

# Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water System – Verdi Drinking Water Supply Management Area Groundwater Protection Rule Summary

## Groundwater, Nitrogen Fertilizer Management, and Nitrogen Loading Analysis

### DWSMA

## Introduction

This document summarizes the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) current understanding of the Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water (LPRW) - Verdi Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) public well nitrate-nitrogen levels, and nitrogen management information. Also included is a summary of the MDA's analysis of nitrogen loss below cropland within this DWSMA. This summary outlines the information the MDA considered to determine whether the proposed list of nitrogen fertilizer best management practices (BMPs) and alternative management tools (AMTs) will be protective of groundwater.

## DWSMA and Public Well Nitrate-Nitrogen Data

The DWSMA boundary defined by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) for the LPRW-Verdi public wells includes 8,608 acres. The MDH defines the groundwater below this DWSMA as high vulnerability (Figure 1). Of the 8,608 acres in the DWSMA, 7,890 acres meet the definition of cropland in the Groundwater Protection Rule (GPR). The GPR applies to the 7,890 acres of cropland within this DWSMA.

The MDA relies on water-quality data provided by the MDH to evaluate nitrate-nitrogen levels in the public water supply. Nitrate-nitrogen levels exceeded 8 mg/L in two of the Verdi public wells within the past 10 years (Figure 2). LPRW-Verdi public well information is shown in Table 1.

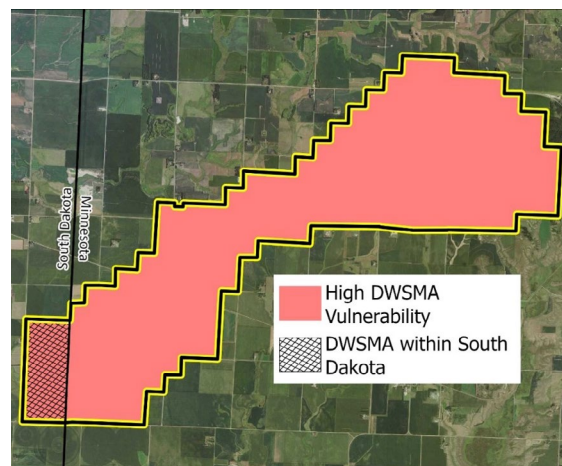


**Figure 1.** LPRW - Verdi DWSMA vulnerability designated by the MDH.

**Figure 2.** LPRW-Verdi public well nitrate data through December 2025. See the supplemental data at the end of this summary for a table of the individual well nitrate data listed in this graph.

