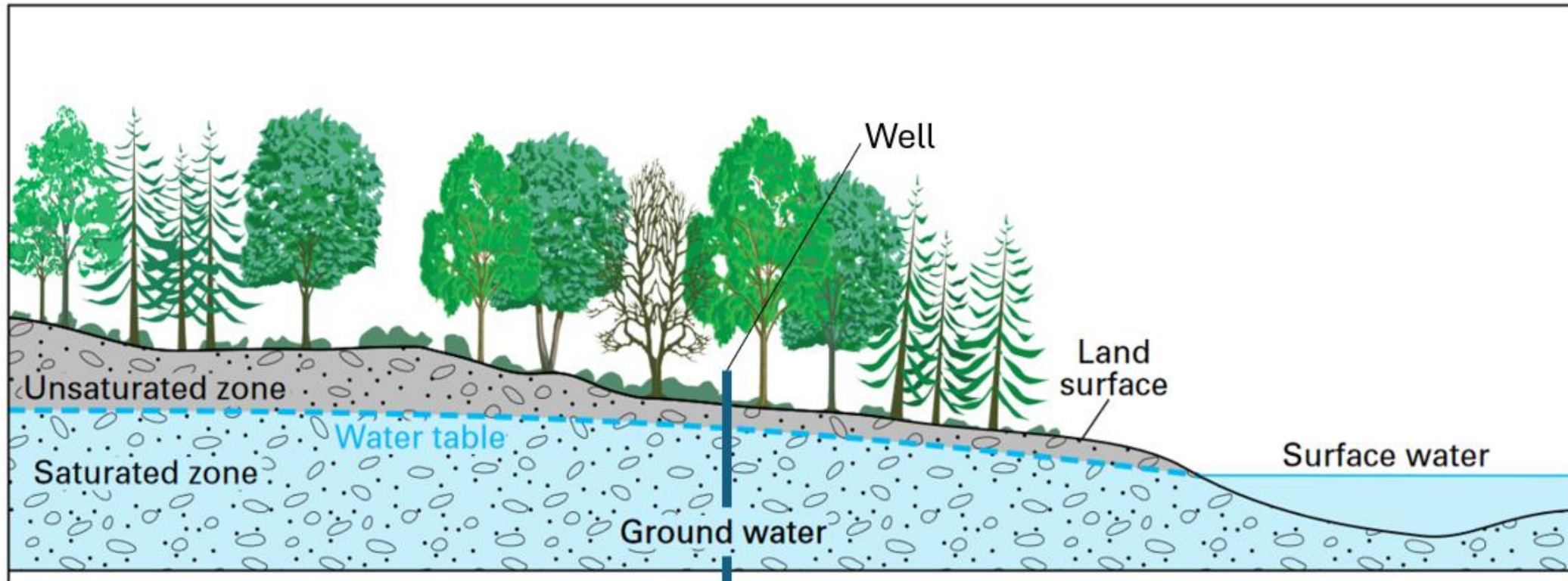




Chester Safe Drinking Water Community Listening Session

November 12, 2025 – 5:30 – 7:30 pm at the Chester Town Hall

Typical sources of drinking water



- **260 households** (34%) on **Town Water**, which draws from Horn Pond and Austin Brook
- Also **500 private wells** in Chester (66%)



Chester Water District Public Water Supply

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- **Chester Board of Water Commissioners**

