



# ANNUAL WATER QUALITY REPORT

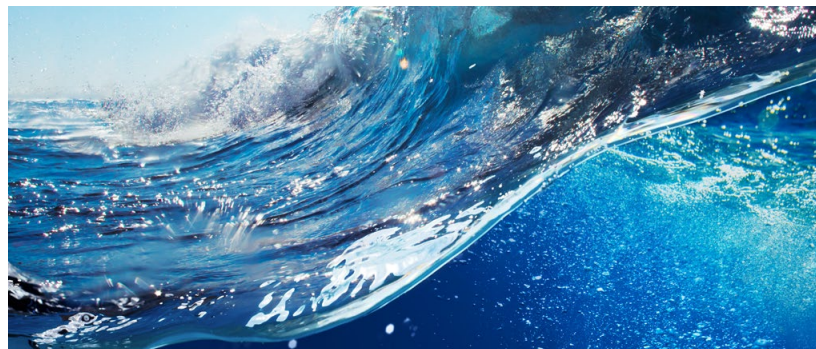
Reporting Year 2023



*Presented By*  
**Natick Water &  
Sewer Division**



PWS ID#: 3198000





## Our Commitment

We are pleased to present to you this year's annual water quality report. This report is a snapshot of last year's water quality covering all testing performed between January 1 and December 31, 2023. Included are details about your sources of water, what it contains, and how it compares to standards set by regulatory agencies. Our constant goal is to provide you with a safe and dependable supply of drinking water. We want you to understand the efforts we make to continually improve the water treatment process and protect our water resources. We are committed to ensuring the quality of your water and providing you with this information.

We are also committed to energy efficiency in our operations. In 2023 we received a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to replace older, electric resistance heating systems at the Springvale water treatment plant with air source heat pumps. In 2024 we will pursue additional grants and advance projects that save energy and reduce costs.

## Where Does My Water Come From?

The Town of Natick obtains its water from 12 groundwater wells at five locations. Ten of the wells are located in Natick, and two are located in Dover. These 12 wells feed Natick's four water treatment facilities: Springvale, Elm Bank, Morses Pond, and Pine Oaks. The Springvale water treatment facilities are made up of two treatment operations, H&T and Tonka, which combine prior to entering the distribution system. Springvale and Elm Bank are the town's primary treatment facilities, and Morses Pond and Pine Oaks serve as backups to supplement water supplies during high-demand conditions. Each treatment facility has an entry point into Natick's drinking water distribution system where the water combines before reaching customers. The Town of Natick's distribution system includes approximately 196 miles of water main and two storage facilities with a combined capacity of nine million gallons.

To find more information about drinking water, visit [water.epa.gov/drink/info/](http://water.epa.gov/drink/info/).

## Lead in Home Plumbing

Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. We are responsible for providing high-quality drinking water and removing lead pipes, but we cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components in your home. You share the responsibility for protecting yourself and your family from the lead in your home plumbing. You can take responsibility by identifying and removing lead materials within your home plumbing and taking steps to reduce your family's risk. Before drinking tap water, flush your pipes for several minutes by running your tap, taking a shower, or doing laundry or a load of dishes. You can also use a filter certified by an American National Standards Institute-accredited certifier to reduce lead in drinking water. If you are concerned about lead in your water and wish to have your water tested, contact the Natick Water and Sewer Division at (508) 647-6557. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available at [epa.gov/safewater/lead](http://epa.gov/safewater/lead).



**When the well is dry, we know the worth of water."**

*-Benjamin Franklin*

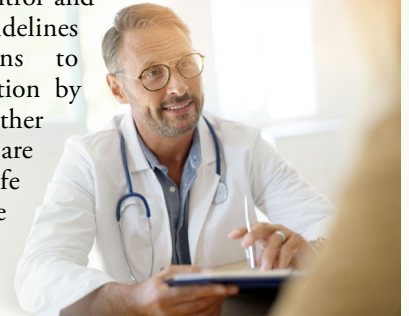
## The Benefits of Fluoridation

Fluoride is naturally occurring in many water supplies in trace amounts. In our system the fluoride level is adjusted to an optimal level averaging 0.7 part per million (ppm) to improve oral health and prevent tooth decay. At this level, it is safe, odorless, colorless, and tasteless. There are over 4 million people in Massachusetts water systems and 184 million people in the U.S. who receive the health and economic benefits of fluoridation.

Due to a nationwide shortage of sodium fluoride, Natick was unable to fluoridate the drinking water from mid-January 2022 through February 2023. As of March 1, 2023, Natick has resumed the addition of fluoride to the drinking water system.

