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Domestic Well Safety Program

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Environmental Public Health
Public Health Division



Overview

Drinking Water-Related Programs, OHA – Other State Agencies

Domestic Well Safety Program

Domestic Well Testing Act

Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area

OHA Drinking Water-Related Programs

Domestic Well Safety Program (DWSP)

- Provides information on domestic well use and human health and safety
- Information on well treatment and maintenance
- Steward of real estate transaction well-testing data

Drinking Water Services (DWS)

- Enforces drinking water quality standards for public & community water systems
- Provides technical assistance to water systems
- Water system operator trainings

Other State Drinking Water-Related Programs

Water Resources Department (OWRD)

- Water rights
- Well Identification Program
- Track Dry Wells
- Certify well construction professionals

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

- Groundwater Protection Act
- Groundwater Management Areas
- Sample domestic well networks to monitor groundwater quality



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Domestic Well Safety Program

The Oregon Domestic Well Safety Program (DWSP) works to protect the lifelong health of people in Oregon who rely on groundwater resources. We partner with local health departments and other state agencies to assess and manage risks associated with private wells and promote domestic well safety.

- Provides information on health effects of drinking contaminated water
- Information on well treatment and maintenance
- Real estate transaction data

Visit **healthoregon.org/wells**

Test well water regularly to protect your health!

Test your well water for:	How Often?	Cost	Symptoms of exposure include:
Coliform & <i>E.coli</i> bacteria	Every year	\$20 to \$40	Diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches or other symptoms
Nitrate	Every year	\$20 to \$40	Babies are at the highest risk. Decreased oxygen in tissues, decrease in blood pressure, increased heart rate, headaches, stomach cramps, vomiting, and sometimes death.
Arsenic	Every three to five years	\$25 to \$45	Problems of skin, circulatory system nervous system, lungs, and bladder. These health problems include some forms of cancer.

Resources

Well Owner's Handbook

Public Health Division
Oregon Domestic Well Safety Program

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Water Well Owner's Handbook

A guide to water wells in Oregon



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WATER RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT

Oregon Water Resources Department
725 Summer St. NE, Suite A
Salem, OR 97301

Contaminants Fact Sheets

Coliform bacteria in well water: What you should know

Coliform bacteria are part of a broad group of bacteria found in soil, water and vegetation. Some coliform, called "fecal coliform," is also found in the intestines of humans and other warm-blooded animals. Coliform can enter your well through groundwater, surface water run-off, cracked or broken well parts, poor construction and leaking septic tanks.

Coliform bacteria and your health
Presence of coliform in your water could indicate the presence of fecal coliform such as *E. coli*. If fecal coliform or *E. coli* is in your water, you may have diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches or other symptoms. Infants, young children and people with compromised immune systems are at a higher risk.

Coliform bacteria and your well water
Testing for coliform bacteria and *E. coli* is the most common way to know if your drinking water is contaminated and unsafe to drink. Contact an accredited laboratory for specific instructions on how to collect, store and send the sample. The test will cost between \$25 and \$40. To find accredited labs in Oregon, visit www.healthoregon.org/wells.

If your water tests positive for coliform or *E. coli*, you should switch to bottled water or another source of safe drinking water and seek treatment options.

You should test for coliform bacteria at least once a year.

For more information:

- Private well owners with health-related questions about coliform bacteria in their water, well maintenance and testing recommendations can call 971-673-0440 or email domestic.wells@odhsa.state.or.us.
- For questions about treatment options for your domestic well, contact the drinking water specialist at your local health department (<http://tinyurl.com/DWcontacts>).

Interpreting your coliform bacteria results

Bacteria result	Water use	Recommendation
Absent (coliform and <i>E. coli</i>)	SAFE for all uses.	Test water at least once a year.
Coliform present, <i>E. coli</i> absent	NOT SAFE for drinking, food preparation, brushing teeth and use in eyes.	If coliform bacteria is in the water, your well may easily become contaminated with more harmful bacteria, such as <i>E. coli</i> , at any time. Follow the instructions below.
Present (coliform and <i>E. coli</i>)	SAFE for other domestic uses and irrigating gardens.	Boil your water before using or use bottled water for other safe drinking water sources. Supervise children to help them avoid swallowing water while bathing, brushing teeth, etc. Although you should always wash produce, remember to wash garden produce with boiled or bottled water. Inspect your well head and well parts for repairs and contact your local drinking water specialist for treatment advice.

