

Spring is the Season for Water Testing

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Does your household get water from a well or directly from the lake? If so, you're not alone – many residents in the Skaneateles Lake Watershed do not have public water. It is important to note, however, that with a private water supply comes responsibility. Unlike municipal water supplies (which are tested and treated to ensure specific chemical, microbiological, and aesthetic standards before the water comes out of the faucet), the safety and quality of the water drawn from a private supply is in your hands.

Well water that is used for drinking should be tested regularly. Because your well draws upon water that is in the soil, the best time to test the water for contaminants is in the spring or fall when the ground is saturated. If you draw water from the lake, it is important to know what kinds of treatment devices are needed. It was once said, "Water links us to our neighbor in a way more profound and complex than any other." This is especially true in the way that the impacts of pollutants are shared within a watershed.

Groundwater is not confined by property lines, and so neighbors do not use and maintain their own "water tables." When you draw upon the groundwater for your lawn sprinkler, this is also your neighbor's groundwater. When a neighbor's septic tank leaks bacteria into their backyard, this is also your groundwater. Every well shaft is a gateway to the groundwater that is shared in our watershed. Unprotected wellheads and damaged well casings are entry points that allow decaying vegetation, pet waste, yard chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, and storm water pollutants to contact the water we drink. Testing your well water for bacteria can help you assess the safety of your drinking water. Test results can also be used to help you identify and remedy any sources of contamination that comes from your property. Lastly, water tests can help determine your potential need for filtration or disinfection devices.