

Very early in the CSD's exploration of the possibility of getting a water system for Boonville, we arranged with Alpha Labs to come to Boonville and test the water in two of the more densely populated areas of town. We had heard there were problems there and Dave Jensen, then County Director of Environmental Health, had suggested we get samples to verify it. Val and I went door to door in these neighborhoods asking for permission to test the water. The results were to be available to the individual residents. The CSD would get a summary of the results, but would not know which result went with which well. Twenty-three wells on twenty-two parcels were selected. Alpha Labs sent two of their people to Boonville to gather the samples, which were to be tested for two things-- E. coli and nitrates. Of the 23 wells that were tested, 16 (69.57%) tested positive for E. coli. As for nitrates, 7 wells had more than 10 ppm, which is the maximum level considered safe by the US EPA. Two wells had over 20 ppm of nitrates.

The results were startling to Alpha Labs and to County Public Health. There were articles in the AVA, then the Ukiah Daily Journal and the Press Democrat. Apparently that is how Boonville's water came to the attention of the State Water Resources Control Board. The SWRCB Division of Drinking Water sent out a survey to Boonville businesses asking various questions about the number of people served and how often.

Based on the results of this survey, some establishments were found to fit the definition of a public water system and the regulatory authority transferred from State Small Water Systems monitored by County Public Health to Public Water Systems monitored by SWRCB. Businesses meet the definition of a public water system if they served water to more than 25 people at least 60 days out of the year.

State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water has the authority to conduct the survey and to regulated public water systems based on the results. The fees are set by State statute.

If (when?) Boonville does get a water system, all those currently classified Public Water Systems would go away to be replaced by a single CSD system.