



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **National Groundwater Awareness Week is March 11-17, 2012**

Des Moines, Iowa – February 23, 2012 – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is teaming-up with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), the National Groundwater Association (NGWA) and the Iowa Water Well Association (IWWA) to remind everyone that National Groundwater Awareness Week will be observed the week of March 11 – 17, 2012. National Groundwater Awareness Week emphasizes the importance of ground water as a valuable resource and also stresses the need for yearly water testing and well and water system maintenance to prevent waterborne illness.

Water supply wells are used to tap groundwater aquifers that flow beneath the earth's surface. Nationally, nearly one half of all of the population obtains their water from groundwater sources. In Iowa, approximately 68 percent of the population obtains their water from groundwater sources. In fact, regardless of where you obtain your water supply, it is likely that each day, you consume water that comes from a groundwater source – even if you drink bottled water. This makes groundwater an important resource for all of us.

Private water wells are used by many homeowners to access the groundwater needed to provide good living conditions. Even though we depend on wells to meet our water needs, they can often be overlooked regarding the actual maintenance and testing they require. This is because there is a misconception that “as long as water flows from the tap, the well and water system must be working just fine.” Every well owner should understand the maintenance needs of their water system. Just as you would check your furnace and smoke detectors on a seasonal basis, your water system should have a checkup at least once a year to make sure that the entire system is operating properly and providing safe drinking water.

According to the National Ground Water Association (NGWA), spring is a good season to have an annual water system checkup - before the peak summer water use season begins.

### **Why is it a good idea to have my water well checked annually?**

An annual checkup performed by an IDNR Certified Water Well Contractor is the best way to ensure that your well and water system continues to provide problem-free service and the highest quality of water possible.

It is important to remember that preventative maintenance usually cost less than emergency maintenance. Good preventive well maintenance—like good car maintenance—can prolong the life of your investment and save your family money, time and inconvenience.

The NGWA, IWWA, IDPH and IDNR all recommend that you inspect and test your private water supply on an annual basis, and any time you notice a change in the water's taste, odor or appearance, or when the well, water treatment system, or water distribution system is serviced or repaired.

### **Schedule your annual water well checkup**

Because your water supply is a valuable resource, it is important to remember that well ownership comes with the responsibility of keeping the well and water system in good working order. Help in determining the safety of your well and groundwater supply is as simple as having a certified well contractor perform a well and water system "check-up."

A well and water system check-up may include:

- A flow test to determine system output, along with a check of the water level before and during pumping (if possible), pump motor performance (check amp load, grounding, and line voltage), pressure tank air charge and condition, setting the pressure switch and inspecting switch contacts, and basic water quality indicators (odor, cloudiness, sediment, etc.)
- Inspections on the visible components of the well and water distribution system to help ensure that all equipment is in good condition and working as designed, the necessary sanitary measures are managed, and the installation meets state and local codes.
- Inspection of all water treatment devices to ensure they are working properly.
- A test of your water to look for coliform bacteria and nitrates, and any other contaminants that may be of local concern. Additional testing may include iron, manganese, water hardness, sulfides, radium, and arsenic, and possibly other contaminants that may increase health risks or cause problems with plumbing, staining of fixtures and clothing, and cause appearance and odor problems.
- And well chlorination to help ensure that the well and water distribution systems are fully sanitized to destroy any bacteria that may be present.

Well owners are also strongly encouraged to:

- Obtain a copy of the IDNR private well consumer information booklet titled "Non-Public Water Wells and Water Systems" and become familiar with the many aspects of well installation and well management.
- Plug all unneeded wells on your property. Unneeded wells can easily fall into disrepair and cause water quality issues with the well(s) you are still using. Unneeded or abandoned wells can also pose a serious safety risk for people, pets, livestock and wildlife.
- Keep containers of hazardous chemicals, such as paint, fertilizer, pesticides, gasoline and motor oil far away from your well, and maintain a "clean zone" of at least 100 feet between the well and all hazardous chemical mixing and storage sites, kennels, livestock operations, and wastewater/septic systems.
- Maintain proper separation between your well and any buildings, above and below grade fuel storage tanks and areas of auto and farm equipment repair.
- Periodically check the well cover and/or well cap on top of the casing (well) to ensure it is in good repair and securely attached. The top of the well and well cap should keep out insects, rodents, surface water, groundwater and precipitation.
- Keep all well records in a safe place, including your construction log/report, and annual well system maintenance and water testing results.

- And develop a relationship with a professional well contractor who is certified in Iowa to perform well services. This will help ensure that you will have an expert resource to turn to if you have well questions or problems.

**For more information:** You can contact your local IDNR Certified Well Contractor, your local County Environmental Health Sanitarian, the Iowa Department of Public Health, or the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

[Click here for information regarding the Iowa DNR Private Well Program](#)

[Click here for help finding Iowa DNR Certified Well Contractors](#)

[Click here for contact information for your local County Environmental Health Sanitarian](#)

[Click here for information on drinking water from the Iowa Department of Public Health](#)

[Click here for information regarding the Iowa Water Well Association](#)

[Click here for information regarding the National Ground Water Association](#)

### **Additional Resources**

[United States Environmental Protection Agency](#)

[United States Centers of Disease Control](#)

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