

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Citizens, Students and Scientists Team Up for Bar Harbor Arsenic Project
Elevated arsenic levels detected in more than a tenth of wells sampled so far

BAR HARBOR, MAINE – Bar Harbor health officer Mike Gurtler is spearheading a new effort to test all the town’s residential wells for arsenic. Free home-test kits will be available at the Municipal Building.

“Arsenic occurs in many Maine wells,” Gurtler says. “It’s an under-reported threat that can cause cancer, heart disease, immune disorders and developmental delays in children.”

He is working with the MDI Biological Laboratory’s “All About Arsenic” program, a monitoring and education initiative that’s underway in Maine and New Hampshire.

Eighty-five Bar Harbor wells were tested in a similar effort in 2021. Six percent of the samples exceeded the EPA’s 10 parts per billion (ppb) arsenic standard for public water supplies; 13% exceeded the more stringent 5 ppb allowed in some other states. Levels ranged from 6.2 ppb to 188.8 ppb

The initiative’s goal is to collect 100 new samples in Bar Harbor. Teachers and students at Conners Emerson School are helping to collect samples and analyze the data. Partners also include the College of the Atlantic and the Portland-based Defend our Health program.

Kits can be picked up at the Bar Harbor planning office (93 Cottage Street) from October 24th through November 16th. On election day, November 8th, students from Conners Emerson and COA will provide information and kits at the Municipal Building.

Residents unable to pick up a kit themselves can contact Dr. Sarah Hall at COA (shall@coa.edu) to arrange for one to be delivered and returned once well water is sampled.

All test kits must be returned to the planning office within 48 hours of sampling. For more information about the initiative contact Mike Gurtler (mgurtler@barharbormaine.gov)

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