

Sentinel & Enterprise

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Editorial: Taking steps to ensure safety of water from private wells

In just another reminder of the pervasive health impacts of PFAS, the recently signed state budget includes funding to help determine the safety of drinking water from private wells.

Hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts residents get their drinking water independent of municipal systems, which means they may contain toxic substances, including PFAS, arsenic, radon, and uranium.

We already have learned that due to PFAS contamination levels in our lakes, rivers, streams and other waterways, the state has advised avoiding – or at least greatly limiting — consumption of fish caught in those bodies of fresh water.

PFAS, manmade chemicals that remain environmental hazards long after their industrial utility, don't break down naturally over time. That trait, as well as the ubiquity of their applications, poses innumerable health risks.

According to a news release sent from the Coalition for Safe Drinking Water, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) will receive \$100,000 toward a study designed for the creation of a statewide program to determine well water's potability.

Unlike public water systems, private wells aren't required to be regulated or tested, leaving users at risk for exposure to dangerous substances and susceptible to illness. A new state regulatory program would provide guidance and standards.

"Safe drinking water is something many of us take for granted, yet the reality is that nearly half a million Massachusetts residents rely on unregulated drinking water from private wells that could be contaminated and potentially cause negative health impacts," said Amie Shei, PhD, president and CEO of The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts.

"Ensuring the safety and health of our homeowners throughout the Commonwealth is vital," added Brian D. Scales, president and CEO of RCAP Solutions. "... Clean, safe water should be a fundamental right for every homeowner."

RCAP Solutions and The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts have partnered to improve access to safe drinking water for owners of private wells.

Results from over 500 water quality tests at private wells statewide showed that approximately 32% of them had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks.

We advise households relying on private wells to avail themselves of this testing service.