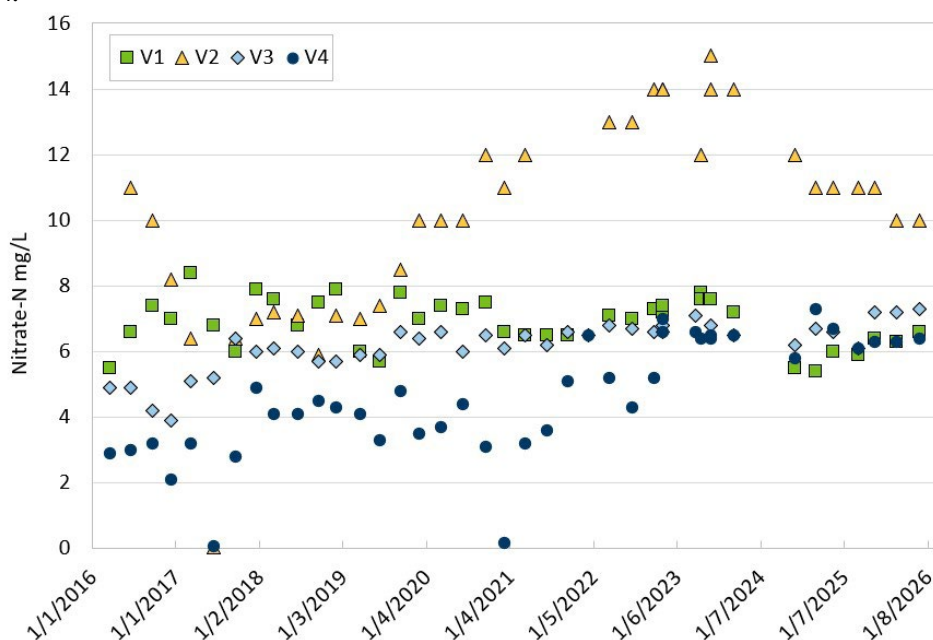


Table 1. LPRW-Verdi public well information

| Local Well ID | MDH Status | Casing Diameter (in) | Casing Depth (ft) | Well Depth (ft) | Date Constructed |
|---------------|------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Well V1       | Primary    | 12                   | 47                | 62              | 1978             |
| Well V2       | Primary    | 12                   | 45.5              | 57.5            | 1978             |
| Well V3       | Primary    | 12                   | 54                | 67              | 1978             |
| Well V4       | Primary    | 12                   | 47                | 60              | 1978             |

## DWSMA Land Use and Potential Nitrate-Nitrogen Point Source Consideration

The MDA conducted a detailed review of potential contaminant sources to determine whether a point source of nitrogen could be the cause of public wells exceeding the criteria for mitigation-level designation (Minnesota Statute 1573.0040, Subp. 3, C). In the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA, the MDA review did not identify a point source. With nitrate levels exceeding 8.0 mg/L within the past 10 years and without a point source contribution, this DWSMA was designated Mitigation Level 2 under Part 2 of the Groundwater Protection Rule in January 2020 (Minnesota Statute 1573.0040, Subp. 7, C, 2).

Part 2 of the GPR responds to DWSMAs with elevated nitrate. The goal is to take action to reduce nitrate in groundwater before a public well exceeds the health standard for nitrate, 10 mg/L. In Mitigation Level 2 DWSMAs, the MDA works with a local advisory team (LAT), which includes local farmers, agronomists, and others to get input on agricultural practices that can reduce nitrate levels in groundwater.

The GPR defines cropland as land used primarily for the production or harvest of annual or perennial field, forage, food, fiber, or energy crops, including pasture but excluding forestland. The evaluation of BMP adoption, to determine if a mitigation level change is needed, excludes soybean acres (Minnesota Statute 1573.0040, Subp. 7, A).

A review of the publicly available [USDA Cropland Data Layer](https://nass.usda.gov/Research_and_Science/Cropland/Release/index.php) (hosted on Crop Scape, [nass.usda.gov/Research\\_and\\_Science/Cropland/Release/index.php](https://nass.usda.gov/Research_and_Science/Cropland/Release/index.php)) in the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA shows that 92% of landcover is cropland (Figure 3). In addition to a review of cropping history, the MDA also surveyed agronomists to understand the nitrogen fertilizer management practices used in this area. The MDA was able to obtain farming information for most of the cropland acres across the DWSMA. Having current and accurate nitrogen fertilizer management data is critical to the discussion of protective agricultural management practices (i.e. BMPs and AMTs) appropriate for this DWSMA. Computer modeling tools allow the MDA to estimate nitrogen leaching under current fertilizer management and to assess how proposed management changes could reduce those losses. The farming practice information collected includes crop planting, harvest, tillage, and nitrogen fertilizer use data. Farmers within this DWSMA use both commercial nitrogen and manure to fertilize corn. Table 2 shows the cropland rotations present within the Verdi DWSMA.

