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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media
From: Joel Kwiatkowski, Environmental Health Manager – Bay County Health Department
Date: March 6, 2023
Re: **Bay County Health Department Acknowledges National Groundwater Awareness Week**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN – National Groundwater Awareness Week is an annual observance to highlight the responsible development, management, and use of groundwater. The event also encourages yearly water well testing, well maintenance, and the promotion of policies impacting groundwater quality and supply.

The Bay County Health Department (BCHD) recommends annual testing of wells for coliform bacteria and E. coli and can perform these types of testing. If a well is located less than 50 feet to either a drain field or septic tank, the well should be sampled more frequently for coliform, E. coli., nitrate, nitrite to ensure that it does not become contaminated.

If you are looking to test for any or all of the following constituents: fluoride, iron, sodium, manganese, chloride, sulfate, nitrate, nitrite, hardness, VOCs, arsenic, pesticides, or herbicides, the State of Michigan Laboratory can perform these tests. You can contact the State of Michigan Lab at (517) 335-8184 to obtain the proper sampling kits. The well owner will receive the kit in the mail, collect the sample, and then either mail it back to Lansing or take it to another lab that can perform these tests.

Any old wells that are no longer in use must be plugged by a licensed well driller. Old, unused wells act as a direct conduit to a groundwater aquifer and can leach contaminants over time, especially as the well casing degrades over time. This is a significant concern if the old well is located close to a farm field or a septic system.

If a homeowner has a well but connects to the municipal water supply, the well must be plugged for the reason stated above, or kept in use as an irrigation well. If it is kept in use, the distribution lines must be isolated from the municipal supply as a means to prevent backflow.

To learn more about Michigan's groundwater usage, visit: <https://www.ngwa.org/connect-with-your-state/State-Resources/Michigan>. To learn about the state's laboratory services, visit the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy website: <https://www.michigan.gov/eglelab>. Bay County residents are now able to view historical data related to their well and septic system by accessing the FetchGIS application: <https://app.fetchgis.com/bayEHpublic>.

If you have questions about well systems, testing, or inspections, please contact BCHD's Environmental Health staff at (989) 895-4006, Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm.

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