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New Initiative Seeks to Secure Safe Drinking Water for Lower Eastern Shore Residents Who Rely on Private Wells

Effort aims to protect public health by engaging residents of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties in citizen science

Today, the Assateague Coastal Trust, Center for Progressive Reform, Environmental Integrity Project, and University of Maryland School of Public Health launched a [new initiative](#) designed to assess and safeguard drinking water for residents of Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore who rely on private wells.

The [Lower Shore Safe Well Water Initiative](#) aims to protect public health by engaging residents of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties in citizen science focused on drinking water quality in the region.

"Safe drinking water is a human right and is fundamental to protecting people's health," said Darya Minovi, Policy Analyst at the Center for Progressive Reform. "In communities with heavy agricultural activity, pollutants can enter groundwater, which many people rely on for drinking and cooking."

Nitrates, one common drinking water contaminant, are colorless, odorless, and tasteless compounds that can form when nitrogen from manure, fertilizer, or failing septic systems breaks down. They are an important plant nutrient, but in excess amounts, they can contaminate drinking water and endanger people's health.

Many Lower Eastern Shore residents rely on private wells for their household water, but the state of Maryland doesn't regularly monitor wells or maintain a public database of well records, leaving many wondering about the quality of the region's well water.

"The goal of the initiative is to protect public health by measuring levels of nitrate in private drinking water wells on the Lower Eastern Shore," said Kathy Phillips, Assateague Coastkeeper and Executive Director of Assateague Coastal Trust. "We are seeking volunteers who live in Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties and have a private well to test their water for nitrates and nitrites, another form of nitrogen. Volunteers will be provided with all testing materials and instructions at no cost."

By participating in the Lower Shore Safe Well Water Initiative, residents can help researchers understand the extent of nitrate contamination in the region. Volunteers will also help advocates alert their communities and local officials to potential contamination that should be addressed.

For more information about the initiative and how residents can get involved, visit <https://www.lowershoresafewells.com/>. Residents interested in participating can fill out a short survey at <https://forms.gle/F7Dc3cY4JMTcV7b26>.

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The Environmental Integrity Project is a nonprofit organization, based in Washington, D.C., and Austin, Texas, that is dedicated to enforcing environmental laws and strengthening policy to protect human health and the environment. Visit us at www.environmentalintegrity.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Assateague Coastal Trust's mission is to promote and encourage the protection of the health, productivity, and sustainability of the coastal bays watershed of Delmarva through advocacy, education, and conservation. Visit us at www.ACTforBays.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

The mission of the University of Maryland School of Public Health is to promote and protect the health and well-being of the diverse communities throughout Maryland, the nation, and the world through leadership and collaboration in interdisciplinary education, research, practice, and public policy. Visit us at <https://sph.umd.edu/> and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).