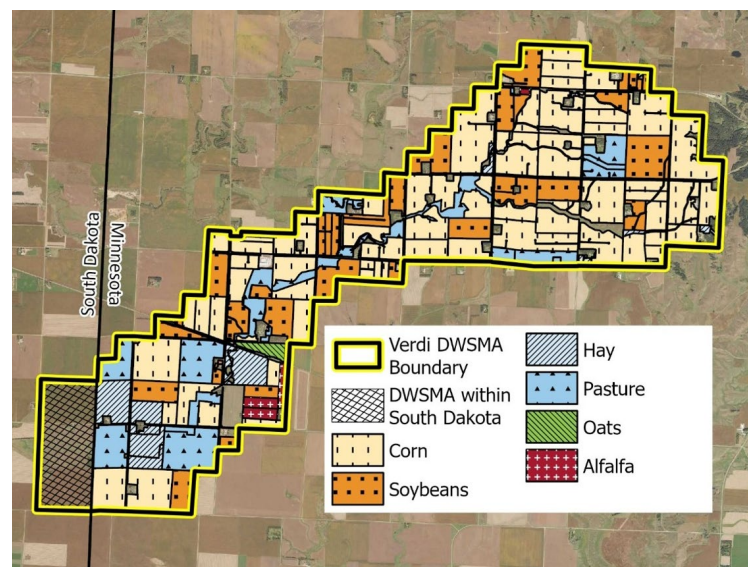


**Figure 3.** 2025 cropland cover in the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA based on the USDA Cropland Data Layer. See Table 3 for specific 2025 cropland cover information.

**Table 2. LPRW-Verdi DWSMA Cropland Rotations**

| Crop Rotation (2013-2023)            | Acres | % Cropland (7,890 acres) |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Corn-Soybeans                        | 5,625 | 71.3%                    |
| Pasture                              | 1,128 | 14.3%                    |
| Corn-Corn-Corn-Soybeans (dryland)    | 568   | 5.7%                     |
| Grass Hay                            | 428   | 5.4%                     |
| Alfalfa-Alfalfa-Alfalfa-Corn-Soybean | 142   | 1.8%                     |
| Corn-Corn-Corn-Soybeans (irrigated)  | 121   | 1.5%                     |

Due to the small number of cropland operators within this DWSMA, more detailed farming practice information cannot be included in this document. Minnesota's statute on Agricultural Data (Minnesota Statute 13.643 Subd. 7) protects the identities and location of producers who are cooperating with the MDA in an assessment of farm practices. If farm practice information could identify an individual, it is considered private information and cannot be shared by the MDA. General nitrogen management information is shared in this summary.

Based on the DWSMA nitrogen fertilizer use information the MDA collected, nitrogen rates are at or above current University of Minnesota guidelines. Nitrogen application rates on corn-soybean rotations ranged from 150-250 lbs. N/acre (dryland & irrigated). Approximately 60% of corn acres receive a split application of nitrogen in-season. Approximately 5% of the cropland receives manure applications. Cover crops are utilized on 12.3% of cropland. Most of the cropland in the DWSMA is highly productive with corn yields ranging from 150-225+ bushels per acre. All nitrogen sources are accounted for, and nitrogen credits from previous legume crops and manure are taken.

**Table 3. 2025 LPRW-Verdi DWSMA Cropland Cover**

| Crop Type | Acres | % of Cropland (7,890 acres) |
|-----------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Corn      | 3,238 | 41%                         |
| Soybean   | 2,954 | 37%                         |
| Pasture   | 1,127 | 14%                         |
| Grass/Hay | 427   | 5%                          |
| Alfalfa   | 142   | 2%                          |

Within the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA crops grown in 2025 included corn, soybeans, pasture, grass/hay and alfalfa (Table 3). The MDA also reviewed the USDA Cropland Data Layer over the past 10 years in the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA. During this time, corn and soybeans were the primary crops grown. Pasture, grass/hay and alfalfa made up 18-21% of cropland over the past 10 years (Table 4).

