

TRACKING IN ACTION

A New Sampling Strategy: Using Partnerships to Improve Well Water Testing in Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

How can we use existing relationships to improve well water testing?

The Problem

After reviewing their [County Environmental Health Profile](#), Eau Claire City-County Health Department (ECCCHD) staff learned their average amount of nitrate in private wells was nearly 1.7 times higher than the Wisconsin average and higher than the state's Preventive Action Limit. To learn more and improve well testing rates, they decided to apply for a *Taking Action with Data* grant through the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.

What They Did

Among other strategies, ECCCHD staff offered residents well testing kits for free. Staff learned through a previous campaign that mailings and coupons for test kits didn't lead to increased testing. For this project, they took a new approach and partnered with the Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division (LCD), which works directly with farmers and rural landowners.

LCD staff have established relationships with these populations and are a trusted source of information. LCD staff incorporated well testing into their popular workshops and participants were able to take home sample bottles. LCD staff also complete on-farm visits, at which point they were also able to collect well water samples.

The Public Health Impact

The partnership was successful, and in combination with door-to-door outreach by an ECCCHD intern, 102 wells were tested during the nine-month project, about 10% of which had unsafe levels of nitrate.

ECCCHD staff learned how sometimes, communicating through a known, trusted source was more effective than trying to forge new relationships.



The partnership with ECCCHD provided our agency a unique opportunity to discuss the interactions of agricultural practices and ground water with local farmers.

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