



## **USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference**

### [Montana Well Test Program: Public Water Quality Program Model](#)

Population growth in suburbs and exurbs of the western United States has resulted in accelerated drilling rates of new private drinking water wells. In response to this trend, Montana State University (MSU) Extension Water Quality offered the first Montana Well Test Program (MWTP) in 1989. MWTP has been offered a number of times since, most recently in the spring of 2005. The 2005 MWTP targeted 15 Montana counties with the largest number of new wells in 2004 and attracted 375 participants. MWTP is a service to Montana well owners which provides affordable well testing services accompanied by test result interpretation and educational materials outlining water quality related health concerns, well water monitoring/maintenance suggestions, and explanations of well owner responsibilities to protect ground water resources. MWTP also produces a data source for use at the county level to assist with local ground water quality inventories.

MWTP functions through the interaction of 4 components: 1) MSU Extension Water Quality which is the instigating, organizing and overseeing entity; 2) county facilitators (county extension agents, health department employees and water quality district personnel) who advertise, answer questions, and distribute sample kits at the local level; 3) a drinking water testing laboratory which provides reliable test results at a competitive cost; 4) well owners.

2005 MWTP preliminary feedback has been positive, and an official survey distributed to both facilitators and participants in August 2005 will provide an assessment of MWTP to assist in future program design. MWTP has proven a beneficial service for Montana residents and could provide a useful model for other states or groups interested in the logistics of conducting similar programs.

Author: Adam Sigler

Coauthor(s): James W. Bauder