**Table 4. LPRW-Verdi DWSMA cropland crop history 2013-2023.**

| Year | Corn Acres | Corn % of Cropland | Soybean Acres | Soybean % of Cropland | Hay/Pasture Acres | Hay/Pasture % of Cropland | Alfalfa Acres | Alfalfa % of Cropland | Small Grain Acres | Small Grain % of Cropland | Fallow Acres | Fallow % of Cropland |
|------|------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| 2013 | 4,116      | 52%                | 2,157         | 27%                   | 1,172             | 15%                       | 373           | 5%                    | 73                | 1%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2014 | 3,302      | 42%                | 2,991         | 38%                   | 1,075             | 14%                       | 420           | 5%                    | 103               | 1%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2015 | 3,952      | 50%                | 2,480         | 31%                   | 1,032             | 13%                       | 345           | 4%                    | 70                | 1%                        | 13           | 0%                   |
| 2016 | 3,029      | 38%                | 3,176         | 40%                   | 1,021             | 13%                       | 378           | 5%                    | 286               | 4%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2017 | 3,520      | 45%                | 2,893         | 37%                   | 1,044             | 13%                       | 316           | 4%                    | 117               | 1%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2018 | 2,391      | 30%                | 3,871         | 49%                   | 1,044             | 13%                       | 211           | 3%                    | 373               | 5%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2019 | 2,372      | 30%                | 1,664         | 21%                   | 1,038             | 13%                       | 281           | 4%                    | 44                | 1%                        | 2,491        | 32%                  |
| 2020 | 3,328      | 42%                | 2,937         | 37%                   | 1,359             | 17%                       | 229           | 3%                    | 38                | 0%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2021 | 3,612      | 46%                | 2,988         | 38%                   | 1,259             | 16%                       | 31            | 0%                    | -                 | -                         | -            | -                    |
| 2022 | 3,290      | 42%                | 2,934         | 37%                   | 1,303             | 17%                       | 89            | 1%                    | 275               | 3%                        | -            | -                    |
| 2023 | 3,551      | 45%                | 2,691         | 34%                   | 1,555             | 20%                       | 93            | 1%                    | -                 | -                         | -            | -                    |

## DWSMA Nitrate-Nitrogen Loss Below Cropland

Using a crop and soil computer simulation called the [Soil & Water Assessment Tool](http://swat.tamu.edu) (swat.tamu.edu) the MDA estimated nitrogen loss below the root zone in the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA, comparing nitrogen management practices used in the recent past with the nitrogen loss below alternative practices. Table 2 shows the crop rotations modeled within the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA.

The MDA modeled nitrogen fertilizer BMPs applicable to the DWSMA that can reduce nitrogen loss below the root zone (Table 5). Applying nitrogen at or below the low end of the 0.075 price ratio range of the University of Minnesota's dryland corn nitrogen recommendations can reduce nitrogen leaching by 8.3%.

**Table 5. MDA modeling estimates of nitrate-nitrogen loss following the adoption of listed BMPs compared to current nitrogen management practices.**

| Management Change                                                                           | Affected Acres within DWSMA | Nitrogen Loss Reduction | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Apply nitrogen to dryland corn acres at or below the low end of the 0.075 price ratio range | 6,193                       | 8.3%                    | Current University of Minnesota corn rates at the low end of the 0.075 price ratio range are 145 lbs. N/acre for corn following soybeans and 180 lbs. N/acre for corn following corn. |

The MDA turned to computer modeling additional practices and AMTs to explore practices that could provide additional reductions in nitrogen loss below the root zone. If these practices were adopted, modeling shows potential reductions in nitrogen leaching below the root zone, as shown in Table 6. Working with local farmers, the MDA will promote this list and, when possible, identify funding to support adoption of these practices.

**Table 6. LPRW-Verdi DWSMA modeled nitrogen loss below additional practices and AMTs considered by the LPRW-Verdi LAT.**

| Management Change                                                                            | Additional Acres within DWSMA | Nitrogen Loss Reduction | Notes                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Use a nitrification inhibitor with preplant applications of urea                             | 1,127                         | 1.5%                    | Survey data indicated that 1,127 corn acres receive preplant urea applications without an in-season side dress application. |
| Use a nitrification inhibitor with preplant applications of urea and hog manure applications | 1,367                         | 2.4%                    | This includes the reduction from nitrification inhibitor use on preplant urea and hog manure applications.                  |
| Cover crop after corn on 20% of dryland corn-soybean acres                                   | 1,101                         | 3.4%                    | This would cover 20% of dryland corn-soybean acres within the DWSMA.                                                        |
| Cover crop after corn on 40% of dryland corn-soybean acres                                   | 2,202                         | 6.7%                    | This would cover 40% of dryland corn-soybean acres within the DWSMA.                                                        |
| Cover crop after corn on 100% of dryland corn-soybean acres                                  | 5,625                         | 20%                     | This rotation change would affect 71% of the cropland within the DWSMA.                                                     |
| Convert dryland C-Sb-C-Sb rotation to C-Sb-Oats-Sb                                           | 5,625                         | 4.4%                    | This model estimate includes 75 lbs. N/acre applied to the oats.                                                            |

