

Private Well Program to Protect Public Health Advocacy Toolkit

Help promote equitable access to safe, clean drinking water across Massachusetts!



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Introduction

The [Private Well Program to Protect Public Health](#) is a community partnership funded by The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts. In an ongoing effort to promote better public health and safety for Massachusetts households with private wells, RCAP Solutions is engaging with key stakeholders and state government officials to advocate for public policy that would ensure well water is tested for contaminants on a routine basis.

The program is also testing well water quality throughout Massachusetts, educating homeowners on what their water test results show, and working directly with homeowners if there is a need for remediation efforts. Using the data gathered from this program, we hope to effect change by moving the Massachusetts legislature to enact statewide private well regulations that would ensure all residents have equitable access to healthy drinking water.

Private wells can sometimes be contaminated by substances including arsenic, E. coli, radon, and uranium, which can have both short and long-term health impacts. Despite this, **private wells are currently not subject to any statewide drinking water standards.**

How to Get Involved

Whether you rely on a public water system or a private well for your drinking water, this is an issue of health equity, and we need your support! Forward the website, www.whatsinyourwellwater.org, to your friends and family!

Our legislators need to hear from a diverse set of constituents across the state that safe drinking water is a priority, so they enact new protections for private well owners. Submit written testimony from a personal perspective, including your own experience with private wells and/or why you think it is important to promote safe drinking water for all. When the time comes for a hearing, consider providing oral testimony too!

Finally, spread the word on social media (include the hashtag [#WhatsInYourWellWater](#)), your website's blog, and any newsletters you may distribute!

Sample Written Testimony to Legislators

Tips for Writing Testimony:

Write your testimony from a personal perspective, including your own experience with private wells. Focus on details as to how this legislation would impact you.

Consider the group you represent. Are you a homeowner? Health agent? Town administrator? Other stakeholder? Share why being a member of one of these groups led you to supporting this act.

Keep it short and sweet! Be sure to focus on the key points:

- The importance of statewide private well regulations
- The fact that there are currently no regulations to ensure well water is free of contaminants
- Ensuring there are appropriate protections in place for drinking water from private wells, as public drinking water is regulated and routinely monitored

How to Submit Your Testimony:

Follow the steps outlined below to be heard:

- Find the contact information for your legislators by [clicking here](#).
- Email your legislators to ask them to support efforts being made to enact statewide private well regulations, including “An Act Promoting Drinking Water Quality for All” (bill numbers S.2667/HD.4693).
- Forward this document to your friends and colleagues and ask them to take action.
- Finally, don't forget to cc communications@rcapsolutions.org on all emails so we're alerted once you've taken action!

Sample Written Testimony:

Dear Senator/Representative _____,

Over 500,000 households in Massachusetts rely on private wells for their drinking water, yet there are no statewide regulations to ensure their water is safe and free of contaminants such as arsenic, E. coli, radon, uranium, and PFAS. In contrast, public water systems are subject to MassDEP Drinking Water Regulations (310 CMR 22.00), which set enforceable legal standards for water quality by which public utilities are required to comply.

Sensible, health-based regulations and oversight for drinking water wells would benefit public health and provide better protections for households who rely on these wells. I hope you will support ongoing efforts to ensure safe drinking water for all Massachusetts residents, including “An Act Promoting Drinking Water Quality for All” (S.2667/HD.4693).

[INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AND/OR THE ORGANIZATION YOU REPRESENT AND EXPLAIN YOUR PERSONAL REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THESE EFFORTS]

The longer we delay action, the longer private well owners remain at risk of drinking water with harmful contaminants. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[YOUR TOWN]

[YOUR ORGANIZATION, IF APPLICABLE]

Sample Social Media Posts & Graphics

Support "An Act Promoting Drinking Water Quality for All" S.2667 / HD.4693

Massachusetts residents who rely on private wells are consuming water that may be unsafe. Unlike with public water systems, there are no statewide regulations to ensure private well water is safe to drink.

It's time to promote equitable access to safe, clean drinking water across the state!



Get Involved & Stay Informed!

WhatsInYourWellWater.org



click to open (then right click + "Save As")

Because there are no statewide regulations for well water quality, Massachusetts households who rely on private wells could be consuming water that is unsafe. Bill S.2667/HD.4693 would change this! Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

[Click here to Tweet!](#)

WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

Unlike with public water systems, **there are currently no statewide regulations to ensure private well water is safe.**

Individual Boards of Health have the authority to develop local regulations, but many are outdated or nonexistent.



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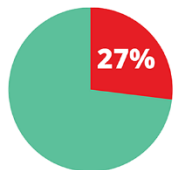
Unlike with public water systems, there are no statewide regulations to ensure private well water is safe. Individual Boards of Health can develop local regulations, but many are outdated or nonexistent. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

In 2021, RCAP Solutions conducted 240 well water tests across several Massachusetts towns. We found that **~27% of wells had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks.**

Arsenic • E. coli • Radon • Uranium • And more...