Jim Zimmerman, Chair

Bob Daley

Lora Wade

- **Chester Board of Health**

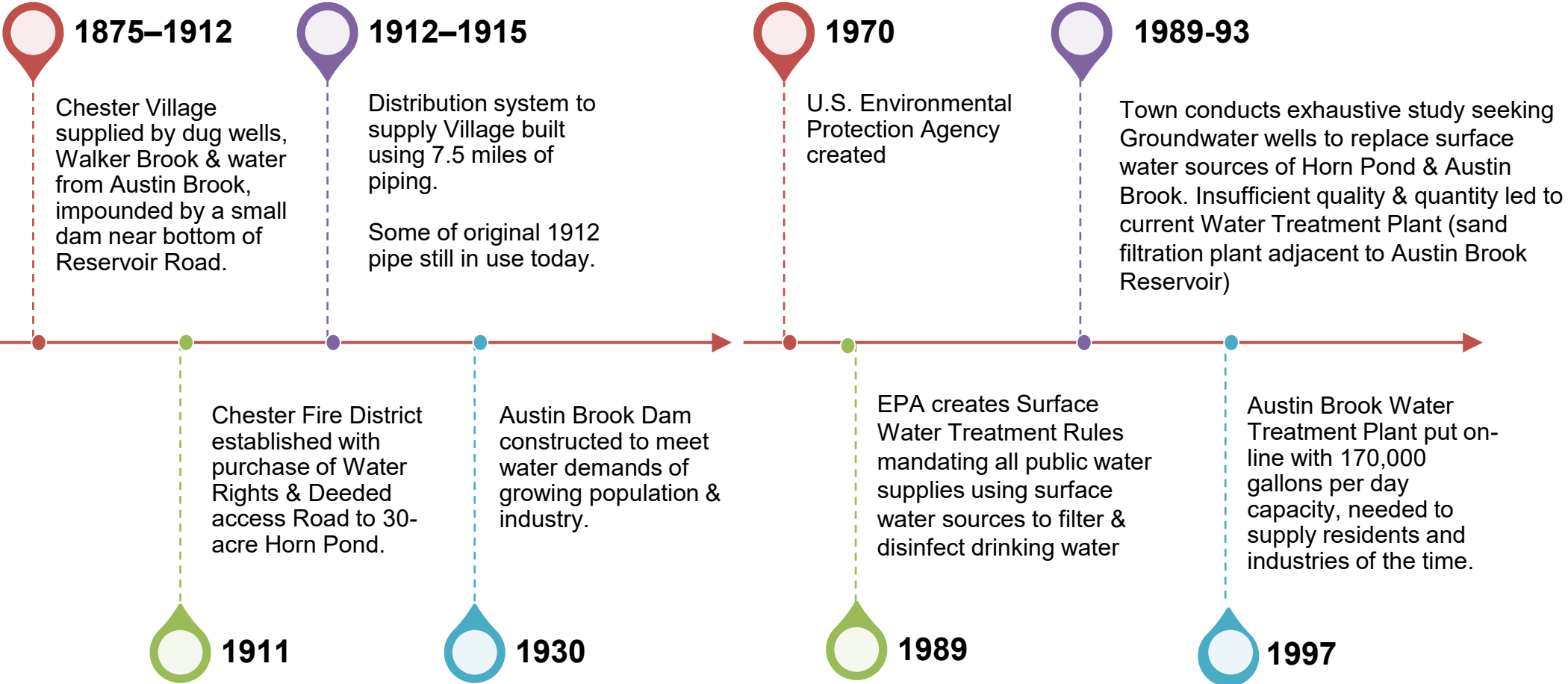
Nicholas Chiusano, Chair

Evie Martensen

Elizabeth Massa

Chester Water District

History



Chester Water District History (cont.)

- **1997-2025**
 - **Discolored water challenges** (caused by Iron and Manganese) have been present on & off since 1997.
 - With extremes of drought and downpours, wash of more organic material into both source waters, raising Total Organic Carbon (TOC). Water when treated with chlorine for disinfection, reacts with these organics to create Disinfection By-Product (DBP – i.e. THM & HAAC5, both known carcinogens)
- **2022-2025**
 - Current Water Commission created. Operator succession plan, including creation of Apprentice Program partnering w/ Gateway Regional School District & Springfield Technical Community College
 - **2024** Expanded shared operator cross-training of groundwater operations with Huntington



Chester Water District

Infrastructure & Capacity



Water sources:

