

Crook County Groundwater Summary

Date: August 19, 2025

Subject: Crook County Groundwater Summary

Groundwater Sampling and Data Collection

In response to concerns in Crook County over groundwater quality and sediment observed in drinking water from domestic wells, state agencies began coordinating with the governor's office in 2023 to better understand local conditions. Agencies recognized the need for more data to understand health risks and opted to fund a domestic well sampling effort. In November 2024, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hired an environmental consultant, Maul Foster and Alongi (MFA), to sample private drinking water wells in Crook County. Results from the study were mailed to landowners and residents in January and February of 2025. DEQ's consultants conducted a follow-up sampling event of many of the same wells and several new wells in April and May of 2025. In total, DEQ tested water samples for 43 analytes. The attached report includes data from both sampling events.

These two sampling events were designed to provide homeowners with drinking water quality information and to provide the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) with initial data to begin a health consultation. A health consultation is a written document comparing data about contaminant levels in water against levels known to cause harm to health. Neither sampling event was intended to identify the source of any contaminants found.

In the Fall of 2024, MFA collected samples from 55 private wells over a two-week period. In the Spring of 2025, MFA collected samples from 58 private wells, 52 of which were also sampled in the Fall of 2024. After each round of sampling, OHA notified individual households of results via email. Based on OHA's analysis, the sampling results showed the following and individualized support has been given to residents to address issues:

- 32 (55%) wells had manganese levels at or above EPA's secondary drinking water standards of 50 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) in the Spring of 2025, with a high of 464 $\mu\text{g/L}$. There were 28 (51%) wells with manganese at or above 50 $\mu\text{g/L}$, with a high of 414 $\mu\text{g/L}$, in the Fall of 2024. EPA's secondary drinking water standards provide guidelines for aesthetic considerations, such as taste, color, and odor. They are not indicative of a risk to human health.
- In both rounds of sampling, several wells had high levels of arsenic, and a few had concerning levels of vanadium.
- Nitrate concentrations were detected in nine wells in the Spring 2025 sampling event and 10 wells in the Fall 2024 event at levels slightly above the primary Maximum Contaminant Level, or MCL, of 10 milligrams per liter (mg/L), with a high of 20.73 mg/L .

- Lead was detected in samples from two households in Fall 2024, and from two different households in Spring 2025. There is no safe level of lead exposure. One household had copper at a level of health concern. However, the source both lead and copper in drinking water is typically from plumbing fixtures, and not from groundwater.
- In the Fall of 2024, 13 wells tested positive for total coliform bacteria. Of these households, only 4 still had coliform detections in the Spring of 2025. No new households tested positive in the second round, indicating that many households took action to address the sources of bacteria.
- The remaining analytes such as aluminum, fluoride and iron were detected, but not at levels posing a risk of harm to health.

Public Health Consultation

OHA communicated individual domestic well water sampling results to landowners and residents, and whether contaminants were present at levels known to harm health, after receiving each round of sampling results. OHA offered individual consultations with a toxicologist to every household; there were seven such requests after the first round of testing, and none after the second round. In Fall of 2025, OHA will use these water test results to complete a health consultation that assesses community-wide health risks based on the levels of various contaminants in domestic well water, including manganese, and provide recommendations to well users and other agencies to reduce exposure to contaminants. For additional information about the health consultation, please visit OHA's webpage www.oregon.gov/crookcowells.

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