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For Immediate Release

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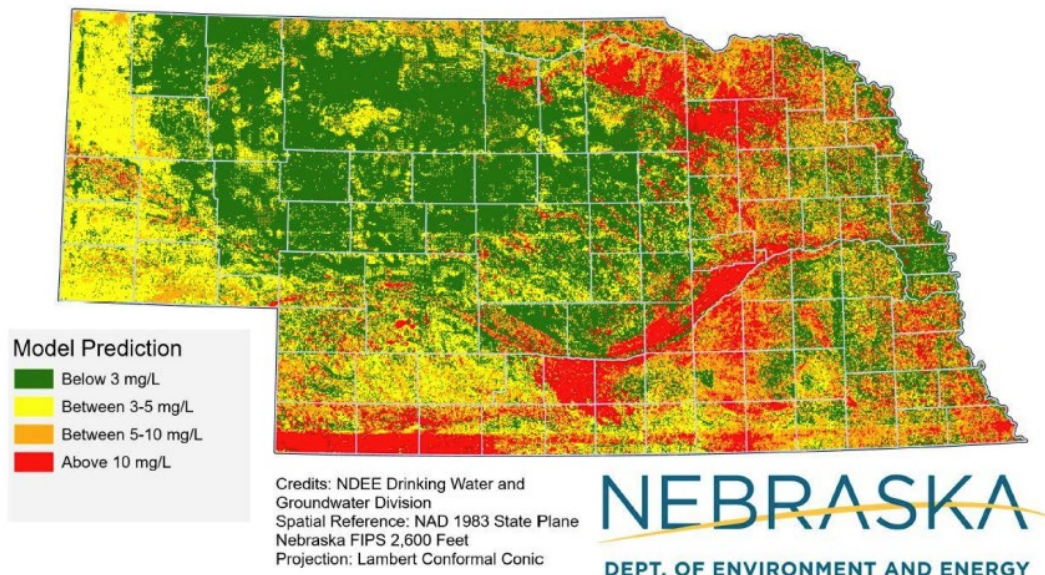
Free Well Water Testing

Many families in rural Nebraska get their drinking water from private wells. Private wells give people more independence, but they also come with responsibilities. One of the most important is making sure the water is safe to drink. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is offering free well water testing during the month of May to encourage awareness of drinking water safety.

Unlike public water systems, private wells are not tested or treated by the government. That means it is up to the well owner to test their water every year. "Testing your private well water regularly is important to make sure it's safe to drink and free from harmful contaminants," explained Chloe Martin, Program Manager at SWNPHD.

Many harmful substances can get into the groundwater and contaminate your well. These substances can be colorless, tasteless, and odorless, so testing is the only way to know what is in your water. In Nebraska, widespread agriculture increases the risk of certain contaminants, like nitrates from fertilizer and animal waste. According to Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) all the counties in the Southwest Nebraska health district have potentially high nitrate levels (see map).

Predictive Nitrate Model Results: Composite Layer in Terms of Nitrate Concentration



High levels of nitrates can be dangerous, especially for babies and pregnant women. Bacteria in well water can also cause illness and is a sign the well needs maintenance or updates. Rain, floods, farming, and even nearby construction can affect groundwater, so it is important to test your well water regularly, even if tests showed it was safe in the past.

Free Well Water Testing

During the month of May 2025, you can test your well for nitrates, nitrites, and phosphates for free at SWNPHD offices in McCook and Ogallala.

Here's how:

1. Collect your water sample from the faucet in your home that you drink from the most.
2. Let the water run for at least 5 minutes to flush the system.
3. Fill a clean, sealed container with enough water to take a drink.
4. Bring your sample to one of the following health department locations during regular business hours:
 - **McCook Office:** 404 West 10th Street, McCook, NE
 - **Ogallala Office:** 418 North Spruce Street, Suite A, Ogallala, NE

“Taking advantage of this free testing opportunity is a simple way to protect your health and learn more about the quality of your drinking water,” continued Martin. “Make it a yearly habit—and encourage your neighbors to do the same.”

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow SWNPHD on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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