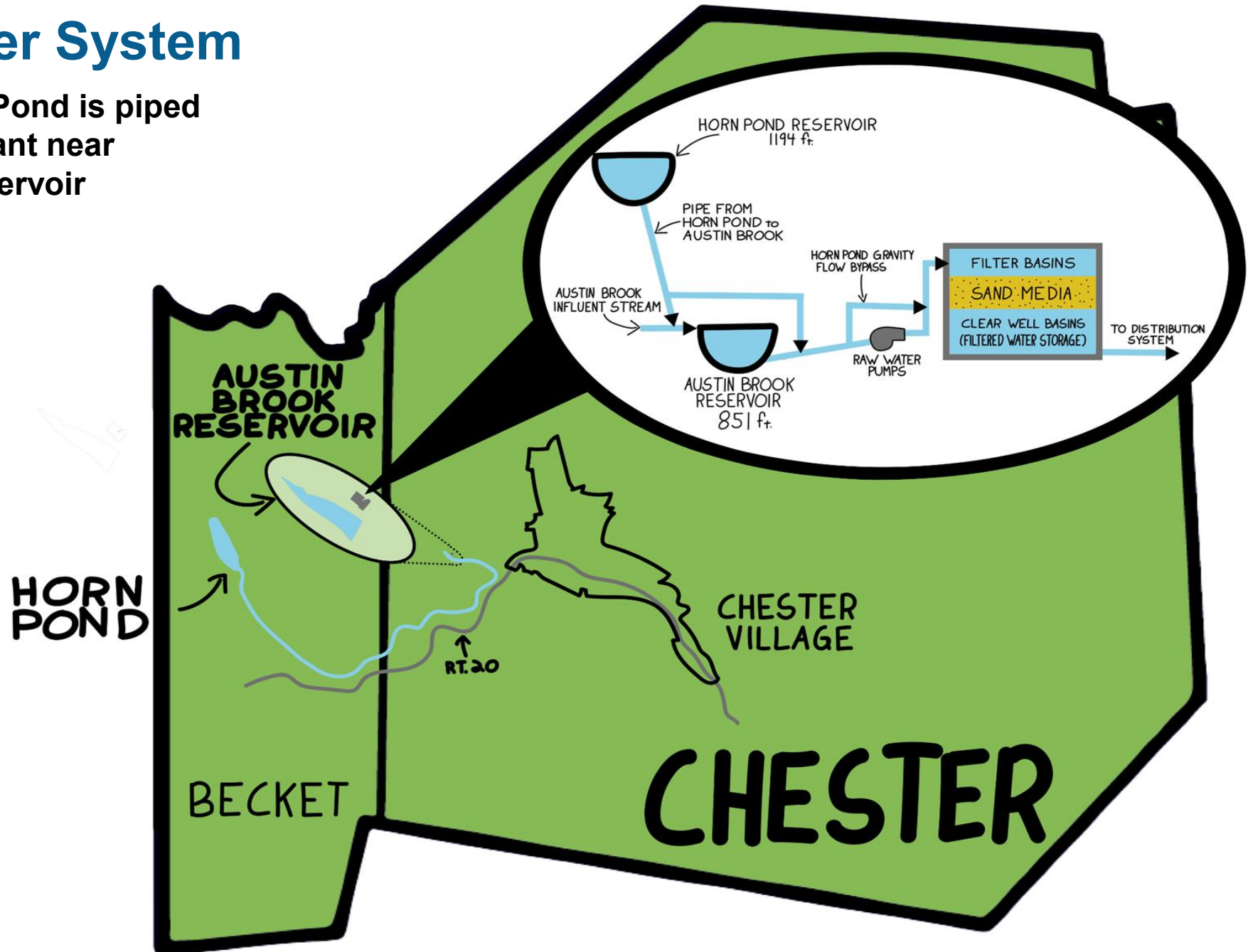
- **Horn Pond** in Becket (approximately 30 acres)
 - Chester owns water rights and access road
 - Water line runs through the cemetery, down Route 20 to the filter plant for treatment
- **Austin Brook Reservoir**
 - Water pumped into filter beds

Distribution:

Water is distributed to approximately **260 connections**

Chester Water System

Water from Horn Pond is piped to the filtration plant near Austin Brook Reservoir