# MDA Recommended Nitrogen Fertilizer Best Management Practices for the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA

In consultation with the local advisory team that includes farmers and agronomists managing cropland within the DWSMA, the MDA developed the following list of BMPs to protect groundwater. View a more detailed list of these BMPs at the [LPRW-Verdi DWSMA webpage](https://mda.state.mn.us/lprwverdi-dwsma) (mda.state.mn.us/lprwverdi-dwsma).

- For dry cropland, apply nitrogen to corn in a corn-corn or corn-soybean rotation at or below the low end of the 0.075 price ratio range in the University of Minnesota’s nitrogen fertilizer application guidelines.
- For irrigated cropland, apply nitrogen to corn in a corn-corn or corn-soybean rotation at or below the 0.10 Maximum Return to Nitrogen (MRTN) in the University of Minnesota’s nitrogen fertilizer application guidelines.
- For all other crops grown within the DWSMA nitrogen rates must follow the current University of Minnesota guidance applicable to that crop.
- Account for all nitrogen sources when calculating nitrogen rate.
- Take appropriate credits for previous legume crops and manure used in the crop rotation.
- On coarse textured soils use split applications of nitrogen fertilizer or a spring preplant application with a nitrification inhibitor or use ESN (polymer coated urea) on labeled crops.

The MDA will conduct an evaluation in this Level 2 DWSMA to determine whether these nitrogen fertilizer BMPs were implemented on 80% of the cropland, excluding soybeans. The evaluation will occur no sooner than three growing seasons after the BMP list is published.

## Conclusion

In the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA, the MDA reviewed the cropping history, surveyed nitrogen management practices, and modeled nitrogen loss estimates below existing nitrogen fertilizer management practices and alternative practices.

Based on MDA’s fertilizer dealer survey, the current nitrogen rates applied on corn in the DWSMA are at or above current University of Minnesota guidelines. All nitrogen sources are considered and nitrogen credits from legumes and manure are counted.

Modeling of nitrogen loss below nitrogen rates at or below the low end of the 0.75 price ratio range shows an 8.3% reduction of nitrogen below the root zone. The adoption of additional practices and AMTs within the DWSMA offer options that can further reduce nitrogen loss below the crop root zone. These options were developed in consultation with the LAT. Specific acres have not been identified for other additional practices, but the LAT acknowledges the groundwater protection these practices could provide if adopted. The next steps in this DWSMA are to review these practices with individual landowners and explore funding opportunities to support their adoption.

Based on the information above, the MDA believes the recommended nitrogen management practices for the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA are appropriate, and that the use of these practices—along with the adoption of AMTs and additional practices—will reduce nitrate nitrogen loss below cropland over the long term. Promotion and funding to support the establishment of these practices within the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA will be a priority.

## Supplemental Data

The following table is supplemental information for the LPRW-Verdi DWSMA Groundwater Protection Rule Summary. The data included below is presented as a graph (Figure 2) in the summary document.

