

High concentrations of arsenic found in 9 percent of northern San Joaquin Valley groundwater

By Jordan Guinn

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An evaluation of the area's groundwater more than five years in the making shows high concentrations of arsenic in 9 percent northern San Joaquin Valley's groundwater.

Wells in Lodi did not have a high concentration of arsenic.

The arsenic arrived naturally as runoff from the Sierra Nevadas, said George Bennett, groundwater hydrologist for the U.S. Geological Survey and one of the assessment's main authors.

More than 40 percent of the state's drinking water comes from groundwater. The USGS analysis only looked at untreated groundwater from wells, not water delivered to consumers through the tap.

"The area of high arsenic concentration appears to be surrounding Stockton and south of Stockton near the eastern edge of the Delta," said George Bennett.

Samples for the report were collected from 61 wells in parts of Amador, Alameda, Calaveras, Contra Costa, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties.

Bennett said the report is an informational tool that will help resource managers and water agencies in the area be aware of the situation and move forward.

The initial well-sampling was conducted in 2005 and a report was released in 2006, but the new report provides an outlook on drinking water aquifers, based on USGS data and hundreds of thousands of records the state's Department of Public Health database.

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