



OREGON STATE PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Office of the State Public Health Director

Kate Brown, Governor

Oregon
Health
Authority

800 NE Oregon Street, Suite 930
Portland, OR 97232
Phone: 971.673.1229
Fax: 971.673.1299

December 22, 2021

Mr. Jeff KenKnight
Chief, Water Enforcement and Field
Branch
Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division
Environmental Protection Agency Region X
1200 Sixth Avenue, Ste. 155, 20-C04
Seattle, WA 98101

RE: January 16, 2020, Petition to EPA for Emergency Action Pursuant to Safe Drinking Water Act Section 1431 to Address Nitrate in LUBGWMA in North Central Oregon

Dear Mr. KenKnight:

This letter is in follow up to recent communication between the Environmental Protection Agency Region X (EPA), Oregon Health Authority (OHA), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) regarding Oregon's activities to protect public health from nitrate contamination in underground sources of drinking water and particularly private domestic wells in the Lower Umatilla Basin Ground Water Management Area (LUBGWMA). Thank you for the continued conversation as EPA seeks to understand the activities the state's agencies are taking, and plan to take, to protect public health in the LUBGWMA.

OHA estimates there are approximately 4,500 domestic wells in LUBGWMA, serving an estimated 12,000 household members. The demographics of the area tend to be, compared to the state, more ethnically diverse, with higher representation of American Indian/Alaska Native populations and with a higher poverty rate. Oregon's state agencies take seriously the effect high nitrate levels in drinking water have on the health of communities in the LUBGWMA, and we are committed to protecting vulnerable and disproportionately affected communities from exposure to contaminated drinking water.

To better protect the public's health, OHA along with DEQ and ODA have developed a workplan to address exposures to nitrate contamination in underground drinking water sources and private domestic wells. Activities we are committed to include better identifying nitrate contaminated private wells and the people using those wells, communicating the risks of exposure to affected private well owners and users, facilitating private well testing and reducing the risk of exposure to those well users. Additionally, the work plan includes activities to mitigate high levels of nitrates and protect the public health from exposure to those sources. Please find attached the "State of Oregon Workplan: Protecting Public Health from Nitrate Exposure in the Lower Umatilla Ground Water Management Area." Some of the activities in the workplan can be accomplished using available resources, however some activities are contingent

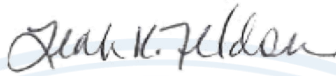
on future resourcing and support. The agencies are committed to pursuing the resources needed to implement the activities in the workplan.

If you wish to discuss the workplan or have any questions, please contact André Ourso, Administrator, Center for Health Protection, Public Health Division at (971) 325-5370, andre.ourso@dhsosha.state.or.us.

Sincerely,



Rachael Banks, MPA
Public Health Director
Oregon Health Authority



Leah Feldon
Deputy Director
Oregon Department of
Environmental Quality



Lauren Henderson
Deputy Director
Oregon Department of
Agriculture