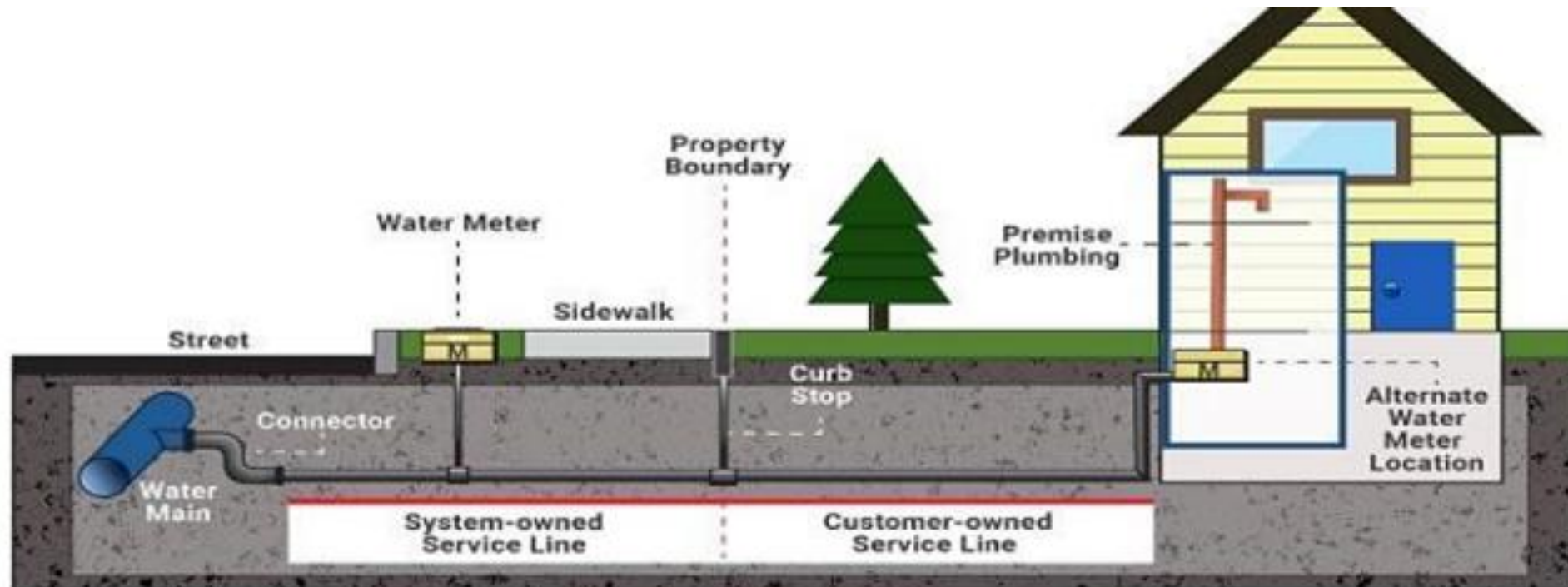


Austin Brook Reservoir



Lead Service Line Replacement

- **2021 US EPA** published revisions to the Lead and Copper rule intended to better protect children & communities from exposure to lead
- Town applied for a grant from the DWSRP to complete a **water service line inventory** and **lead service line replacement plan**
- **Completed this month** and Town certified as **lead-free**



Other upgrades

- **SCADA (computer control system) upgrade**
- **21 months of extensive water testing** mandated by the Department of Environmental Protection
 - Replacement of vertical infrastructure
 - Re-established semi-annual hydrant exercising program
 - Replaced several non-functioning hydrants
- **NO Disinfection By Products (DBP) violation** in the past 9 months
- **Found & mitigated 70,000 gpd water leaks**
- **Current avg 30,000 gpd** - result of closed Industry & leak detection
 - Cleared Austin Reservoir overgrowth, removed 100 tons of sediment
 - Secured Grants to fund re-sanding and **GAC** layer of filter beds, Regionalization Grant w/Blandford, **LSL** Grant, **AMP** Grant, all successfully completed.
 - Clear wells vacuumed, drained & buildup of biofilm, Fe & Mn removed w/Pantonite
- Established **shared operator relationship with Huntington** allowing cross training of groundwater operations
- Implementing reclamation of **Horn Pond access Road**

The background of the image is a monochromatic, teal-colored photograph of water ripples. The ripples are concentric circles of varying sizes, creating a complex, textured pattern across the entire frame. The lighting is soft, highlighting the peaks and troughs of the waves.

Private Wells

Private Wells

Permitting - MA Regulations

- ❖ Any well drilling must be done by a **MassDEP certified well driller** (or overseen by an on-site certified well driller) and shall submit a **Well Completion Report** to the Board of Health within 30 days of completion.
- ❖ Private Well Certificates should be issued by Boards of Health **prior to occupancy permit** for existing structure, or prior to issuing a building permit for new construction. To obtain a Private Well Certificate, applicants should submit the following documents to the Board of Health:
 - Copy of the **Well Completion Report**, including pumping test results
 - Copy of the **water quality report**

Private Wells

Permitting - MA Regulations (cont'd)

- Boards of Health MAY “make reasonable health regulations” (MGL Chapter 111, Section 31) including those that are more stringent than Title V. These may include:
 - Setback distances
 - Well construction, alteration and maintenance standards
 - Well decommissioning standards
 - Periodic water quality testing
- It is recommended that BOHs establish requirements for:
 - Private well construction permit
 - Plumbing permit (for new potable sources)
 - Private well alteration permit
 - Permit for decommissioning (sealing) abandoned wells, test holes and dry or inadequate borings
- Boards of Health should consider potential threats to groundwater quality when deciding what testing program is most appropriate for town.

Private Wells

Permitting in Chester

- Permitting of private wells in Chester is done through the Board of Health.
- Current regulations require **construction permits** and **plumbing permits** for new potable wells.
- The Town is considering adding permits for **well alteration** and **decommissioning**.
- Currently the Town does not have any regulations that are more stringent than State regulations.

Proposed Legislation

No statewide regulations to ensure private well water is safe

Out of 502 tests across several MA towns, found 32% had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks

Make resources available to assist eligible homeowners with the cost of well water upgrades.