| Well Number | Collection Date | Nitrogen Test Levels in mg/L |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| V1          | 2016-03-16      | 5.5                          |
| V1          | 2016-06-15      | 6.6                          |
| V1          | 2016-09-19      | 7.4                          |
| V1          | 2016-12-13      | 7                            |
| V1          | 2017-03-06      | 8.4                          |
| V1          | 2017-06-14      | 6.8                          |
| V1          | 2017-09-20      | 6                            |
| V1          | 2017-12-18      | 7.9                          |
| V1          | 2018-03-07      | 7.6                          |
| V1          | 2018-06-19      | 6.8                          |
| V1          | 2018-09-17      | 7.5                          |
| V1          | 2018-12-05      | 7.9                          |
| V1          | 2019-03-19      | 6                            |
| V1          | 2019-06-12      | 5.7                          |
| V1          | 2019-09-12      | 7.8                          |
| V1          | 2019-12-04      | 7                            |
| V1          | 2020-03-09      | 7.4                          |
| V1          | 2020-06-11      | 7.3                          |
| V1          | 2020-09-22      | 7.5                          |
| V1          | 2020-12-09      | 6.6                          |
| V1          | 2021-03-09      | 6.5                          |
| V1          | 2021-06-14      | 6.5                          |
| V1          | 2021-09-13      | 6.5                          |
| V1          | 2022-03-15      | 7.1                          |
| V1          | 2022-06-21      | 7                            |
| V1          | 2022-09-28      | 7.3                          |
| V1          | 2022-11-02      | 7.2                          |
| V1          | 2022-11-02      | 7.4                          |
| V1          | 2023-04-19      | 7.8                          |
| V1          | 2023-04-19      | 7.6                          |
| V1          | 2023-05-31      | 7.6                          |
| V1          | 2023-06-01      | 7.6                          |
| V1          | 2023-09-11      | 7.2                          |
| V1          | 2024-06-06      | 5.5                          |
| V1          | 2024-09-03      | 5.4                          |
| V1          | 2024-11-21      | 6                            |
| V1          | 2025-03-10      | 5.9                          |
| V1          | 2025-05-22      | 6.4                          |
| V1          | 2025-08-26      | 6.3                          |
| V1          | 2025-12-03      | 6.6                          |
| V2          | 2016-06-15      | 11                           |

| Well Number | Collection Date | Nitrogen Test Levels in mg/L |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| V2          | 2016-09-19      | 10                           |
| V2          | 2016-12-13      | 8.2                          |
| V2          | 2017-03-06      | 6.4                          |
| V2          | 2017-06-14      | 0.05                         |
| V2          | 2017-09-20      | 6.4                          |
| V2          | 2017-12-18      | 7                            |
| V2          | 2018-03-07      | 7.2                          |
| V2          | 2018-06-19      | 7.1                          |
| V2          | 2018-09-17      | 5.9                          |
| V2          | 2018-12-05      | 7.1                          |
| V2          | 2019-03-19      | 7                            |
| V2          | 2019-06-12      | 7.4                          |
| V2          | 2019-09-12      | 8.5                          |
| V2          | 2019-12-04      | 10                           |
| V2          | 2020-03-09      | 10                           |
| V2          | 2020-06-11      | 10                           |
| V2          | 2020-09-22      | 12                           |
| V2          | 2020-12-09      | 11                           |
| V2          | 2021-03-09      | 12                           |
| V2          | 2022-03-15      | 13                           |
| V2          | 2022-06-21      | 13                           |
| V2          | 2022-09-28      | 14                           |
| V2          | 2022-11-02      | 14                           |
| V2          | 2022-11-02      | 14                           |
| V2          | 2023-04-19      | 12                           |
| V2          | 2023-06-01      | 14                           |
| V2          | 2023-06-01      | 15                           |
| V2          | 2023-09-11      | 14                           |
| V2          | 2024-06-06      | 12                           |
| V2          | 2024-09-03      | 11                           |
| V2          | 2024-11-21      | 11                           |
| V2          | 2025-03-10      | 11                           |
| V2          | 2025-05-22      | 11                           |
| V2          | 2025-08-26      | 10                           |
| V2          | 2025-12-03      | 10                           |
| V3          | 2016-03-16      | 4.9                          |
| V3          | 2016-06-15      | 4.9                          |
| V3          | 2016-09-19      | 4.2                          |
| V3          | 2016-12-13      | 3.9                          |
| V3          | 2017-03-06      | 5.1                          |
| V3          | 2017-06-14      | 5.2                          |

