



## The Clean Drinking Water Project.

The Clean Drinking Water Project was created in 2015 as part of a legal settlement between the Community Association for the Restoration of the Environment (“CARE”)/Center for Food Safety and a cluster of dairies in the Lower Yakima Valley. On May 19, 2015, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Washington approved three Consent Decrees filed in *CARE v. Cow Palace Dairy, et al.*, 13-cv-3016-TOR, *CARE v. Henry Bosma Dairy, et al.*, 13-cv-3019-TOR, and *CARE v. George & Margaret, LLC, et al.*, 13-cv-3017-TOR. These Consent Decrees obligated the owners of five large dairies to fund a Clean Drinking Water Program designed to provide clean, safe drinking water to those members of the community who have been endangered by groundwater contamination. Additionally, the CDWP serves the dual purpose of outreach by contacting eligible residents and informing them of the potential dangers from nitrate contamination in the area.

For decades, residents of the Lower Yakima Valley have experienced groundwater contamination from the “historic and current volumes of wastes generated and stored by dairies, and the application of nitrogen-rich fertilizers including dairy waste in the Lower Yakima Valley.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, a study by the Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) found that about twenty percent of the residential wells sampled in the Lower Yakima Valley exceeded the EPA maximum contaminant level (MCL) for nitrate in drinking water of 10 ppm (or mg/l) under the Safe Drinking Water Act.<sup>2</sup> Drinking water containing nitrate in excess of 10 mg/l or using nitrate-contaminated water to cook, bathe, brush teeth, or prepare infant formula poses serious health risks, including “Blue Baby Syndrome.” Exposure to water with levels of nitrate above 10 mg/l is especially risky for infants and young children, older adults and adults with compromised immune systems, and pregnant women.

Under the CDWP, any residents who lives within the Covered Area and whose drinking water test results show nitrate levels above the 10 ppm MCL<sup>3</sup> are eligible to receive clean drinking water. To enroll, eligible residents simply need to contact the CDWP (contact information provided below). From there, CDWP staff will coordinate free water sampling and analysis. If the results exceed the nitrate level parameters, then the CDWP will arrange for the free water delivery or free installation of a reverse osmosis system. The CDWP further expects to continue funding regular maintenance of reverse osmosis systems or weekly water delivery until the testing of certain monitoring wells repeatedly show nitrate levels that are at or below the 10 ppm MCL.

Since it was first established in 2015, the CDWP has been able to provide clean and safe drinking water to approximately 100 eligible residents in the Lower Yakima Valley. More recently, on January 31, 2019, the Eastern District of Washington approved another consent Decree filed in *CARE et al. v. Snipes Mountain Dairy, Inc.*, 1:17-cv-3067-TOR, obligating Snipes Mountain Dairy, Inc. to provide additional funding to the CDWP. With the additional

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<sup>1</sup> Relation Between Nitrate in Water Wells and Potential Sources in the Lower Yakima Valley, Washington. EPA-910-R-13-004. March 2013. Available at <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2017-12/documents/lower-yakima-valley-groundwater-report-2013.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Resident with previously installed reverse osmosis systems and nitrate levels above 60 ppm are eligible for free bottled water delivery.



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funding, the CDWP will be able expand its program to provide more clean drinking water to an even greater number of eligible residents impacted by nitrate contamination in the groundwater.

For any residents who may feel that they may be at risk from nitrate contamination and would like to receive a free water test, please contact Becky Donaldson at (509) 831-9430 or by email at: [cleandrinkingwaterproject@gmail.com](mailto:cleandrinkingwaterproject@gmail.com). Please mention the Clean Drinking Water Project in your call or email. Thank you for taking the time to read and learn about nitrate contamination and how it can affect you or your loved ones.

Sincerely,

The CDWP Staff