



TINA KOTEK  
GOVERNOR

June 21, 2024

Concerned Residents and Ally Organizations  
c/o Oregon Rural Action  
P.O. Box 1231  
La Grande, OR 97850

Dear Oregon Rural Action and Letter Signatories,

Thank you for your recent letter about the health and safety of community members who rely on domestic wells for their drinking water in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA). The conversations we have had during my visits to the region to hear from community members have been substantive and informative. As I have said during those visits, my administration is committed to addressing the significant concerns to safe drinking water in the near term as well as making progress towards long-term solutions. I was pleased to be joined by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Administrator Casey Sixkiller and Senator Jeff Merkley during my most recent visit so we could hear first-hand about the progress that has been made over the past year, as well as discuss the additional work that will need to happen.

Nitrate contamination of rural, private drinking water is an issue that states across the nation are facing. The State of Oregon is working closely with the EPA on both short and long-term solutions to providing safe drinking water and remediation of the underlying aquifer contamination. I can assure you that state agencies will continue to partner and collaborate with community-based organizations like Oregon Rural Action and others as this work continues.

Over the past year and a half, the State has activated a comprehensive and unprecedented well testing, water delivery, and water filtration installation program. Last spring, I set a goal for the State to offer free well testing to all households in the LUBGWMA and subsequent water delivery and treatment installation resources. Thanks to partnership with community-based organizations, summer canvassing efforts during the last year, and ongoing outreach via mail and phone, the State has identified the domestic wells at risk in the LUBGWMA, has tested over half of those wells, and has contacted each of those identified households to offer testing at least three times over the past year.

Much of this work is being organized and led by the Oregon Health Authority. Below is a list of actions I am directing OHA Director Dr. Sejal Hathi to implement within the agency with regard to their testing, water delivery, and filtration plans:

254 STATE CAPITOL, SALEM OR 97301-4047 (503) 378-3111 FAX (503) 378-8970

[WWW.GOVERNOR.OREGON.GOV](http://WWW.GOVERNOR.OREGON.GOV)

- By July 31, 2024, post a map presenting well test results in a format that protects privacy of individual households to [testmywell.oregon.gov](https://testmywell.oregon.gov) and [pruebadepozo.oregon.gov](https://pruebadepozo.oregon.gov).
- Complete testing of 30% of wells that remain untested due to various reasons by June 30, 2025, with the understanding that domestic well testing is not compulsory and therefore some residents may continue to opt out of testing.
- By September 30, 2024, complete at-home nitrate test strip mailings to all untested households to encourage residents to access free well water laboratory testing.
- By June 30, 2025, complete quarterly well water re-testing of 75% of households identified as being at highest risk of exceeding 10 mg/L nitrate (i.e., households between 5mg/L-9.99mg/L) and maintain this completion rate as new households are identified in this range.
- For households with treatable levels of nitrate that are awaiting installation of end-of-kitchen-tap reverse osmosis systems as of June 30, 2024, reduce the installation backlog by 50% by December 31, 2024, and by 100% by June 30, 2025. These are households with nitrate at or above the Environmental Protection Agency maximum contaminant level of 10mg/L up to 25 mg/L nitrate.
- By September 20, 2024, OHA and the Oregon Department of Human Services will complete and report out on surveys of all households receiving water deliveries as of June 30, 2024, to confirm their needs are being met, and will continue to survey households at least twice yearly to ensure ongoing needs are met for these and newly added households.

The involved state agencies are currently working directly with the EPA on developing a comprehensive state plan to outline the work that each agency has already activated and plans for future actions to address the nitrate contamination in the LUBGWMA. This plan will also incorporate recommendations from the local LUBGWMA committee that were developed through the LUBGWMA committee second “Action Plan.” The agencies expect to release this plan outlining future actions later this summer. In the meantime, I expect federal and state agencies to continue to work on new strategies to address long-term remediation needs. Our partnership with the EPA is immensely valuable in this regard as we look at how other states are working to address what is a nationwide concern for which there is no easy or quick solution.

Again, thank you for your letter, and please expect follow-up communication from Director Hathi with more specific information about the plans to achieve my expectations in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina Kotek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tina" and last name "Kotek" clearly distinguishable.

Governor Tina Kotek