| Well Number | Collection Date | Nitrogen Test Levels in mg/L |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| V3          | 2017-09-20      | 6.4                          |
| V3          | 2017-12-18      | 6                            |
| V3          | 2018-03-07      | 6.1                          |
| V3          | 2018-06-19      | 6                            |
| V3          | 2018-09-17      | 5.7                          |
| V3          | 2018-12-05      | 5.7                          |
| V3          | 2019-03-19      | 5.9                          |
| V3          | 2019-06-12      | 5.9                          |
| V3          | 2019-09-12      | 6.6                          |
| V3          | 2019-12-04      | 6.4                          |
| V3          | 2020-03-09      | 6.6                          |
| V3          | 2020-06-11      | 6                            |
| V3          | 2020-09-22      | 6.5                          |
| V3          | 2020-12-09      | 6.1                          |
| V3          | 2021-03-09      | 6.5                          |
| V3          | 2021-06-14      | 6.2                          |
| V3          | 2021-09-13      | 6.6                          |
| V3          | 2021-12-16      | 6.5                          |
| V3          | 2022-03-15      | 6.8                          |
| V3          | 2022-06-21      | 6.7                          |
| V3          | 2022-09-28      | 6.6                          |
| V3          | 2022-11-02      | 6.6                          |
| V3          | 2022-11-02      | 6.8                          |
| V3          | 2023-03-30      | 7.1                          |
| V3          | 2023-06-01      | 6.8                          |
| V3          | 2023-09-11      | 6.5                          |
| V3          | 2024-06-06      | 6.2                          |
| V3          | 2024-09-03      | 6.7                          |
| V3          | 2024-11-21      | 6.6                          |
| V3          | 2025-03-10      | 6.1                          |
| V3          | 2025-05-22      | 7.2                          |
| V3          | 2025-08-26      | 7.2                          |
| V3          | 2025-12-03      | 7.3                          |
| V4          | 2016-03-16      | 2.9                          |
| V4          | 2016-06-15      | 3                            |
| V4          | 2016-09-19      | 3.2                          |
| V4          | 2016-12-13      | 2.1                          |

| Well Number | Collection Date | Nitrogen Test Levels in mg/L |
|-------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| V4          | 2017-03-06      | 3.2                          |
| V4          | 2017-06-14      | 0.06                         |
| V4          | 2017-09-20      | 2.8                          |
| V4          | 2017-12-18      | 4.9                          |
| V4          | 2018-03-07      | 4.1                          |
| V4          | 2018-06-19      | 4.1                          |
| V4          | 2018-09-17      | 4.5                          |
| V4          | 2018-12-05      | 4.3                          |
| V4          | 2019-03-19      | 4.1                          |
| V4          | 2019-06-12      | 3.3                          |
| V4          | 2019-09-12      | 4.8                          |
| V4          | 2019-12-04      | 3.5                          |
| V4          | 2020-03-09      | 3.7                          |
| V4          | 2020-06-11      | 4.4                          |
| V4          | 2020-09-22      | 3.1                          |
| V4          | 2020-12-09      | 0.17                         |
| V4          | 2021-03-09      | 3.2                          |
| V4          | 2021-06-14      | 3.6                          |
| V4          | 2021-09-13      | 5.1                          |
| V4          | 2021-12-16      | 6.5                          |
| V4          | 2022-03-15      | 5.2                          |
| V4          | 2022-06-21      | 4.3                          |
| V4          | 2022-09-28      | 5.2                          |
| V4          | 2022-11-02      | 6.6                          |
| V4          | 2022-11-02      | 7                            |
| V4          | 2023-03-30      | 6.6                          |
| V4          | 2023-04-19      | 6.4                          |
| V4          | 2023-06-01      | 6.4                          |
| V4          | 2023-06-01      | 6.5                          |
| V4          | 2023-09-11      | 6.5                          |
| V4          | 2024-06-06      | 5.8                          |
| V4          | 2024-09-03      | 7.3                          |
| V4          | 2024-11-21      | 6.7                          |
| V4          | 2025-03-10      | 6.1                          |
| V4          | 2025-05-22      | 6.3                          |
| V4          | 2025-08-26      | 6.3                          |
| V4          | 2025-12-03      | 6.4                          |

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