

Water Quality

Regional Water Quality Challenges

The City of San Juan Bautista gets 100% of its water supply from groundwater. The two main factors that affect the water quality of our groundwater are:

Nitrate in groundwater originates primarily from fertilizers, septic systems, and manure storage/spreading systems.

1. **Nitrates** from agricultural runoff and broken septic systems, and
2. **Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)**, including salts, that come from agricultural runoff and the use of residential water softeners to treat the naturally "hard" groundwater.

These two issues have led to several water quality violations over the last 20 years, some of which have been resolved and some of which are still occurring. These violations will be explained below.

Total Dissolved Solids comprise inorganic salts and small amounts of organic matter dissolved in water.

California Department of Public Health - Nitrate Violation - May 30, 2014

On May 30th, 2014, the City received a Compliance Order from the California Department of Public Health regarding nitrate levels exceeding the acceptable limit in Well #2. The source of the problem was found to be a leaking septic system, and once that property was put on city sewer the nitrate levels in Well #2 almost immediately dropped back down to less than 50% of the acceptable limit. In early January of 2015, the city received letters from the State Department of Public Health and the San Benito County Environmental Health Department stating that the drinking water met the state drinking water standards.

Is my water safe to drink? **YES**

Regional Water Quality Control Board - Total Dissolved Solids Violation - 2001

In 2001, the city received a Compliance Order from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (CCRWCBC) regarding the reduction of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) in the effluent from the city's wastewater treatment plant. The city is still in violation of this Compliance Order. The city undertook several projects as part of the 2006 infrastructure improvement project, such as the installation of the city's purple pipe system for reclaimed water, that count towards addressing the effluent problem, but none of them reduced the TDS levels. Next steps include:

- **Installation of the water softening Pellet Plant, and**
- **Passing an ordinance banning residential water softeners**

These measures will reduce the TDS levels of the source water and eliminate the salts introduced by residential wastewater, which *should* reduce the TDS level close to the acceptable limit, but further improvements may still be necessary.

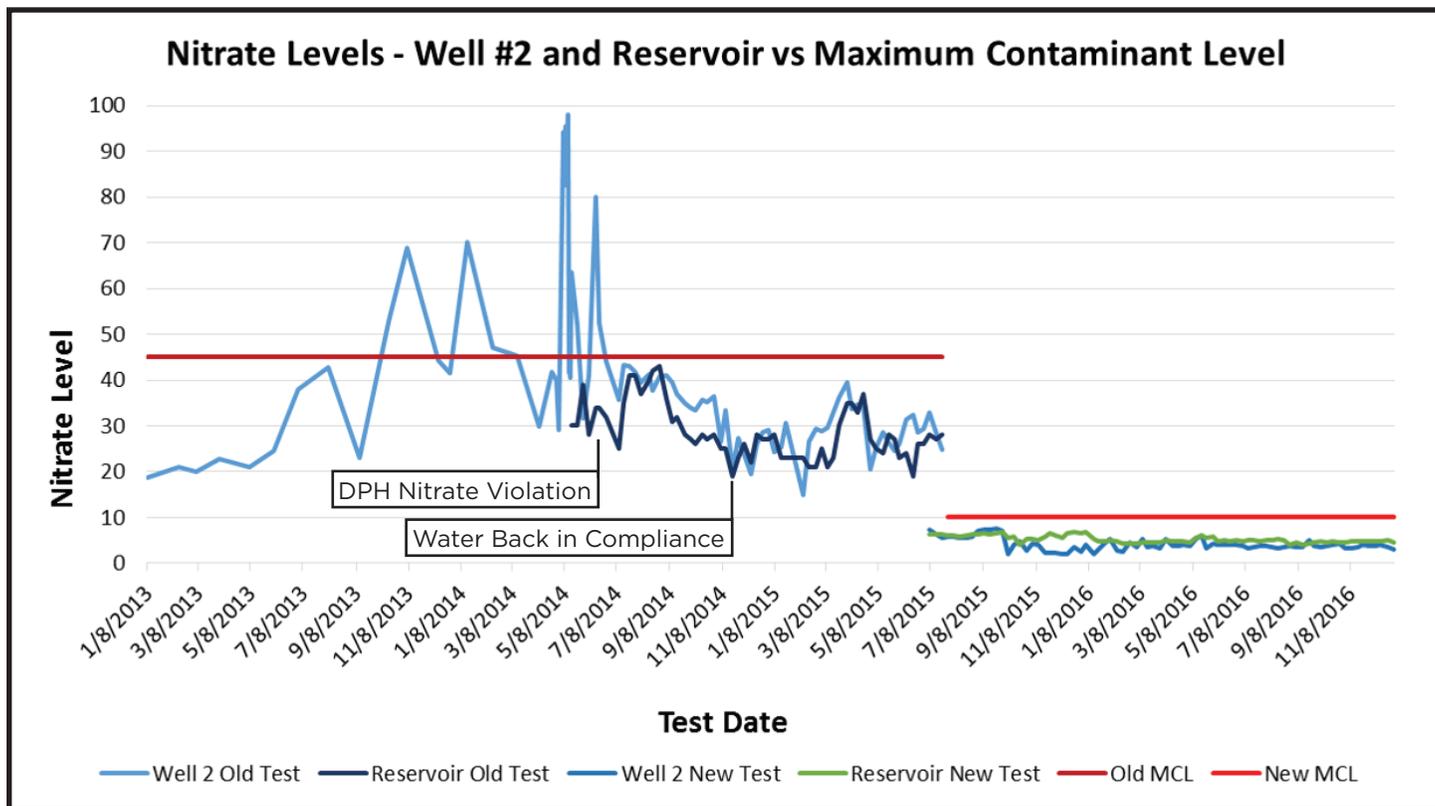
Will additional development exacerbate this problem? **NO**

Bottom line:

Drinking water from the City of San Juan Bautista water system currently complies with all state and federal water quality requirements.



Water Quality Graph - Nitrates



Hard Water - FAQs

What is "hard water"?

Hard water is water that has a high mineral content. Common minerals include: calcium, magnesium, and manganese.

Is it common?

Yes. More than 85% of the United States, as well as other local cities such as Hollister, are affected by hard water.

Is it safe to drink?

Yes. Hard water is NOT a health hazard. In fact, calcium and magnesium are an important part of your recommended diet.

What is the city doing to address this issue?

In the Spring of 2017, the city will be installing a water softening Pellet Plant to treat our well water centrally before it is delivered to water system customers. The project was originally funded through the 2006 Capital Improvement Loan, but the funds were exhausted before the Pellet Plant was completed. After unsuccessfully exploring multiple grant funding options, the city attained the necessary funds through the debt refinancing process in 2015.