## Important Health Information

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immunocompromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants may be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA)/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by cryptosporidium and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791 or [water.epa.gov/drink/hotline](http://water.epa.gov/drink/hotline).



## QUESTIONS?

For more information about this report, or for any questions relating to your drinking water, please contact Division Supervisor Anthony Comeau or the staff at the Natick Water and Sewer Division at (508) 647-6557 or [water@natickma.org](mailto:water@natickma.org).

## Source Water Assessment

DEP has prepared a Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) report for the supply sources serving this water system. The SWAP report notes the key issues of activities in Zone 1: hazardous material storage and use, residential land use, transportation corridors, oil or hazardous material contamination sites, and wellhead protection planning in the water supply protection area for all sources. The report commends the water system on existing source protection measures.

### What Can Be Done to Improve Protection?

The SWAP report recommends that the town:

1. Develop and implement a wellhead protection plan.
2. Expand on the scope of the emergency response teams to ensure that they are aware of the stormwater drainage in Zone II.

Natick Water and Sewer Division plans to address the protection recommendations by:

- continuing to develop and implement a wellhead protection plan
- continuing to locate and map the stormwater drainage systems within Zone II
- reviewing pending National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit

Residents can help protect sources by:

- practicing good septic system maintenance
- supporting water supply protection initiatives at town meetings
- taking hazardous household chemicals to hazardous materials collection centers on specified days
- limiting pesticide and fertilizer use
- taking waste motor oil to the Natick Recycling Center

### What Is My System's Ranking?

A susceptibility ranking of moderate to high was assigned to this system using the information collected during the assessment by DEP.

### Where Can I See the SWAP Report?

The complete SWAP report is available at the Town of Natick Department of Public Works and [mass.gov/files/documents/2019/02/22/swap-nero-with-inst.pdf](https://mass.gov/files/documents/2019/02/22/swap-nero-with-inst.pdf). For more information, call the Natick Water and Sewer Division at (508) 647-6557 or email [water@natickma.org](mailto:water@natickma.org).

## Substances That Could Be in Water

To ensure that tap water is safe to drink, DEP and the U.S. EPA prescribe regulations limiting the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water, which must provide the same protection for public health. Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of these contaminants does not necessarily indicate that the water poses a health risk.

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity. Substances that may be present in source water include:

Microbial Contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, which may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, or wildlife;

Inorganic Contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or may result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming;

Pesticides and Herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses;

Organic Chemical Contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production and which may also come from gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems;

Radioactive Contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or may be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities.

More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the U.S. EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.



## What's a Cross-Connection?

Cross-connections that contaminate drinking water distribution lines are a major concern. A cross-connection is formed at any point where a drinking water line connects to equipment (boilers), systems containing chemicals (air-conditioning systems, fire sprinkler systems, irrigation systems), or water sources of questionable quality.

Cross-connection contamination can occur when the pressure in the equipment or system is greater than the pressure inside the drinking water line (backpressure). Contamination can also occur when the pressure in the drinking water line drops due to fairly routine occurrences (main breaks, heavy water demand), causing contaminants to be sucked out from the equipment and into the drinking water line (backsiphonage).

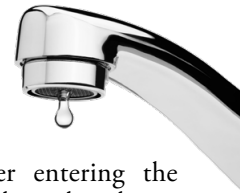
Outside water taps and garden hoses tend to be the most common sources of cross-connection contamination at home. The garden hose creates a hazard when submerged in a swimming pool or attached to a chemical sprayer for weed killing. Garden hoses that are left lying on the ground may be contaminated by fertilizers, cesspools, or garden chemicals. Improperly installed valves in your toilet could also be a source of cross-connection contamination.

Community water supplies are continuously jeopardized by cross-connections unless appropriate valves, known as backflow prevention devices, are installed and maintained. We have surveyed industrial, commercial, and institutional facilities in the service area to make sure that potential cross-connections are identified and eliminated or protected by a backflow preventer. We also inspect and test backflow preventers to make sure that they provide maximum protection. For more information on backflow prevention, contact the Safe Drinking Water Hotline at (800) 426-4791.



## Water Main Flushing

Distribution mains (pipes) convey water to homes, businesses, and hydrants in your neighborhood. The water entering the distribution mains is of very high quality; however, water quality can deteriorate in areas of the distribution mains over time. Water main flushing is the process of cleaning the interior of water distribution mains by sending a rapid flow of water through them.



Flushing maintains water quality in several ways. For example, flushing removes sediments like iron and manganese. Although iron and manganese do not pose health concerns, they can affect the taste, clarity, and color of the water. Additionally, sediments can shield microorganisms from the disinfecting power of chlorine, contributing to the growth of microorganisms within distribution mains. Flushing helps remove stale water and ensures the presence of fresh water with sufficient dissolved oxygen and disinfectant levels and an acceptable taste and smell.

