

Using Surveillance Data to Target Private Well Testing

What was the problem/situation?

About 12% of NJ residents obtain their drinking water from private wells. There are no federal or state regulations assuring the quality of water from NJ's private wells, and private well owners are responsible for protecting and monitoring their own water quality.

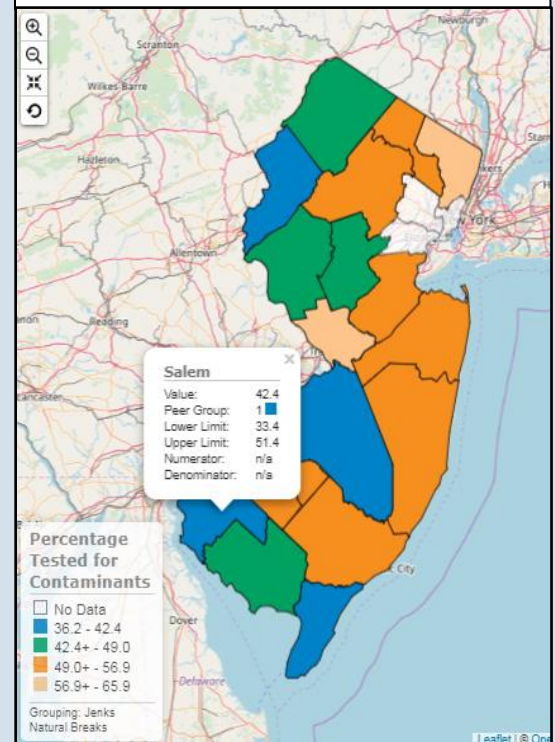


How was Tracking involved?

Working in partnership with Jessie Gleason, head of NJDOH's CDC-funded Private Well Cooperative Agreement, NJ Tracking funded and analyzed previously unavailable survey data on the usage and testing of NJ's private wells. [Summary private well data](#) were published at the county-level on the NJ Tracking data portal starting in 2016.

Using the newly available private well usage and testing data, Ms. Gleason identified Salem County as having one of the highest concentrations of residential private wells combined with the lowest percentages of tested wells. As stated by Ms. Gleason, "I'm always looking to identify communities in need of private well outreach and testing." During the summer of 2018, Ms. Gleason worked with Pittsgrove Township's Environmental Commission in Salem County to collect and test raw and treated water for 100 homes. Water was tested for gross alpha, nitrates and coliform by the NJDOH Laboratory.

Self-Reported Testing of Private Wells used for Drinking Water: Tested for Contamination within Last 2 Years, By County, 2014 - 2015



What action was taken to resolve the problem?

Results were mailed to all participants with individual guidance on recommended water treatment. Twenty-five tested households were found to be drinking water which exceeded the gross alpha maximum contaminant level (MCL) of 15 pCi/L; 12 were found to be drinking water which exceeded the nitrate MCL of 10mg/L; and 18 households had drinking water with detectable total coliform.

As stated by Ms. Gleason, “EPHT data allowed us to target a community in need of private well testing. We identified 43 families exposed to hazardous drinking water contaminants and have taken the first important step towards helping them reduce their exposure.”



NJSHAD serves as the main data portal for NJDOH, providing public access to data and information from the entire New Jersey Department of Health, and hosts datasets for the New Jersey Environmental Public Health Tracking (NJEPH) Program. NJSHAD provides static public health indicators which combine data and information, and dynamic custom public health query tools. The functionality, content, and utility of NJSHAD and the NJEPHT portal are constantly being enhanced.