

February 15, 2019 – Letter to the Editor of the New Paltz Times

Attention- Homeowners with wells

New Paltz is one of many towns in New York where most residents rely on private wells for their water supply. Whereas public water supplies are routinely monitored by water utility companies as part of their service, private well owners are responsible for the safety of their water.

With the above in mind, the Town of New Paltz Environmental Conservation Board (EnCB) recommends that homeowners regularly test private wells, particularly in households with small children or elderly adults or if someone is pregnant or nursing. There are three certified drinking water laboratories in Ulster County: Kingston Water Department Lab Inc. (Kingston), Environmental Labworks, Inc. (Marlboro) and Gentech Environmental Services (Stone Ridge).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that private wells be tested annually for total coliform bacteria, nitrates, total dissolved solids, and pH levels. If you suspect the presence of other contaminants, you should test for those also. EPA has identified common conditions or nearby activities that well owners should be aware of and the substance(s) that should be tested for to ensure well safety (see: <https://www.epa.gov/privatewells/protect-your-homes-water#welltestanchor>). If you are concerned that your drinking water well may have been contaminated after a flood or another natural disaster, contact the Ulster County Health Department or New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for additional advice on inspecting and testing your well.

Protecting your water supply by carefully managing activities near the water source is a key step toward ensuring the quality of your drinking water. This includes keeping contaminants away from the well itself, keeping hazardous chemicals out of septic systems and not mixing or using pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, degreasers, fuels, and other pollutants near the well. You should also regularly check the integrity of any above ground and underground storage tanks that hold home heating oil, diesel, or gasoline on your property. Additional information about maintenance of drinking water wells appears on the Ulster County Cornell Cooperative Extension website at: <http://ulster.cce.cornell.edu/environment/emergency-preparedness/water-septic-issues>.

In a related matter, the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA) offers three free Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events per year as a safe and convenient way for Ulster County households to dispose of hazardous materials. Dates for collection events in 2019 will be posted on UCRRA's website at: <http://www.ucrra.org/household-hazardous-waste>.

Clean water is essential for good health. The EnCB wishes all New Paltz residents a happy and healthy 2019!

-Town of New Paltz Environmental Conservation Board