OHA 8243 (9/20)

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact Domestic Well Safety Program at 971-673-0440. We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.

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DOMESTIC WELL
SAFETY PROGRAM

Accredited Drinking Water Laboratories Interactive Map



Well Testing Fact Sheet

Drink well water? Test it regularly to protect health.

Test your well water regularly to protect your household from harmful contaminants. The three most common well water contaminants in Oregon are bacteria, nitrate, and arsenic. Depending on where you live, you may also choose to test for other contaminants.

Oregon Health Authority's minimum testing recommendations

Test your well water for:	Frequency*	Cost	Symptoms of exposure include:
Coliform and <i>E. coli</i> bacteria	Every year	\$20 to \$40	Diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches or other symptoms
Nitrate	Every year	\$20 to \$40	Babies are at the highest risk. Decreased oxygen in tissues, decrease in blood pressure, increased heart rate, headaches, stomach cramps, vomiting, and sometimes death.
Arsenic	Every three to five years	\$25 to \$45	Problems of skin, circulatory system, nervous system, lungs, and bladder. These health problems include some forms of cancer.

* You may need to test more frequently if: The well has a history of contamination; your septic system has recently malfunctioned; household members have a stomach illness; infants are drinking the water; or any equipment has broken or malfunctioned.

How to test well water

- Find an accredited lab by visiting <http://www.oregonwells.org> or by calling OHA at 971-673-0440.
- Contact the lab to get a water collection kit.
- Follow the lab's instructions on how to collect a water sample.
- Return the sample to the lab as soon as possible, within 24 hours of collection. Test results are usually ready one to three business days after the lab receives the samples.

What to do with test results

If the well water does not meet safety standards, you may need to install a water treatment system or use alternative sources of drinking water. Visit www.healthoregon.org/wells or contact the Oregon Health Authority Domestic Well Safety Program at Domestic.Wells@odhsa.oregon.gov or call 971-673-0440 for information on water treatment.

Where does contamination come from?

Contamination in well water can come from natural or human sources, including malfunctioning septic systems, agricultural fertilizers and pesticides, animal manure, industrial facilities, or the natural geology of the nearby area.



You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer free of charge. Contact the Domestic Well Safety Program at Domestic.Wells@odhsa.oregon.gov or 971-673-0440 (voice/text). We accept all relay calls.

200-262650 (06/23)



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Domestic Well Testing Act

DWTA ORS 448.271 "Real Estate Transactions"

Currently the only law in place for domestic wells in Oregon

In any transaction for the sale or exchange of real estate that includes a well that supplies ground water for domestic purposes, **the seller of the real estate shall, upon accepting an offer to purchase that real estate, have the well tested for arsenic, nitrates and total coliform bacteria.** The Oregon Health Authority also may, by rule, require additional tests for specific contaminants in specific areas of public health concern. **The seller shall submit the results of the tests required under this section to the authority and to the buyer within 90 days of receiving the results of the tests.**