During flushing operations in your neighborhood, some short-term deterioration of water quality, though uncommon, is possible. You should avoid tap water for household uses at that time. If you do use the tap, allow your cold water to run for a few minutes at full velocity before use, and avoid using hot water to prevent sediment accumulation in your hot water tank. Please contact us if you have any questions or if you would like more information on our water main flushing schedule.

## Water Conservation Tips

You can play a role in conserving water and save yourself money in the process by becoming conscious of the amount of water your household is using and looking for ways to use less whenever you can. It is not hard to conserve water. Here are a few tips:

Automatic dishwashers use four to six gallons for every cycle, regardless of how many dishes are loaded. So get a run for your money and load it to capacity.

Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth.

Check every faucet in your home for leaks. Just a slow drip can waste 15 to 20 gallons a day. Fix it and you can save almost 6,000 gallons per year.

Check your toilets for leaks by putting a few drops of food coloring in the tank. Watch for a few minutes to see if the color shows up in the bowl. It is not uncommon to lose up to 100 gallons a day from an invisible toilet leak. Fix it and you save more than 30,000 gallons a year.

Use your water meter to detect hidden leaks. Simply turn off all taps and water-using appliances. Then check the meter after 15 minutes. If it moved, you have a leak.

## Test Results

Our water is monitored for many different kinds of substances on a very strict sampling schedule, and the water we deliver must meet specific health standards. Here, we show those regulated substances that were detected in our water. Remember that detecting a substance does not mean the water is unsafe to drink; our goal is to keep all detects below their respective maximum allowed levels.

The state recommends monitoring for certain substances less than once per year because the concentrations of these substances do not change frequently. In these cases, the most recent sample data is included, along with the year in which the sample was taken.

REGULATED SUBSTANCES							
SUBSTANCE (UNIT OF MEASURE)	YEAR SAMPLED	MCL [MRDL]	MCLG [MRDLG]	HIGHEST RESULT OR HIGHEST RUNNING AVERAGE	RANGE LOW-HIGH	VIOLATION	TYPICAL SOURCE
Barium (ppm)	2022	2	2	0.04	0.02–0.04	No	Discharge of drilling wastes; Discharge from metal refineries; Erosion of natural deposits
Chlorine (ppm)	2023	[4]	[4]	0.53	0.03–1.02	No	Water additive used to control microbes
Fluoride (ppm)	2023	4	4	0.60	0.38–0.60	No	Water additive which promotes strong teeth
Haloacetic Acids [HAAs]–Stage 2 (ppb)	2023	60	NA	10.0	1.2–10.0	No	By-product of drinking water disinfection
Nitrate (ppm)	2023	10	10	2.1	0.6–2.1	No	Runoff from fertilizer use; Leaching from septic tanks, sewage; Erosion of natural deposits
Perchlorate (ppb)	2023	2	NA	0.17	0.08–0.25	No	Inorganic chemicals used as oxidizers in solid propellants for rockets, missiles, fireworks, and explosives
PFAS <sup>1</sup> (ppt)	2023	20	NA	17	ND–18.16	No	Discharges and emissions from industrial and manufacturing sources associated with the production or use of moisture- and oil-resistant coatings on fabrics and other materials; Use and disposal of products containing these PFAS, such as firefighting foams
TTHMs [total trihalomethanes]–Stage 2 (ppb)	2023	80	NA	31	1.5–31	No	By-product of drinking water disinfection

Tap water samples were collected for lead and copper analyses from sample sites throughout the community

SUBSTANCE (UNIT OF MEASURE)	YEAR SAMPLED	AL	MCLG	AMOUNT DETECTED (90TH %ILE)	SITES ABOVE AL/TOTAL SITES	VIOLATION	TYPICAL SOURCE
Copper (ppm)	2023	1.3	1.3	0.196	0/30	No	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; Erosion of natural deposits
Lead (ppb)	2023	15	0	ND	0/30	No	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; Erosion of natural deposits

## SECONDARY SUBSTANCES

SUBSTANCE (UNIT OF MEASURE)	YEAR SAMPLED	SMCL	MCLG	HIGHEST RESULT OR HIGHEST RUNNING AVERAGE	RANGE LOW-HIGH	VIOLATION	TYPICAL SOURCE
Manganese (ppb)	2023	50 <sup>2</sup>	NA	33.3	ND–100	No	Leaching from natural deposits

## UNREGULATED SUBSTANCES<sup>3</sup>

SUBSTANCE (UNIT OF MEASURE)	YEAR SAMPLED	HIGHEST RESULT OR HIGHEST RUNNING AVERAGE	RANGE LOW-HIGH	TYPICAL SOURCE
Hardness (ppm)	2023	125.2	86.7–155.0	Naturally occurring
Sodium (ppm)	2022	86	66–114	Natural sources; Runoff from use of salt on roadways

<sup>1</sup> For the latest PFAS6 results and information, visit [natickma.gov/1753/PFAS](http://natickma.gov/1753/PFAS).

