



PRESS RELEASE

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Well Prospects, Data Sought for Groundwater Testing Program

The Otsego County Conservation Association is seeking potential drinking water well test sites and existing water well test data for inclusion as it launches a countywide groundwater program, “What’s In Our Water?”

Heavy industrial activity, including high volume hydraulic fracturing – or hydrofracking – for natural gas, may put our groundwater at risk. Most homeowners do not know the quality of their well water and, as such, would not be able to prove water contamination if it were to occur.

With these two points in mind, OCCA has designed a groundwater testing program – “What’s In Our Water?” – that will feature certified baseline testing of private drinking water wells in pre-selected areas countywide. These data will provide:

- 1) A baseline for, and fingerprinting of, well water chemistry by which changes to the wells will be detectable, and;
- 2) A better understanding of groundwater flow systems and subsequent mapping of aquifers.

Having raised the funds necessary to initiate the program, OCCA invites property owners throughout the county to submit their wells for testing consideration. The final decision as to which wells are to be tested will be based on existing data, identified data gaps, and location, among other determining factors. OCCA will pay to have the chosen wells tested and will own the data. Test results will be shared with property owners. Municipal wells are also eligible for testing.

Both water sampling and analysis will be conducted by New York State Department of Health Environmental Laboratory Approval Program-certified professionals, after the appropriate test sites have been identified by hydrology experts using previously collected water quality data. This battery of third-party testing will identify the baseline concentrations of signature chemicals typically associated with hydrofracking or other heavy industrial activity which may or may not already be present in the groundwater.

“Gas drilling was a wakeup call,” said OCCA President Vicky M. Lentz. “The possible impacts of hydrofracking are not well studied. Understanding the characteristics of our drinking water, and fingerprinting well water and the aquifers from which it flows, is important. We know we have an abundant supply of good, clean water here, but we need to learn more,” Lentz said.

Groundwater is one of our most valuable resources. Half of America drinks groundwater every day, and more than 17 million households in the United States have individual wells which supply water for their families. These wells are used to extract groundwater from aquifers. Above and beyond gas drilling concerns, the importance of understanding the properties and flow patterns of drinking water is paramount to protection of this resource without which we cannot survive.

“OCCA also asks Otsego County property owners who have had wells tested within the last two years to share this data with us so that their results can be made part of the growing countywide groundwater data pool,” said OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs.

The call for potential well testing sites and existing data dovetails with OCCA’s release of a Request for Proposals to ELAP-certified laboratories this week.

For more information on “What’s In Our Water?”, the laboratory RFP, or to submit a well for consideration, call OCCA at (607) 547-4488 or e-mail admin@occainfo.org. Copies of test results can be mailed to OCCA, PO Box 931, Cooperstown, NY 13326.

OCCA is a private, non-profit environmental membership organization dedicated to promoting the appreciation and sustainable use of Otsego County's natural resources through education, advocacy, resource management, research, and planning. For more information on OCCA, or to support programming, call [\(607\) 547-4488](tel:6075474488) or visit www.occainfo.org.