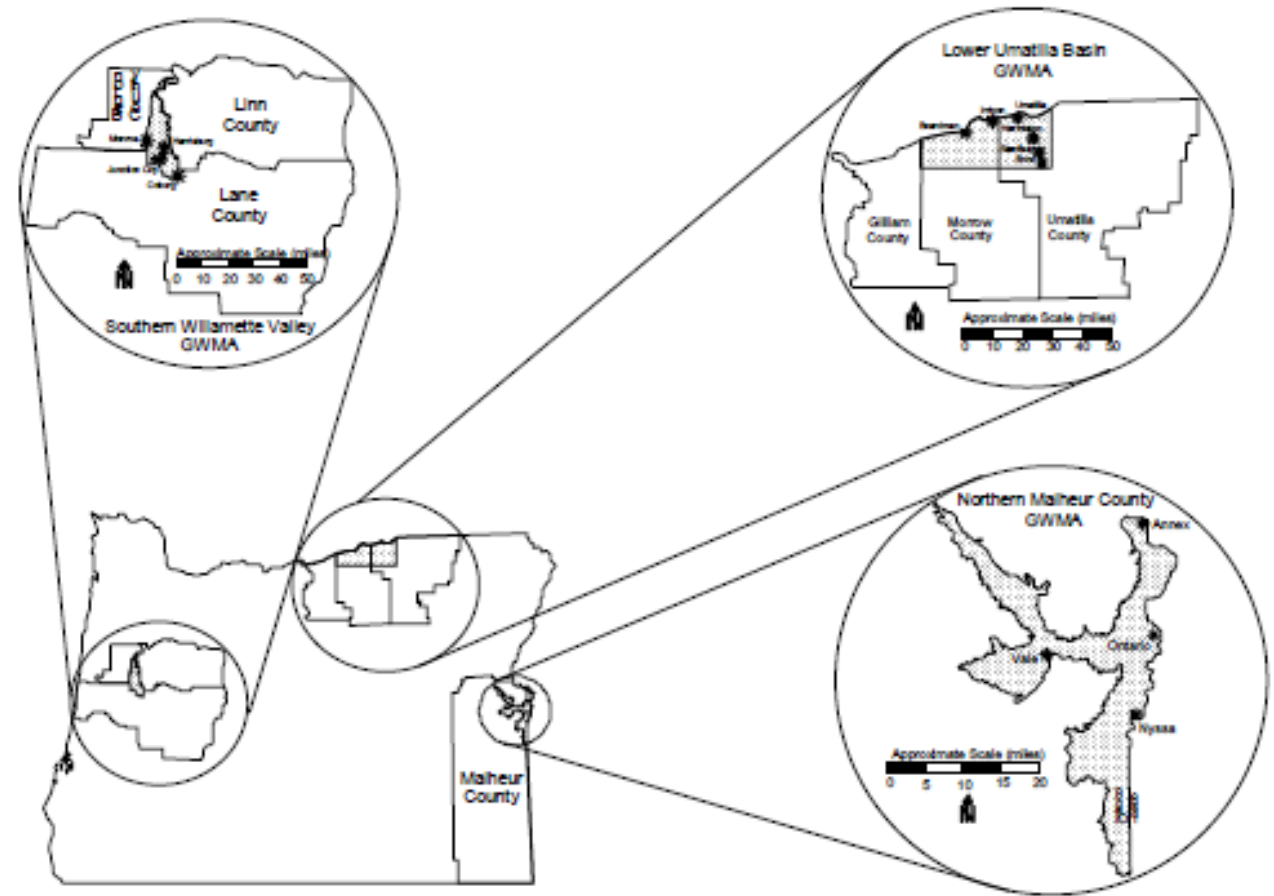


LUBGWMA Overview

Groundwater Management Areas (GWMA)

