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STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY  
LANSING



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VIA EMAIL

TO: Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Environment, Great Lakes,  
and Energy Members  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Environment, Great Lakes,  
and Energy Members  
Kathryn Summers, Director, Senate Fiscal Agency  
Mary Ann Cleary, Director, House Fiscal Agency  
Christopher M. Harkins, Director, State Budget Office

FROM: Aaron B. Keatley, Chief Deputy Director 

DATE: April 3, 2023

SUBJECT: Report on Calendar Year 2022 Private Well Testing Appropriation and Work Plan

In accordance with Section 1004 of Article 4, Part 2, of 2022 PA 166, attached is the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's (EGLE) report on the calendar year 2022 Private Well Testing Appropriation and Work Plan.

If you need further information, please contact Sara Pearson, Supervisor, Source Water Unit, Drinking Water and Environmental Health Division, at 517-420-3219; or you may contact me at 517-512-5992.

Attachment

cc/att: Curtis Hertel Jr., Director of Legislative Affairs, Governor's Office  
Marc Rehmann, Policy Director, Governor's Office  
Chris Semrinec, Senate Fiscal Agency  
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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

## Legislative Report

# Private Well Testing Appropriation and Work Plan

Report Period:  
Calendar Year 2022

Authority:  
Section 1004 of Article 4, Part 2, of 2022 PA 166

## Private Well Testing Appropriation and Work Plan

### **\$5 MILLION APPROPRIATION**

A \$5 million appropriation was made by the Michigan Legislature in 2022 PA 166 to address the need for free or low-cost well testing for Michigan residents relying upon private wells as their source of drinking water. There are more than 700,000 active household wells on record in Michigan; many of these wells have had no water quality analysis since the initial installation of the well. This \$5 million appropriation is designed to help address the need for residents to have certainty in the quality of their well water.

This report is provided in accordance with Section 1004 of Article 4, Part 2, of 2022 PA 166, which states:

Sec. 1004. (1) From the funds appropriated in part 1 for private well testing, the department shall award grants to local health departments to provide free or low-cost water testing to private well owners. Testing offered shall include coliforms, nitrates, nitrites, arsenic, and other contaminants as determined by application.

(2) On or before April 1, the department shall transmit to the appropriations subcommittees, the fiscal agencies, and the state budget office and post on the department's website a report on the previous calendar year's activities funded with private well testing funds. The report shall include a list of all grantees and award amounts.

There were no formal activities taken or expenditures that occurred with respect to these private well testing funds during calendar year 2022. This is a new appropriation for fiscal year 2023; therefore, a Work Plan is needed prior to utilizing these funds. The following Work Plan describes how the funds will be used to achieve the objective of providing no cost, accessible testing for private well users across the state of Michigan for common water quality parameters. This Work Plan has been developed to meet the objective as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Private Well Testing Work Plan is divided into four categories:

- 1) Define eligible analytical parameters;
- 2) Describe the process to receive free quality testing of private water wells;
- 3) Detail outreach efforts to inform residents of free testing services; and
- 4) Detail reporting and metrics to measure the effectiveness of the processes and the public health outcomes of this appropriation.

### **PRIVATE WELL TESTING - ELIGIBLE ANALYTICAL PARAMETERS**

Newly drilled residential wells are approved for use by local health departments (LHD). Under the Michigan Public Health Code, 1978 PA 368, as amended, only a coliform bacteria sample is required to demonstrate that the water meets appropriate standards that are protective of public health. Local sanitary codes may be more protective. After

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initial testing, many wells are not tested again until there is an identified problem with the well or the water; the well is replaced; or, in some locations, the property is sold. Reasons for not testing may be that it is cost prohibitive, residents do not know the process for well testing, residents are unaware of potential contaminants, and/or well maintenance is not widely understood. This private well testing funding offers residents an opportunity to receive no cost testing for the most common water quality concerns and to learn more about their water and well with information provided by the State of Michigan and their LHD.

Standard water quality concerns for private wells include coliforms, metals (aluminum, antimony, arsenic, boron, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, mercury, selenium, uranium, and zinc), and partial chemistry parameters (nitrate, nitrite, fluoride, chloride, sulfate, sodium, hardness, and iron). These are the most common contaminants that can pose hidden health threats to people drinking the water if concentrations go undetected and exceed maximum contaminant levels or water quality standards. The average cost for testing, including shipping and handling, ranges from approximately \$40 to \$200 depending on the testing parameters selected.

