

# Well Water Contaminants in Watauga County

Contaminant	Drinking Water Standard	Private Well Water Test Results					
		Total wells tested	Number of wells tested above standard	Percentage (%) of wells tested above standard	Minimum	Maximum	Average
<b>Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL)</b>							
Arsenic	10	1077	26	2.41%	0.71	38	3.25
Barium	2000	662	0	0%	70.71	1200	81.82
Beryllium	4	0	-	-	-	-	-
Cadmium	5	705	2	0.28%	0.71	5	0.76
Chromium	100	662	0	0%	7.07	30	7.12
Copper	1300	662	7	1.06%	35.36	11870	109.61
Lead	15	1065	41	3.85%	3.54	2660	8.23
Mercury	2	657	0	0%	0.35	0.35	0.35
Nitrate	10000	279	1	0.36%	707.11	15190	1345.51
Nitrite	1000	279	0	0%	70.71	410	72.42
Selenium	50	662	0	0%	3.54	6	3.54
Uranium	30	1	0	0%	15	15	15
<b>NC 2L Groundwater</b>							
Barium	700	662	3	0.45%	70.71	1200	81.82
Boron	700	0	-	-	-	-	-
Cadmium	2	705	12	1.7%	0.71	5	0.76
Chromium	10	662	3	0.45%	7.07	30	7.12
Cobalt	1	0	-	-	-	-	-
Nickel	100	1	0	0%	7.07	7.07	7.07
Zinc*	1000	662	41	6.19%	35.36	32000	505.64
<b>Health Advisory</b>							
Iron*	2500 (DEQ)	662	104	15.71%	70.71	51000	426.52
Manganese*	300 (EPA)	1065	105	9.86%	21.21	2100	35.23
Sodium	20000 (EPA)	618	611	98.87%	707.11	150000	8016.91
<b>State Health Goal</b>							
Hexavalent Chromium	0.07	0	-	-	-	-	-
Thallium	0.2	0	-	-	-	-	-
Vanadium	0.3	0	-	-	-	-	-

Contaminant levels are measured in micrograms per liter (µg/L), which is equal to parts per billion (ppb). Note: Copper and Lead standards are called "Action Levels".

\*The EPA also has a nuisance standard for aesthetic effects caused by these contaminants, however, this table uses the health-based standard.

**Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL):** The highest level of a contaminant that the US EPA allows in drinking water supplied by public utilities. An MCL takes into consideration the best available treatment technology and associated costs along with health risk. More information about MCL standards: <https://bit.ly/epa-MCL>.

**NC 2L Groundwater:** Set by NC DEQ as the highest level of a contaminant allowed in groundwater, which may be tolerated without creating a threat to human health or which would otherwise make the groundwater unsuitable for its intended best usage, such as a drinking water. Note: Barium, Cadmium, and Chromium have different standards under state and federal regulations; both are included in this table. More information about NC 2L Groundwater standards: <https://bit.ly/nc2Lgw>.

**Health Advisory:** In the absence of federal standards, the US EPA and state agencies can issue advisories to communicate the level of a contaminant in drinking water at which harmful health and/or aesthetic effects are not anticipated to occur over a specific period of time.

**State Health Goal:** In the absence of state and federal standards, level established by NC DHHS to communicate to private well users the risk associated with using their well water.

This publication was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (P42ES031007).

For more information visit:

<https://sph.unc.edu/superfund-pages/for-communities/>

Eaves LA, Keil AP, Rager JE, George A, Fry RC. Analysis of the novel NCWELL database highlights two decades of co-occurrence of toxic metals in North Carolina private well water: Public health and environmental justice implications. *Sci Total Environ.* 2022 Mar 15;812:151479. doi: [10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.151479](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.151479). Epub 2021 Nov 9. PMID: 34767890.

