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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FREE WATER TESTING NOW AVAILABLE FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS

WELD COUNTY, CO – When Weld County Chemist Mark Thomas speaks about his office’s newest instrument, there is a tinge of excitement in his voice. “We are talking about testing parts per billion,” Thomas said. “That is like saying we can measure something that is as small as one eyedropper drop of water in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.”



*Weld County Chemist Mark Thomas explained how the county’s new gas chromatograph and mass spectrometer will be used to test water samples from county residents.*

Thomas, who works in Weld County’s Department of Public Health and Environment laboratory, is referring to the county’s new gas chromatograph and mass spectrometer instrument which will enable the county to provide free ground-water testing for individuals concerned about potential impacts to their wells from oil and gas activity near their property.

“This instrument will analyze a water sample for volatile organic compounds, also known as VOCs, and will produce a report as to what level those compounds exist – if they exist at all,” said Thomas. “We anticipate that individuals in the county who use well-water will want to take advantage of this test so they can have base-line information to which they can compare future tests.”

The VOC testing is offered by the county at no charge for county residents on well water. Municipal water is already tested for VOCs by the individual municipal water suppliers.

“The county is proud to be able to offer the free VOC testing to county residents,” said Weld County Commissioner Chairman Sean Conway. “This instrument provides valuable information and will not only help protect public health but also provide assurance.”

Prior to the acquisition of the gas chromatograph and mass spectrometer, county residents had to pay either the state or a private lab for VOC testing which, for some individuals, was cost prohibitive. With this instrument, the county can now provide that testing at no charge to county residents.

Last Spring, Weld County received a grant from the Federal Mineral Lease Board. “Weld County chose to use that grant funding for the purchase of this instrument in order to provide



*County residents interested in having their water tested for volatile organic compounds can contact the Weld County Department of Environmental Health at 970-304-6415.*

Mineral Lease Board. “Weld County chose to use that grant funding for the purchase of this instrument in order to provide

a water-testing service for our residents” said Commissioner Dave Long. The cost of the instrument was approximately \$145,000.

For additional fees, the county can also test water samples for metals, ions, pH and bacteria.

“The instrument has been certified, and we are ready to begin testing,” said Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment Laboratory Manager Cherylyn Darnell. “The process for residents to request sampling is in place and is as easy as making a phone call.”

County residents interested in having their well-water sampled should call the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment at 970-304-6415 and provide their name, address and phone number. A member of the Weld County staff will contact the resident to set up an appointment to collect the sample. The sample must be collected by a member of the department to ensure the sample isn’t inadvertently contaminated in the collection process. “If you fill your car up with gas earlier in the day, or even mow your lawn prior to the sample being collected, that fuel could show up in the analysis of the sample,” said Thomas. “It is that sensitive.”

Once the sample is collected, it will be tested and a report will be generated and made available to the resident. Because this is a new service offered by the county, estimated turn-around time for testing is approximately two weeks from the time the sample is collected. County residents will be able to take advantage of the free VOC testing twice a year if they choose.

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