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In 2021, @RCAP_Solutions conducted 240 well water tests across several MA towns and found that ~27% of wells had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

PFAS is in private wells too.

The MassDEP PFAS Private Well Testing Program has found that **~5% of private wells tested across Massachusetts have PFAS6 exceeding state health standards.**



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#PFAS is in private wells too! These toxic chemicals can cause a slew of human health impacts. MassDEP's PFAS Testing Program found that approximately 5% of wells had levels of PFAS exceeding state standards. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

[Click here to Tweet!](#)

WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

There are unequal drinking water protections across the state.

Residents who live in municipalities with public water systems are more likely to have access to safe drinking water than residents who don't.



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Massachusetts homeowners face inequities when it comes to water. Those who live in municipalities with public systems are more likely to have access to safe drinking water than those who rely on private wells. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

Several other states have sensible, health-based regulations for private wells. These states require private well water be tested for contaminants upon sale or transfer of a home.



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Several other states (including Oregon, Rhode Island, and New Jersey) have sensible, health-based regulations for private wells. Let's add Massachusetts, with its 500,000 private wells, to the list! Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

Many people who discover contaminants in their wells resort to drinking bottled water, which is expensive.

Plastic also harms the environment; **80% of plastic water bottles used in the United States end up in landfills.**



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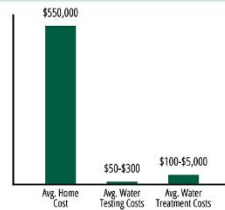
Many people who discover contaminants in their private wells resort to drinking bottled water, which harms the environment. In fact, 80% of plastic bottles used in the United States end up in landfills. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

Water testing and treatment costs are a small fraction of a home's selling price.

The median home price in Massachusetts is \$550,000, while testing ranges from \$50-\$300 and one-time treatment costs range from \$100-\$5,000.



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Private well water testing and treatment costs are a fraction of a home's price. The median home price in MA is \$550,000, while testing ranges from \$50-\$300 and one-time treatment costs range from \$100-\$5,000. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

Local Boards of Health (BOHs) already collect fees for enforcement of regulations.

If statewide regulations were enacted, and BOHs handled their enforcement, fees would not change much. In addition to already collecting fees for local private well regulations, these BOHs currently collect fees for Title 5 (septic systems), food permits, public pools, and more.



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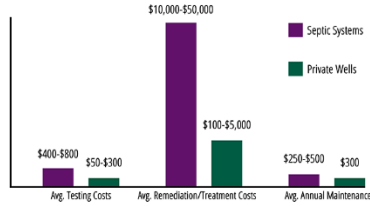
If statewide private well regulations were enacted, & local Boards of Health (BOHs) handled enforcement, fees wouldn't change much. BOHs already collect fees for local well regulations & for septic systems, etc. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

Maintaining a private well is less expensive than maintaining a septic system.

Yet currently septic systems are subject to statewide regulations and private wells are not.



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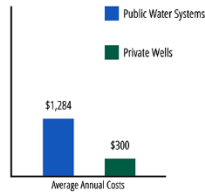
Maintaining a private well is less expensive than maintaining a septic system. Yet currently septic systems are subject to statewide regulations and private wells are not. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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WHY ARE MASSACHUSETTS PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS NEEDED?

In general, drinking water from private wells is less expensive than drinking from public water systems.

The average annual cost for a single-family home using a **public water system** is **~\$1,284**, whereas the average annual cost for a single-family home using a **private well** is **\$300**.



Get Involved & Stay Informed!

WhatsInYourWellWater.org



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Generally, drinking from private wells is less expensive than drinking from public systems. The average annual cost for using a public system is ~\$1,284. The average annual cost for using a private well is \$300. Learn more at whatsinyourwellwater.org! #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

[Click here to Tweet!](#)



<https://youtu.be/uVlSeAqGf-w>

If you had issues with your private well water, wouldn't you want to know? This #PrincetonMA homeowner discovered arsenic & more his water. Health-based private well regulations are needed! <https://youtu.be/uVlSeAqGf-w>

@Sen_Chandler @KimFergusonMA #WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli

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<https://youtu.be/RSF2iRwOWSQ>

This #WestminsterMA neighborhood suffered with sodium chloride contamination in their private well water. Sensible, health-based regulations for private wells are needed! <https://youtu.be/RSF2iRwOWSQ>

*@JohnCronin_MA @KimFergusonMA #JonZlotnik
#WhatsInYourWellWater #mapoli*

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Sample Blog & Newsletter Post

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is proud to support the efforts being made by RCAP Solutions and The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts to ensure equitable access to safe drinking water for all residents of the Commonwealth by advocating for statewide private well regulations.