The funds will be applied to analyses of these standard water testing parameters and associated shipping costs to assist residents with evaluating the quality of their well water and with making informed decisions about their drinking water.

### **ACCESSIBILITY TO PRIVATE WELL TESTING FUNDS - THE PROCESS**

All private well users will have the ability to request standard water testing parameters. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) will host an online private well testing request system for residents to request analyses. The online portal will also have water quality information for residents and contact information for their LHD for guidance on testing parameters, the process for requesting analyses, and well maintenance. LHD staff will also be available to complete requests for individual private well owners requesting their assistance.

The online private well testing request system will route the request to one of three participating laboratories, based on parameters being tested and the geographic area of the private well being tested. The EGLE Drinking Water Laboratory will provide coverage for the Lower Peninsula and the Luce-Mackinac-Alger-Schoolcraft District Health Department and the Western Upper Peninsula Health Department, via their contract laboratory, will be analyzing samples from the eastern and western Upper Peninsula, respectively, for coliform and partial chemistry analyses due to time sensitivity for analyses. EGLE will enter into grant contracts/agreements with these LHDs.

The laboratory will ship the appropriate collection containers to the resident with instructions for sampling. The resident will be responsible for sample collection and for returning water samples immediately using a prepaid return shipping box and label.

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Upon completion of water testing, the analytical results will be sent to the resident, the LHD, and EGLE. The LHD will contact the resident if the analyses indicate an exceedance of a water quality parameter standard. The LHD will provide the resident with additional information on the appropriate steps to take, including resampling of the water to verify the result and determining what actions will be needed to address the exceedance.

### **OUTREACH TO PRIVATE WELL OWNERS**

Private well users routinely contact EGLE, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and/or their LHD with questions about the quality of their well water and testing services. Residents will now be informed of this opportunity for free testing.

Current outreach mechanisms will be used to inform residents of this opportunity to better understand their water quality. For example, the DHHS has developed a well assessment outreach effort as a means to inform residents about their wells, the health impacts of contaminants of concern, and how to maintain their wells. This outreach effort is an ideal way to inform residents of the availability of funding to test their water quality and will be included in the effort. Additionally, LHDs will also distribute DHHS outreach materials, along with local materials, to community members. Michigan is currently an active participant in the *Be Well Informed* program hosted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, which provides an online tool for residents to input their laboratory results and receive feedback on potential health concerns and water treatment choices. EGLE features this tool on the *Be Well Informed* webpage and provides guidance for residents to contact their LHD: <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/maps-data/be-well-informed>. Existing resources are also available on the DHHS website under the Care for MI Drinking Water webpage: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/environmental-health/topics/care-for-mi-drinking-water>. There are several resources, including a section with education material and videos developed by both EGLE and the DHHS, on the Care for MiWell webpage: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/environmental-health/topics/care-for-mi-drinking-water/mi-well>. Information will be included on these websites directing residents to the online request system.

### **EVALUATION/METRICS OF PRIVATE WELL TESTING EFFORTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH OUTCOMES**

While the objective of providing funding for private well testing is to help people determine the health-based quality of their water, this effort also provides an opportunity to educate owners about the responsibilities of well ownership, promote good maintenance practices, and provide information to assist with making decisions if water quality does not meet water quality parameter standards.

Because very little information is available about the actual quality of the water from private water wells across the state after a new well is installed, the data collected, while

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providing no cost water quality analyses, is also a start to understanding this gap and identifying opportunities to ensure citizens have confidence in their drinking water. The LHDs will be the main contact for responding to questions from residents. The LHD will also provide guidance on any steps that may be needed following the receipt of results. The LHDs will track their efforts with assisting citizens.

EGLE monthly reporting, grouped by county and LHD, will include:

- How the resident learned about the private well testing program;
- The number of addresses/private wells requested to be sampled through the online system;
- The number of samples returned by well users (both valid and invalid);
- The number of samples per analyte;
- Dollars spent on sample analysis and shipping; and
- The number of completed results reported to the well owner, the LHD, and EGLE.

Outreach efforts will also be monitored and reported to identify the most effective outreach methods and refine best outreach and education practices.

As the requests and needs of private well users become known and better understood, successes and gaps will be evaluated. Gaps anticipated include the lack of resources currently available to assist homeowners for remediation of water quality issues, such as drilling a new water well, properly plugging abandoned wells, connecting to an available municipal water supply, or installing and maintaining a water treatment system. The assessment of the processes and outreach will be completed every six months to evaluate efforts and make any necessary adjustments to this Work Plan. This assessment will be reported annually.