

What Is In Our Water?

It depends. At the risk of being repetitive, if you are on a private domestic well, you are on your own. Have your well water tested, especially for a property you are about to buy, and find out what is in the water. Many of the contaminants which potentially jeopardize human health are invisible and without odor yet are easily removed.

If your water is supplied by a regulated municipal system, or by a communal water system, the Safe Drinking Water Act, passed by Congress in 1974 and subsequently amended, gave the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the authority to set and enforce drinking water standards. The entity which supplies your water is required to issue an annual report. The report for the City of Santa Fe's Sangre de Cristo Water Department is mailed every year to customers and is available on line at this location.

<http://www.santafenm.gov/DocumentView.asp?DID=3332>

The Water Quality Report details the sources of supply, the water quality, and the range of occurrence of constituents which fall under Primary Standards (regulated contaminants) and which have a legally enforceable MCL (Maximum Contamination Level) and those which fall under Secondary Standards and for which the EPA provides guidelines which are non-enforceable. It is interesting to note that the water constituents which are among the most annoying to consumers are listed but not regulated under Secondary Standards...iron, manganese and sulfur. Hardness, "lime scale" caused by the precipitation of calcium and magnesium, is not on the list. Silica, another staining constituent with high local occurrence, also does not make the list.

By definition, municipal water is EPA-compliant on an annualized basis but levels may vary considerably in accordance with water available (the mix of reservoir and well field water) and your geographic location. The Water Quality Report also explains the disinfection process and the City's efforts to monitor the resultant disinfection by-products. The City provides disinfected water through your connection. It's the law. One of the best things you can do for your household water quality is to install carbon cartridge filters to remove the chlorine odor and taste. The adverse health effects of chlorinate water are well documented. The option to further purify drinking water is an individual choice.

In order to "rest" the aquifers in the two well fields and to provide an alternate supply to the combination of aquifer and Santa Fe watershed reservoir water available for Santa Fe City and County residents, the City and County have started construction of the Buckman Direct Diversion Project. The Buckman Direct Diversion (BDD) project will provide access to the City's and County's allotted San Juan-Chama water supply by means of an intake structure on the Rio Grande near the historic town site of Buckman, on the east side of the about river three miles downstream from the Otowi Bridge, north west of Santa Fe. Las Campanas is a limited partner in the venture and will receive and treat a portion of the water for its residents at a facility that is not part of the BDD.

Even though the project is under construction, it remains controversial because of the perceived potential that waters contaminated from LANL discharge may enter the Buckman Direct Diversion intake. I encourage you to peruse the BDD website. The site details the rationale behind the project, the stages of construction and the water treatment process. The reader may also download the independent report on the effectiveness of the proposed treatment and a slide presentation on the quality of Rio Grande water. <http://www.bddproject.org>