

**RESOLUTION**

**ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Supervisor Peer  
Supervisor Sweeney  
INITIATED BY



8/25/2023  
DATE DRAFTED

**Revised County Program to Subsidize Groundwater Nitrate Testing and Mitigation for Residential Wells That Exceed Health Standards**

**WHEREAS**, the level of nitrates in Rock County's groundwater has increased over the past two decades in private wells, with over an estimated 3,000 Rock County homeowner wells exceeding the state and federal drinking water nitrate health advisory level of 10 parts per million (ppm); and,

**WHEREAS**, in order to address the continued threat to public health of nitrates in Rock County's ground water, the Rock County Board of Supervisors created the Rock County Nitrate Workgroup by Resolution 17-SA-282 which was tasked with, among other things, evaluating nitrate sources and researching groundwater nitrate reduction initiatives being conducted in other parts of Wisconsin; and,

**WHEREAS**, The Rock County Board of Supervisors approved Resolution 21-7A-281, directing Staff to explore the feasibility of creating programs to address nitrate mitigation in Rock County's groundwater of creating and administrating programs to address excess nitrate levels in Rock County Groundwater including, but not limited to, implementation of a program to subsidize the cost of nitrate testing for ground water well users in Rock County, and a program to subsidize the cost of installation of reverse osmosis, or similar, water treatment systems that filter out groundwater nitrates to levels lower than federal maximums; and,

**WHEREAS**, Staff developed a comprehensive report and recommendation which was presented to the Groundwater Nitrate Workgroup for consideration; and,

**WHEREAS**, the current cost for a water test is \$27.00 and the approximate cost of a reverse osmosis system is \$600 to \$1,200.00; and,

**WHEREAS**, this nitrate testing and mitigation program was previously approved by resolution 22-2A-425 as an eligible expenditure under the American Rescue Plan Act; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Groundwater Nitrate Workgroup recently reviewed the status of the existing program and complementary Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Well Compensation Program and recommendations developed by Staff and recommend the following program revisions for consideration by the County Board:

The focus of the program shall be the highest risk populations and wells with the 10 ppm or greater nitrate levels (previously 15 ppm); and,

Well testing shall be made available at no cost to households with pregnant individuals or infants less than one year old or with wells that previously tested over 10 ppm (previously 15 ppm); and,

Wells that test higher than 10 ppm (previously 15 ppm) shall be eligible for an additional test at no cost to the individual to confirm results; and,

Reverse osmosis, or similar, system shall be made available at no cost to households with pregnant individuals or infants less than one year old that test higher than 10 ppm or any other eligible well that tests higher than 10 ppm (previously was 15 ppm); and,

**WHEREAS**, all other eligibility requirements previously approved by County Board Resolution 22-2A-425 will remain the same and include:

General eligibility shall be limited to 1-2 family dwellings that are owner occupied or rented; and,

The testing option shall be advertised County wide through various outreach means, including, but not limited to, newspaper publications, notification to Towns and through the mailing list associated with owners of private septic systems; and,

Staff shall make an assessment of possible cause of high nitrate levels as part of the testing process and additional staff time associated with the assessments associated with this program may be reimbursed by the program funds; and,

The users of wells that test higher than 25 ppm shall be advised that a Reverse Osmosis system may not be effective at reducing nitrate levels below the health advisory level. In situations with nitrates at 25 ppm or higher, there will be an evaluation process the determine if an RO system is feasible to treat water below the health advisory level. In some high nitrate situations RO may not be applicable and the need for a well replacement should be considered with full or partial replacement costs requiring additional County Board approval; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this 14th day of September, 2023, does by enactment of this Resolution approve a Revised Groundwater Nitrate Testing and Mitigation Program as outlined above and authorizes continued funding not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for said program, which may be expended over multiple years; and,

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the Rock County Board of Supervisors, does by enactment of this Resolution authorize County Staff to develop program administration processes and procedures to carry out this project.

FISCAL NOTE:

\$100,000 of ARPA funding was budgeted in 2022 for the Rock County Health Department's clean water programming.

Ryan Wiesen  
Assistant Finance Director

LEGAL NOTE:

The County Board is authorized to take this action pursuant to §§ 59.01 & 59.51, Wis. Stats.

Richard Greenlee  
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Recommended. Under ARPA rules, these funds must be expended by 2026 and cannot be reallocated to other purposes after 2024.

Josh Smith  
County Administrator

**Committee Action**

Board of Health

Board of Health recommended this resolution for approval by a unanimous voice vote.

Land Conservation Committee

The Land Conservation Committee recommended this resolution for approval by a unanimous voice vote.