



March 14, 2025

Senate HHS Committee Chair Senator Wiklund
Senate HHS Committee Vice Chair Senator Mann
Senate HHS Committee Ranking Minority Member Senator Utke

Subject: Well Management Governor Budget Recommendations

Dear Senator Wiklund, Senator Mann, and Senator Utke:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments to the 2025 Legislature while considering the Governor's budget request for funding recommendations. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Well Management Program supports our work at Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA) to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared view of the importance of protecting public health and groundwater in Minnesota for future generations.

Well Management Program

MRWA Source Water Protection staff work in cooperation with the MDH to assist public water supply systems with the development and implementation of wellhead protection plans. All wellhead protection plans have a common mission to locate municipal wells that are no longer in use and whose locations and status are in question. These wells are typically large and deep wells that can transmit contaminants from the land surface directly into the source water aquifers being utilized for public drinking water supply use.

Initial review of historic data supplied by the MDH and city records can provide a general idea of the location of the well in question. The MDH Well Management Program staff have been supportive of the well location efforts by dedicating their time and expertise with locational equipment in order to locate these types of wells; their knowledge and ability to provide and operate the necessary equipment is often crucial to the success of these well location efforts.

For example, in the city of Oklee, MRWA and city staff reviewed old well records and notes and learned of a well located 35 feet from a well the city presently utilizes. In 1956 this well was filled with earth and concrete. With its close proximity to a well that the city uses to provide drinking water to their residents, city and MRWA staff knew it was important to locate this well since it wasn't properly sealed. MDH Well Management staff from the Bemidji office provided on-site technical assistance for the project with a magnetometer. In a short amount of time MDH Well Management staff was able to detect the well casing that was buried underground; two shovels of dirt later we were visually able identify the well! With this improperly sealed well only 35 feet from the city's operating well, the potential for contaminants to enter in the aquifer that the city utilizes for its drinking water supply was at risk. The city of Oklee continues to work with MDH Well Management program to ensure this well is properly sealed and removing the potential risk to drinking water quality.

MRWA staff also recently worked in cooperation with MDH Well Management staff from the Rochester office to locate and seal a former municipal well in the city of Le Center. MDH Well Management staff was instrumental in identifying potential locations for two former city wells near city hall by spending numerous hours reviewing in detail, MDH historical information and evaluating the site with the magnetometer locational equipment. Excavation of the site uncovered the two wells, and the city worked with MRWA Source Water Protection staff and Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District to apply for grants through the MDH Source Water Protection Unit and Clean Water Fund to successfully seal one of the former municipal wells, with the other planned for a future sealing project. By sealing the abandoned well, the city worked to protect their source of drinking water from contaminants that may directly enter the city's deep groundwater aquifer and negatively impact the drinking water quality.

This is only a couple of examples, although we could share many more across the State of Minnesota on the importance of the great work MDH Well Management Program has done in protecting drinking water.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Blair

Lori Blair
Executive Director
Minnesota Rural Water Association