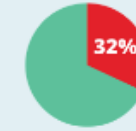
Ensure access to safe drinking water.

CURRENT LACK OF REGULATIONS IN PRIVATE WELLS

Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution established “the right to clean air and water”, yet half a million residents who rely on private wells may not know if their drinking water is safe from contaminants.



Unlike with public water systems, **there are currently no statewide regulations to ensure private well water is safe.** Individual Boards of Health have the authority to develop local regulations, but many are outdated or nonexistent.



PRIVATE WELL PROGRAM UNCOVERS CONTAMINANTS

From 2020–2022, we conducted 502 water quality tests across several Massachusetts towns. We found that **~32% of wells had levels of contaminants exceeding state health standards and/or suggesting potential health risks.**

In addition, MassDEP’s recent PFAS Private Well Sampling Program has found that **~15% of wells had PFAS levels exceeding state health standards.**



BOTTLED WATER IS NOT AN APPROPRIATE SOLUTION

Many people who discover contaminants in their wells resort to drinking bottled water, which is expensive. Plastic also harms the environment; 80% of plastic water bottles used in the United States end up in landfills.

INEQUITY IN COMMUNITIES

Residents who live in municipalities with public water systems or with local private well regulations are more likely to have access to safe drinking water than residents who don’t.



HEALTH IMPACTS OF CONTAMINATED WATER

PFAS IS IN PRIVATE WELLS TOO!

Contaminant	Examples of Potential Health Risks
PFAS (forever chemicals)	Developmental effects in fetuses & infants. Effects on the thyroid, liver, kidneys, certain hormones, & the immune system.
E. coli	Gastrointestinal illness
Nitrate	Can cause death in babies younger than 6 months
Radon	Cancer
Total Coliform Bacteria	Gastrointestinal illness
Uranium	Cancer, kidney toxicity
Manganese	Neurological effects
Arsenic	Cancer, skin damage, circulatory system problems

OTHER STATES WITH PRIVATE WELL REGULATIONS

Several other states (including Oregon, Rhode Island, and New Jersey) have sensible, health-based regulations for private wells. These states require private well water be tested for contaminants upon sale or transfer of a home. In addition, property owners must disclose the results of the well water test prior to the sale or transfer.

Let’s add Massachusetts to the list!



OREGON

Regulations Enacted: 1989
Private Wells in OR: 350,000



RHODE ISLAND

Regulations Enacted: 2002
Private Wells in RI: 48,000



NEW JERSEY

Regulations Enacted: 2002
Private Wells in NJ: 400,000

In addition, New Jersey requires different counties test for different contaminants in areas which have varying contamination concerns.



WhatsInYourWellWater.org



#WhatsInYourWellWater

SENATE BILL SPONSORED BY SENATOR ELDRIDGE
HOUSE BILL SPONSORED BY REP. BLAIS AND REP. KILCOYNE



**IT'S TIME TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE
ACCESS TO SAFE DRINKING WATER
FOR PRIVATE WELL OWNERS
ACROSS MASSACHUSETTS!**

**Support "An Act Protecting Drinking Water Quality in Private Wells"
S.585 / H.900**

**THIS ACT
WILL**

- ✓ Authorize MassDEP to develop health-based regulations to ensure private well water is safe to drink.
- ✓ Grant MassDEP clear authority to establish standards and define testing requirements for new and existing wells to ensure effective implementation.
- ✓ Upon the sale of a home, a private well used for drinking water would require disclosure of testing results – similar to the state's Title 5 septic system regulations, which are widely accepted as essential protections for environmental and public health.
- ✓ The state would make resources available to assist eligible homeowners with the cost of well water upgrades.

**THIS ACT
WILL NOT**

- ✗ Impose an undue burden on homeowners. There will be efforts to proactively educate homeowners, address lab testing capacity, and develop strategies to mitigate paperwork for homeowners and health agents.

**HOW YOU
CAN HELP**

🔊 Whether you rely on a private well or a public water system for your drinking water, this is an issue of health equity!

Voice your support to our state legislators by scanning the QR code or visiting the link below! Our website comes with pre-loaded messages to make it easy for you to be heard.



WhatsInYourWellWater.org

03/13/2025

Break-Out Group Questions

Town Water Group

1. How do you get information about the public water supply?
2. How would you like to get information?
3. What most concerns you about your drinking water?

Private Wells Group

1. Have you had your water tested since you purchased your house?
2. What do you think about proposed legislation that would set standards for testing water in private wells?
3. What most concerns you about your drinking water?

THANK YOU!