



Montana Department of Transportation Plains Maintenance Facility

Site Update

February 2019

Since 2012, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Groundwater Remediation Program has provided oversight of groundwater salt contamination in the Lower Lynch Creek Road area in Plains. DEQ continues to work with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) to assess the contamination and assist residents whose water has been impacted.

Current Update

- MDT continues to provide bottled water to all salt-affected residents for drinking and cooking.
- MDT has drilled six deep-water wells at properties where water has been most severely affected. Initial water quality testing of the deep-water wells showed elevated amounts of naturally occurring arsenic, iron, and manganese. In response, MDT's contractor, Culligan, installed water treatment systems to bring in-home water quality to appropriate levels.
- Water quality testing of both untreated and treated water will continue until the salt contaminants dissipate to concentrations that meet beneficial use criteria, which means the water is suitable for uses such as drinking, food preparation, irrigation, watering livestock, and industry.
- **We're having a public meeting!** Please join us to get updates and ask questions.

When: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 at 6:30 pm

Where: Plains Christian Missionary Alliance Church,
Community Room,
505 West 5th Street, Plains MT

DEQ will make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who wish to participate in the meeting. If you require an accommodation, please contact Christine Mandiloff at (406) 444-6469, christine.mandiloff@mt.gov.

Would You Like More Information?

- Flip the page over for answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- View our website at: <http://deq.mt.gov/Land/statesuperfund/mdtplains>
- Have a specific question? Contact one of the experts—they're happy to help!



Site Contacts

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What happened?

In 2012, MDT self-reported to DEQ that road maintenance salt stored at its Plains storage facility had leached into groundwater; later, it was found that some residents' wells had been affected. Salt attenuates (lessens) through dilution in water and absorption into soil but it takes time. DEQ has worked with MDT to assess and respond to the problem and will do so until water quality is restored for residents whose wells were affected. Those efforts have included well water sampling, providing bottled water, drilling deep-water wells for residents whose water was most significantly impacted, and installing water treatment systems for the deep-water wells. MDT also began housing its salt operations in a building to prevent additional salt leaching to groundwater.

Is there a risk to my health from salt-contaminated water?

The sodium and chloride in the water do not pose a risk to your health unless you're medically required to be on a low sodium diet. We encourage you to contact your health provider if you have questions about the salt's potential impact to your health.

My water is affected by the salt contamination. Will I get bottled water? Will I get a new deep-water well?

MDT has and will provide bottled water to residents if secondary water quality standards are exceeded in their drinking water. Secondary water quality standards are exceeded if there is over 250 milligrams per liter of chloride in the water and/or more than 500 milligrams of total dissolved solids in the water. MDT has drilled deep-water wells for residents whose water has been most severely impacted and where salt has degraded the class of groundwater from Class I to Class II or III. (Class I groundwater is the highest quality groundwater and is considered suitable for most beneficial uses.) Please contact DEQ for information about whether you qualify for bottled water or a deep-water well.

What happens to the old shallow-water wells that have been replaced with new deep-water wells?

The old shallow-water wells will be used for monitoring purposes. Eventually, after the salt attenuates and ground water recovers, the shallow-water wells could potentially be used again.

Are there problems with the new deep-water wells?

Tests of the deep-water wells showed elevated concentrations of naturally occurring arsenic, iron, and manganese. Arsenic concentrations in the deep aquifer exceed the Human Health Standard of 10 micrograms per liter, and the water must be treated to be safe for drinking and cooking. Iron and manganese are treated due to beneficial use problems. MDT's contractor, Culligan, installed water treatment systems to treat the water from those wells for in-home use; irrigation water is not treated.

Who's responsible to maintain and pay for the water treatment systems that MDT installed?

MDT is responsible for the maintenance and cost of the water treatment systems until shallow water quality returns to appropriate levels. At that time, MDT will hook up the shallow wells upon request by the current property owners. Residents who wish to continue using their deep-water wells will be responsible for the maintenance and cost of the water treatment systems.

Where can I get more information?

You can find more information about water quality, updates, and more on our website at: <http://deg.mt.gov/Land/statesuperfund/mdtplains>

If you do not have access to our website, please contact Laura Alvey, DEQ Groundwater Remediation Program, at (406) 444-0212 for related documents.