



AN ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING STORY

TESTING THE WATERS: USING WELL WATER DATA TO TARGET OUTREACH

THE PROBLEM

Two out of every five households in Wisconsin rely on private wells to supply their water. Until recently, homeowners were unable to access data on the quality of well water through a centralized database. As an outcome from a Wisconsin Tracking initiative from 2010, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UW-SP) developed the [Well Water Quality Viewer](#), a portal to display these well water data.

While the portal provided rich data for much of the state, a review of the portal's maps revealed data were scarce for several counties – particularly those where labs run by local health departments provided most well testing services.

WHAT WE DID

To investigate this issue, the Wisconsin Tracking Program convened stakeholders, including UW-SP and the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards. The State Laboratory of Hygiene facilitated discussions about how to engage health departments and promote the Well Water Quality Viewer. As a result of these efforts, staff from Eau Claire City-County Health Department were able to add their data to the portal and create maps of well water quality in their jurisdiction.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

Eau Claire staff targeted outreach to one township with the highest levels of nitrate. Letters were sent to all 250 homes in the township explaining well testing and offering a coupon for 50% off the testing price. They also partnered with their local Land Conservation Division. While the mailing only yielded 12 returned tests, the partnership with the Land Conservation Division was very successful. They were able to distribute 50 tests.

To visit the portal and explore data in Eau Claire and other Wisconsin communities, search “UW-SP Well Water Viewer” in your internet browser.

“Test results from more than 9,000 Eau Claire County wells are now available online, making it easier for our residents to research local well water quality and easier for us to target education efforts.”

SHANE SANDERSON
Environmental Health Director
Eau Claire City-County
Health Department

