



# BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Yakima County Reassures Residents Regarding Efforts to Ensure Safe Drinking Water in the Lower Yakima Valley**

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YAKIMA – Yakima County is committed to protecting the health and safety of its residents and wishes to reassure the community regarding a recent U.S. District Court ruling concerning nitrate contamination in groundwater within the Lower Yakima Valley.

**Longstanding Efforts to Address Nitrate Concerns** Yakima County has been actively addressing elevated nitrates in partnership with the Washington State Department of Health, the Yakima Health District, and the Washington State Department of Ecology for a decade. Through the Lower Yakima Valley Groundwater Management Area (LYV GWMA) work and recently through the Safe Drinking Water Initiative, Yakima County has offered extensive well testing, free bottled water or in-home reverse-osmosis (R-O) filtration systems for affected residents.

Direct outreach to residents has been key to the efforts.

“We’ve reached out to Lower Valley households who obtain their drinking water from private or shared wells using every available means,” stated District 3 Commissioner LaDon Linde. “In addition to direct mail, phone calls, advertising and an open house, we’ve deployed a robust door to door outreach team to ensure households that qualify for free well testing and related services receive a notice and have the opportunity to participate in our program.”



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Since the inception of these initiatives, hundreds of residents have received support to ensure their drinking water is safe.

**Clarity on the Recent Federal Court Ruling** The U.S. District Court's recent order for three dairies in the Granger area to test residential wells and provide alternative drinking water reinforces the importance of coordinated efforts to avoid duplication of services and confusion.

"In my opinion the EPA, using the DOJ, has very unnecessarily caused alarm within our community and threatens the confidence that our residents have in the strong, existing collaborative efforts between Yakima County, the Yakima Health District, the State Department of Health and the State Department of Ecology," stated District 1 Commissioner Amanda McKinney. "It is especially egregious in my opinion, given that there are zero reported cases of blue baby syndrome (methemoglobinemia) in Yakima County or Washington State attributed to nitrate contamination."

Further, thanks to local and state collaboration, households in the surrounding area have already been offered:

- **Free well testing** for nitrate and coliform bacteria through the LYV GWMA Safe Drinking Water Initiative.
- **In-home R-O treatment systems** for wells with nitrate levels above the EPA's health standard of 10 mg/L, along with free maintenance for the first year.
- **Educational resources** to help residents understand and mitigate risks associated with nitrate contamination.

**Collaboration and Partnership** Yakima County's existing partnerships have demonstrated progress in addressing nitrate contamination. While the recent federal actions underscore the importance of this issue, they should not diminish public confidence in the robust systems already in place to assist residents. Yakima County's focus remains on science-based solutions and proactive community support.

"Yakima County remains steadfast in its commitment to addressing groundwater safety using a community-driven, fact-based approach," concluded District 2 Commissioner Kyle Curtis. "Together with our partners, we will continue working to address elevated nitrates in groundwater and provide the necessary resources to help protect our communities."

**Information and Assistance** For more information about the work being conducted in the Lower Yakima Valley, please visit [Yakima County's GWMA webpage](#) or call the Nitrate Hotline at 1-866-886-7117 for information about well testing and available resources.

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