ORS 468B.175-188

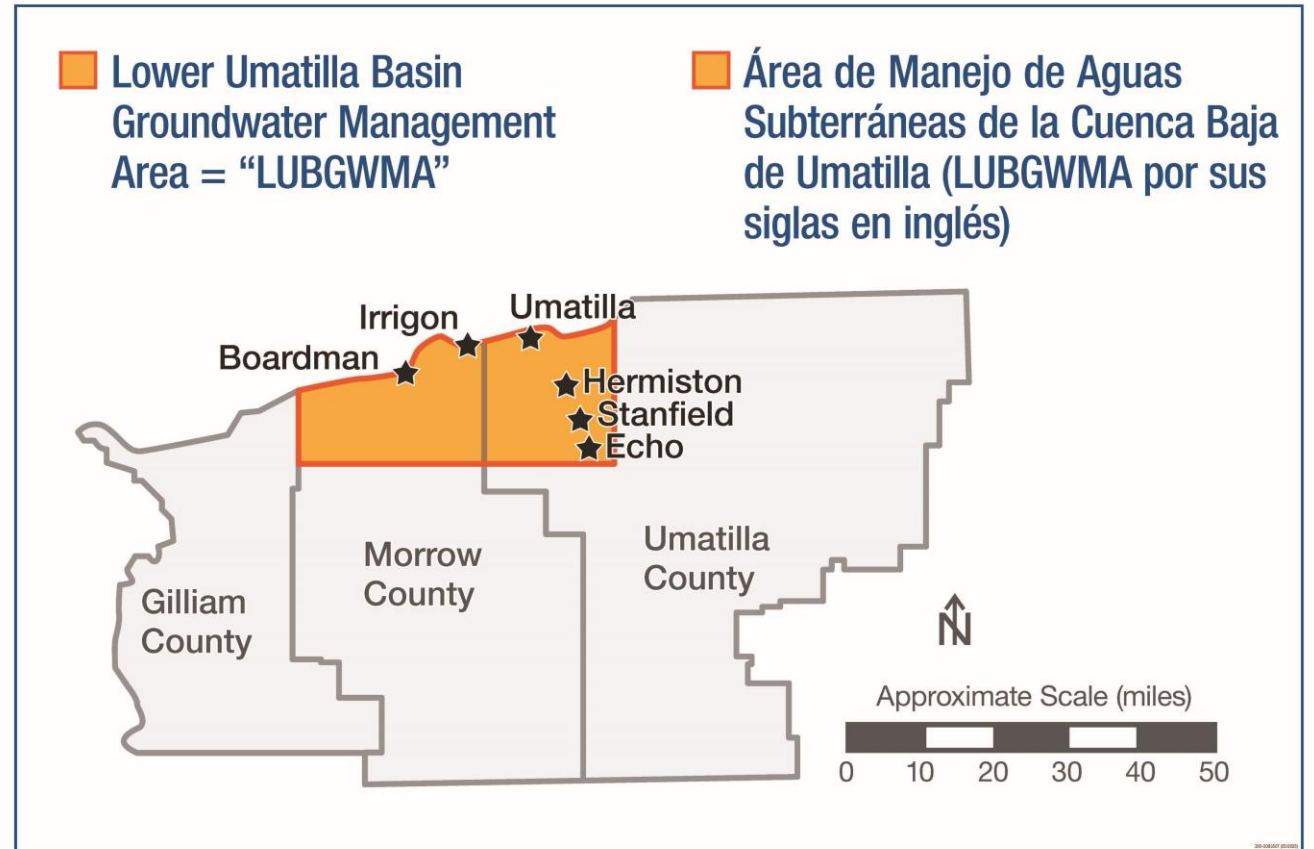
- Areas of groundwater concern due to water contamination from nonpoint source activities
- Requires development of an action plan to address the contamination issues



LUBGWMA Overview

In 1990, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) designated the **Lower Umatilla Basin** as a [Groundwater Management Area](#) because of high nitrate levels.

This area covers more than 550 miles across **Northern Morrow** and **Northwestern Umatilla** counties.



Overview Continued

In 2023, Governor Kotek directed OHA to begin working with local public health agencies and community organizations in Morrow and Umatilla counties to alert communities to possible health risks from contaminated well water and provide safe water services.

Since then, OHA has worked with our partners to do outreach, test private wells for nitrate, and provide safe drinking water to households. Many partners had already been working to get wells tested before 2023, but with limited support from outside the area.

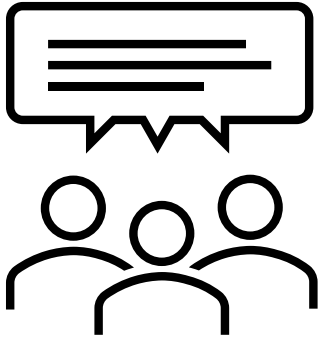


Accessing Free Resources

If you use private well water for drinking and cooking **and** live in the LUBGWMA, you qualify for free resources:

- If you haven't already, get started with a [free well water test](#)
- If your well has unsafe levels of nitrate, you can receive **free drinking water delivery**. OHA may also be able to install a free **water treatment system**
- U.S. citizenship is not required to receive resources. We do not ask for information about citizenship.





What questions do you have?

Feel free to reach out to me at Ana.L.Pineyro@oha.oregon.gov

Contact the Domestic Well Safety Program:

- Phone - 541-952-9254
- Email - Domestic.Wells@odhsoha.oregon.gov

