



CSREES New England Region Water Quality Program

Applying knowledge to improve water quality

Cooperative Extension
in New England

- Research
- Education
- Extension

"The Private Well Initiative educational materials are valuable to both the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension programming as well as local and state Health Departments."

Karen Filchak,
University of Connecticut
Cooperative Extension

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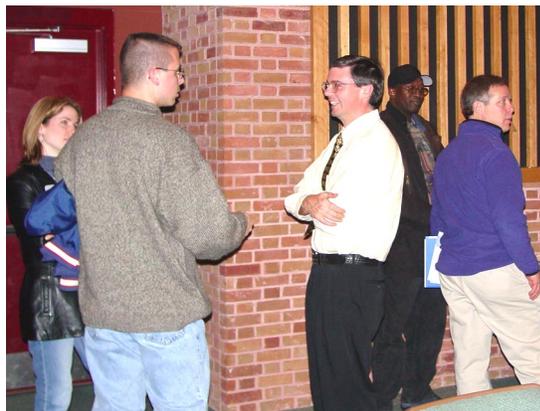


New England Private Well Initiative

The Private Well Initiative teaches New England private well owners how to test and adequately treat their well water as well as assess and prevent water quality contamination around their homes. The Initiative is a partnership with the CSREES New England Water Quality Program, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency New England (EPA New England) and state drinking water agencies.

Situation

The health and livelihood of New Englanders depends on the availability of a safe drinking water supply. Even though 20% of New Englanders drink water from private wells, it is a water source that is not regulated to the extent that public drinking water supplies are. Private well owners are responsible for the quality of their own drinking water. They need to be aware of potential contamination risks to their wells and how to protect against these risks. Changing property laws and regulations have created an increased demand for well water testing. As a result, more private well owners are demanding well water testing information.



Residents at a private well workshop in Rhode Island discuss their private well concerns with Richard Amirault of the RI Department of Health.

Actions

The Private Well Initiative is bridging the gap to provide information about risks and protection to private well owners throughout New England.

A cooperative agreement with EPA New England, initiated in 2001, provided funding to the CSREES New England Water Quality Program for the production of educational materials. These materials include:

- A set of 26 fact sheets on the topic of drinking water testing, contaminants, and treatment methods. These fact sheets have been developed for Rhode Island, with funding provided to URI Cooperative Extension by RI HEALTH, and are being revised and updated by each state. The Rhode Island fact sheets are available online at http://www.uri.edu/ce/wq/has/html/has_well_facts.html and are distributed to private well owners at monthly Private Well Protection Workshops in Rhode Island.
- One groundwater demonstration model for each state and a groundwater educational handbook. A groundwater poster for youth is under development. At the University of Maine, the groundwater model was used as part of the Maine Children's Water Festival, attended by over six hundred 5th and 6th graders.
- Private well testing brochure and display stand to be distributed in public places throughout New England, including libraries, town halls, doctor's offices and health clinics, and other public places.

"This Private Well protection workshop has given me access to the information that I need to test and protect my private well."

RI resident

www.usawaterquality.org/newengland

New England Private Well Initiative relates to CSREES National Themes:

Drinking Water and Human Health, Pollution Assessment and Prevention, Watershed Management

For contacts go to: http://www.usawaterquality.org/newengland/newq_contacts.html

USDA CSREES National Water Quality Program: Drinking Water and Human Health Theme <http://www.usawaterquality.org/themes/health/>

EPA New England Drinking Water Program: <http://www.epa.gov/region01/eco/drinkwater/>

This project would not have been possible without the collaboration of CSREES New England, EPA New England and our state drinking water agency partners.

The CSREES New England Regional Water Quality Program works to improve water quality management through educational knowledge and extension programming that emerges from a research base. The program builds on the strengths of the Extension Water Quality Programs at the Land Grant Universities throughout New England. Partners in this regional program are equal opportunity providers and employers.

CSREES is the Cooperative States Research, Education and Extension Service, a sub-agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, and is the federal partner in this water quality program.

Impacts

- Education of private well owners on drinking water testing, contamination, and treatment methods.
- Valuable partnership between the CSREES New England Water Quality Program and EPA New England. This partnership is important to extension programs in each state, creating more opportunities for funding and allowing states to leverage existing resources.
- Strengthening New England residential pollution prevention programs with the addition of new educational materials.
- New partnerships and increased communication within each of the New England states between extension programs and various agencies and organizations, which have led to additional positive outcomes. In Maine a new partnership with the Maine Bureau of Health and Environmental Toxicology has led to the formation of a "private well listserve" with Extension, Toxicologists, the Drinking Water Program, and various specialists in State Government.
- The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension received a Planning Grant from New England Extension Directors to conduct a needs survey and hold a planning meeting to identify gaps in educational programming throughout New England for private well owners.



Workshop participants learn first hand about proper well construction techniques.

"The New England Private Well Initiative has illustrated the importance of Federal agencies and the Land Grant Universities working in partnership to achieve a common goal. Private well issues in New England are challenging and complex, requiring innovative and creative solutions which we are developing together."

Jane Downing,
Associate Director of Drinking Water,
EPA New England.