RCAP Solutions, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, and many other partners engaging with key stakeholders and state government officials to advocate for public policy that would ensure well water is tested for contaminants on a routine basis.

Private wells can sometimes be contaminated by substances including arsenic, E. coli, radon, and uranium, which can have both short and long-term health impacts. Despite this, private wells are currently not subject to any statewide drinking water standards. Sensible, health-based regulations are needed to protect public health.

In 2021, RCAP Solutions conducted 240 water quality tests across six Massachusetts towns. They discovered that approximately 27% of wells had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks. In 2022, additional water quality tests will be conducted across the state.

You can stay informed and get involved in these efforts by visiting whatsinyourwellwater.org!

Additional Print Materials

8.5x11 Private Well Legislation Flyer

IT IS TIME TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR PRIVATE WELL OWNERS ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS!

Support "An Act Promoting Drinking Water Quality for All" Bill S.2667 / HD.4693

THIS ACT WILL

- ✓ Authorize MassDEP to develop health-based regulations to ensure private well water is safe to drink.
- ✓ Be the first step in achieving uniform statewide private well regulations to protect health.
- ✓ Likely be modeled after Title 5 regulations (regulations for septic systems), which is widely accepted as an important protection for environmental and public health.

THIS ACT WILL NOT

- ✗ impose an undue burden on homeowners. The new efforts to proactively educate homeowners, access the test by law by, and develop strategies to mitigate pathways to homeowners and health agencies.
- ✗ Specify what the exact regulations will be.
- ✗ Certain details about certain names, testing new names, and reporting. These details would be developed by MassDEP, rely with input from water experts, stakeholders, and the public.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Make your support to our state legislators by scanning the QR code or visiting the link below. This website comes with email-based messages to make it easy for your voice to be heard.

WhatsInYourWellWater.org

800.488.1969 www.rcapsolutions.org @RCAPSolutions

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11x17 Private Well Program to Protect Public Health Water Testing Results Infographic

Private Well Program to Protect Public Health: Water Testing Results

In 2021, RCAP Solutions conducted 200 well assessments and water tests across six Massachusetts watersheds which had a high concentration of private wells. While we report that approximately 27% of wells had levels of contaminants exceeding state health-based standards and/or suggesting potential health risks, state health standards are based on federal standards and are adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

Information from MassDEP shows that only about 4.6% of community public water systems (PWS) throughout the state had instances of contaminants exceeding exceed state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks.

These results show that sensible, health-based regulations and oversight for drinking water wells would lead to a public health benefit. Our full findings are outlined below.

Private Wells Sampled by RCAP Solutions (2021)

MassDEP Data for Community Public Water Systems in Massachusetts (2021)

Results by Town: Data in each table is a targeted survey ranging from 10% to 50% of wells having levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks.

Private wells, community public water systems, what's the difference? Private wells usually supply water to an individual residence. These wells which draw their water from the ground, are not subject to any statewide health-based regulations. Community public water systems supply drinking water to the greater public on a daily basis (e.g., gas stations, campgrounds, etc.) and are subject to statewide health-based regulations.

Most Common Contaminants Found

About the Private Well Program to Protect Public Health

The Private Well Program to Protect Public Health is currently largely funded by the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, in cooperation of DEEP to promote better public health and safety for Massachusetts households with private wells. RCAP Solutions is engaging with key stakeholders and state government officials to discuss to public policy that would ensure well water is tested for contaminants on a routine basis.

The program is also testing well water quality in two rural Massachusetts, educating homeowners on why their water test results should be reviewed regularly with homeowners. These services are free of charge. Along the data gathered from this program, we hope to effect change by moving the Massachusetts legislature to enact statewide private well regulations that are on par with regulations for public water systems. For more information, visit: www.rcapsolutions.org/ma-private-wells

Water Quality Standards and Potential Health Impacts

Massachusetts Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) are a set of guideline levels for various contaminants that could potentially be found in drinking water. These levels are based on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) federal standards for drinking water. Many Massachusetts has adopted more stringent standards in some cases.

There are several potential health problems that can occur if contaminated water is consumed. In addition, contaminants may impact the use of drinking water (e.g., eye irritation, taste, or home infrastructure).

Contaminant	MCL	Examples of Potential Health Risks
Arsenic	0.05 mg/L	Cancer, skin, changes, digestive system problems
Lead	None/Action	Neurodevelopmental issues
Nitrate	10 mg/L	Can cause death in babies younger than 6 months
Radon	MDCL: 4 pCi/L	Cancer
Total Coliform Bacteria	None/Action	Contaminates final illness
Uranium	0.30 mg/L	Cancer, kidney toxicity
Manganese	0.30 mg/L	Neurodegenerative issues

Source: EPA and MassDEP. EPA: www.epa.gov. "Private Well" program conducted under award # 2019-01-000001-000001 provided by RCAP Solutions.

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