<sup>2</sup> Manganese is a naturally occurring mineral found in rocks, soil, groundwater, and surface water. Manganese is necessary for proper nutrition and part of a healthy diet, but it can have undesirable effects on certain sensitive populations at elevated concentrations. U.S. EPA and DEP have established public health advisory levels for manganese to protect against concerns of potential neurological effects.

<sup>3</sup> Unregulated contaminants are those for which the U.S. EPA has not established drinking water standards. The purpose of unregulated contaminant monitoring is to assist U.S. EPA in determining their occurrence in drinking water and whether future regulation is warranted.

## WATER HARDNESS GUIDE

This information is provided so that residents can adjust their appliances (measured as  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ):

AMOUNT (PPM)	RATING
<60 ppm	soft
61-120 ppm	moderately hard
121-180 ppm	hard
>181 ppm	very hard

## Definitions

**90th %ile:** Out of every 10 homes sampled, 9 were at or below this level. This number is compared to the Action Level to determine lead and copper compliance.

**AL (Action Level):** The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

**MCL (Maximum Contaminant Level):** The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.

**MCLG (Maximum Contaminant Level Goal):** The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.

**MRDL (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level):** The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.

**MRDLG (Maximum Residual Disinfectant Level Goal):** The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

**NA:** Not applicable.

**ND (Not detected):** Indicates that the substance was not found by laboratory analysis.

**ppb (parts per billion):** One part substance per billion parts water (or micrograms per liter).

**ppm (parts per million):** One part substance per million parts water (or milligrams per liter).

**ppt (parts per trillion):** One part substance per trillion parts water (or nanograms per liter).

**SMCL (Secondary Maximum Contaminant Level):** These standards are developed to protect aesthetic qualities of drinking water and are not health based.

## What Are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of manufactured chemicals used worldwide since the 1950s to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. During production and use, PFAS can migrate into the soil, water, and air. Most PFAS do not break down; they remain in the environment, ultimately finding their way into drinking water. Because of their widespread use and their persistence in the environment, PFAS are found all over the world at low levels. Some PFAS can build up in people and animals with repeated exposure over time.

The most commonly studied PFAS are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). PFOA and PFOS have been phased out of production and use in the United States, but other countries may still manufacture and use them.

Some products that may contain PFAS include:

- Some grease-resistant paper, fast food containers/wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes
- Nonstick cookware
- Stain-resistant coatings used on carpets, upholstery, and other fabrics
- Water-resistant clothing
- Personal care products (shampoo, dental floss) and cosmetics (nail polish, eye makeup)
- Cleaning products
- Paints, varnishes, and sealants

Even though recent efforts to remove PFAS have reduced the likelihood of exposure, some products may still contain them. If you have questions or concerns about products you use in your home, contact the Consumer Product Safety Commission at (800) 638-2772. For a more detailed discussion on PFAS, please visit [bit.ly/3Z5AMm8](http://bit.ly/3Z5AMm8).

## Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG)

You may not be aware of it, but every time you pour fat, oil, or grease (FOG) down your sink (e.g., bacon grease), you are contributing to a costly problem in the sewer collection system. FOG coats the inner walls of the plumbing in your house as well as the walls of underground piping throughout the community. Over time, these greasy materials build up and form blockages in pipes, which can lead to wastewater backing up into parks, yards, streets, and storm drains. These backups allow FOG to contaminate local waters, including drinking water. Exposure to untreated wastewater is a public health hazard. FOG discharged into septic systems and drain fields can also cause malfunctions, resulting in more frequent tank pump-outs and other expenses.

Communities spend billions of dollars every year to unplug or replace grease-blocked pipes, repair pump stations, and clean up costly and illegal wastewater spills. Here are some tips that you and your family can follow to help maintain a well-run system now and in the future:

### NEVER:

Pour FOG down the house or storm drains.

Dispose of food scraps by flushing them.

Use the toilet as a wastebasket.

### ALWAYS:

Scrape and collect FOG into a waste container such as an empty coffee can, and dispose of it with your garbage.

Place food scraps in waste containers or garbage bags for disposal with solid wastes.

Place a wastebasket in each bathroom for solid wastes like disposable diapers, creams and lotions, and personal hygiene products, including nonbiodegradable wipes.