



# Summary of Nonpublic Household Water Well Project Recommendations:

## Improving and Protecting Water Well Quality

Thousands of Kansans rely on nonpublic water wells for their household, including providing water for drinking, cooking, bathing, household pets, and cleaning purposes. While approximately 70,000 nonpublic wells are registered in the state of Kansas to provide household water, the quality of the water is not guaranteed and may be contaminated from a range of environmental, industrial, and agricultural contaminants. Contamination of nonpublic water wells is far too common, and most well users are unaware that their water is not safe.

There are few protections at the state or local level to ensure that water from nonpublic water wells is safe. The recommendations (next page) seek to address this problem by providing concrete steps that, if taken, would provide increased protections for Kansans relying on nonpublic water wells for household use.

### Project Background

The recommendations included here were compiled as part of the Nonpublic Household Water Well Project, a three-year project led by the Department of Preventive Medicine & Public Health at the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita (KUSM-W), in partnership with the Public Health Law Center, and funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. The purpose was to identify promising practices that could protect Kansans relying on nonpublic water wells for household purposes. The project team included public health and legal professionals with experience working on groundwater quality issues impacting nonpublic water wells in Kansas.

### Research Process

The recommendations were identified through the following research and analysis processes:

- Review and analysis of Kansas state laws and county sanitary codes;
- Representative sampling and review of 24 Kansas city codes;
- Literature review to identify best practices in water quality management for nonpublic water wells;
- Dozens of key informant interviews to develop and evaluate proposed recommendations;
- A survey of more than 100 Kansas stakeholders to determine public health significance, feasibility of, and potential funding sources of proposed recommendations; and

- A survey of stakeholders to identify which organizations need to lead the implementation of each recommendation.

### Key Partners and Organizations

The following organizations and partners contributed to the project by participating in key informant interviews, completing surveys, and/or providing feedback and technical assistance.

- Environmental Finance Center
- Groundwater Management Districts
- Kansas Association of Counties (KAC)
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)
- Kansas Environmental Health Association (KEHA)
- Kansas Farm Bureau
- Kansas Farmers' Union
- Kansas Geological Survey (KGS)
- Kansas Ground Water Association
- Kansas Legislature
- Kansas Public Health Association (KPHA)
- Kansas Rural Water Association
- Kansas State University (KSU)
- Kansas Water Office (KWO)
- Kansas Water Resources Initiative
- KDHE Certified Laboratories (Labs)
- League of Kansas Municipalities (KLM)
- Local Environmental Health Professionals (LEHP)
- Midwest Assistance Program
- Regional Advisory Committees
- United States Department of Agriculture-Rural Development
- Water Well Contractors and Drillers
- Water Well Owners and Users



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## Nonpublic Household Water Well Project Recommendations

The following recommendations are organized according to the potential impact each recommendation could have on protecting public health, from greatest impact to least impact, as reported by survey respondents. The first recommendation was not ranked as the first priority; however, it is likely the first step that needs to happen chronologically.

#	Recommendations	Key Organizations/Lead Entities
1	Create a “Nonpublic Household Water Well” designation	KDA, KDHE, KWO, Legislature
2	Provide notice when specific groundwater contamination is found and when there is an event potentially impacting groundwater quality	KDHE, Legislature, LEHP
3	Establish triggering events to inspect wells and test water quality	KDHE, LEHP
4	Develop standardized water sampling and analysis protocol and form	KDHE, Labs, LEHP
5	Create a statewide group focused on advancing nonpublic water well quality	KDA, KDHE, KWO, Legislature
6	Revise the Kansas Dry Cleaner Environmental Response Act	KDHE, Legislature
7	Limit the use of some nonpublic household water wells	KDHE, KWO, Legislature, LEHP
8	Create funding mechanisms to offset costs of inspection, water quality testing, corrective action, and/or plugging of nonpublic water wells for those unable to pay	KDA, KDHE, KWO, Legislature
9	Establish a three-part process: permitting, inspection, and water quality testing	KDHE, KEHA, Labs, LEHP
10	Standardize environmental health professionals’ training	KDHE, KEHA, LEHP
11	Track and provide information about abandoned wells in property transactions	KDHE, LEHP
12	Create standards to determine when connecting to a public water supply must be required	KAC, KDHE, KWO, Legislature, LEHP
13	Establish frequency of inspection and water quality testing after initial triggering event	KDHE, LEHP
14	Establish licensing requirement for the installation of water well pumps	KDHE, LEHP, Water Well Contractor/Driller
15	Update key nonpublic water well resources	KDHE, KGS, KWO, LEHP
16	Develop remediation training and certification standards	KDHE, KEHA
17	Update county sanitary codes	KAC, KDHE, LEHP
18	Assess interest in water well maintenance subscription service	KDA, KDHE, KEHA, KWO, LEHP, Water Well Contractor/Driller

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