



## Well Water Quality Testing Program

### **What is the Well Water Quality Program?**

One of the goals of the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District is to educate *private* well owners about the importance of water quality and how it impacts both health and overall quality of life. Through this program, we aim to address water quality concerns related to nonpoint source groundwater contamination. Our approach combines awareness with action, empowering homeowners to take proactive steps in protecting their water sources. We wish to support homeowners by offering cost-sharing opportunities for water testing for ***Taos County residents located outside the Town of Taos***. Depending on the type of test you choose, we can help reduce the cost, making it easier for you to better understand and protect your water quality.

### **Why test my water?**

If you rely on a private well for your drinking water, it's important to know that your water is not monitored by city, state, or federal agencies. As a well owner, you are solely responsible for ensuring the safety and quality of your water. Water quality issues can sometimes occur without any noticeable signs—such as changes in taste, color, or smell. That's why routine water testing is essential, even when everything seems normal.

### **When should I get my water tested and how often?**

Private well owners should test their water for bacteria and nitrate annually.

In addition, drinking water should be tested if:

- You notice a change in your water quality (change in water taste, color, or smell).
- There are changes in the water availability (Water Table dropped).
- People drinking the water suffer from an illness that may be waterborne.
- After a natural disaster such as wildfire or flood.
- You replace or repair any part of your well system.
- You are having problems with your septic tank.
- You identify a major water leak.
- When children, babies, or a pregnant person will be living in the home.
- If your well has never been tested.

More information can be found in the New Mexico Private Well Owners Handbook issued by the New Mexico Department of Health. The handbook can be accessed following this link or QR code:

<https://nmtracking.doh.nm.gov/environment/water/PrivateWells.html>





## Identifying reasons to test your water

According to the [EPA.gov](https://www.epa.gov/privatewells/protect-your-homes-water), the chart below lists common conditions or nearby activities that well owners should be aware of and the substance(s) that you should consider testing for to ensure your well is safe. Not all of the substances listed pose an immediate or long-term health problem, some impact quality of life only such as appearance, taste, and odor.

<https://www.epa.gov/privatewells/protect-your-homes-water>

| Conditions or Nearby Activities:  | Test for:   |
|---|---|
| Recurring gastro-intestinal illness   | Coliform bacteria   |
| Household plumbing or service lines that contain lead                           | pH, lead, copper  |
| Radon in indoor air or region is radon rich                                     | Radon   |
| Corrosion of pipes, plumbing  | Corrosion, pH, lead   |
| Nearby areas of intensive agriculture   | Nitrate, nitrite, pesticides, coliform bacteria                                   |
| Coal or other mining operations nearby  | Metals, pH, corrosion   |
| Gas drilling operations nearby  | Chloride, sodium, barium, strontium   |
| Dump, junkyard, landfill, factory, gas station or dry-cleaning operation nearby | Volatile organic compounds, total dissolved solids, pH, sulfate, chloride, metals |
| Odor of gasoline or fuel oil, and near gas station or buried fuel tanks         | Volatile organic compounds  |
| Objectionable taste or smell  | Hydrogen sulfide, corrosion, metals   |
| Stained plumbing fixtures, laundry  | Iron, copper, manganese   |
| Salty taste and seawater, or a heavily salted roadway nearby                    | Chloride, total dissolved solids, sodium  |
| Scaly residues, soaps don't lather  | Hardness  |
| Rapid wear of water treatment equipment   | pH, corrosion   |
| Water softener needed to treat hardness   | Manganese, iron   |
| Water appears cloudy, frothy or colored   | Color, detergents   |



## **Well Water Quality Cost Share Program**

To incentivize well water testing, the Taos Soil and Water Conservation District (TSWCD) is offering a **50/50** cost-share opportunity, with a maximum District contribution of up to **\$500** per household. This program is available to **Taos County residents located outside the Town of Taos** and is intended solely for residential (non-commercial) use. Water quality tests are to be performed by laboratories certified by NMED-DWB to analyze drinking water samples for water systems in New Mexico. TSWCD will not reimburse tests performed at non-certified laboratories. As part of the program, participants are required to share their water test results with the District. However, all shared data will remain anonymous—results will not be linked to applicant names or addresses. The purpose of collecting this information is to support regional water resource managers and contribute to broader water quality databases, helping to build a clearer picture of groundwater conditions across Taos County. This program is offered on a first come first serve basis and first-time participants will be prioritized.

### **Required Forms for the Well Water Quality Cost Share Program:**

1. Well Water Quality Cost Share Application form.
2. A copy of a recent property tax bill showing proof of property ownership OR if renting or leasing, written permission, property tax bill and contact information of property owner.
3. Official Test Results from laboratories.

*To qualify, applications must be approved **before testing begins**. This program is for **Taos County residents, not including residents located within the Town of Taos**. If approved, TSWCD will allocate a budget of up to **\$500 per household**, dependent on individual testing needs and available funding. This program has limited funding and is offered on a first come first serve basis. A site visit and well mapping will be completed prior to testing. Approved landowners may be reimbursed for up to **50% of testing costs**, not to exceed their approved budget. Please note that Taos SWCD is not responsible for test results or result interpretations. Participation in this program is voluntary.*

### **Important Laboratory Sample Guidelines:**

- Each laboratory has its own specific instructions for collecting and delivering samples.
- It is your responsibility to contact the laboratory directly to confirm and follow their requirements.
- Most laboratories require samples to be delivered Monday–Thursday. Deliveries on Friday may result in extra weekend fees. If you are shipping your sample, you must follow shipping instructions provided by the laboratory.
- Failed samples that are not collected according to laboratory standards or not mailed properly will not be reimbursed by TSWCD.

If you are unable to deliver your sample yourself, coordinated group drop-offs can be arranged.

**Please note:** if using our drop off services, laboratories will be chosen by TSWCD based on cost and location.

**Please contact Elisa Hardy at [ehardy@taosswcd-nm.gov](mailto:ehardy@taosswcd-nm.gov) or (575) 240-5121 for any questions about applying for Cost Share assistance.**



## **WELL WATER QUALITY TESTING COST SHARE APPLICATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest Town/Neighborhood: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live within the Town of Taos? **YES** or **NO**

**\*\*Residents located within the Town of Taos are not eligible for cost share assistance.**

Have you participated in other Taos SWCD Cost-Share Programs and have received more than \$600 this fiscal year? **YES** or **NO**

Landowner and/or lessee name, address, telephone (if other than applicant):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about this Cost Share opportunity? \_\_\_\_\_

You **AGREE** to sharing your Official Laboratory test results and well location with Taos SWCD for private and public databases to receive cost share assistance. \_\_\_\_\_, initial to agree.

You **DO NOT AGREE** to sharing official Laboratory results and are declining cost share assistance. Only technical assistance will be provided. \_\_\_\_\_, initial to decline.

Which Laboratory will you be using? \_\_\_\_\_

Which parameter(s) will you be testing for? \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** I hereby declare that the information and all statements attached to this application are true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

**Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Applications can be submitted to Elisa Hardy via email, [chardy@taosswcd-nm.gov](mailto:chardy@taosswcd-nm.gov) OR, physically dropped off at the office, 220 Chamisa Rd., Taos, NM. 87571. A copy of your Official Laboratory results must be turned in to TSWCD before receiving reimbursement.**