



Media Release

Concentrations of Some Pollutants Increasing in Streams Following Camp Fire

Public Warned Not to Drink or Cook with Untreated Surface Waters

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2019

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REDDING – Five months after the Camp Fire ravaged 153,336 acres and became the deadliest wildfire in California history, state water quality officials continue to monitor waterways impacted by the fire. The most recent testing of surface water samples shows a rise in concentrations of some metals and contaminants, prompting the State Water Board to underscore a longstanding caution about consuming such water.

While the public should never drink or cook with untreated water from lakes and streams, it is especially important at this time to not use or drink water from waterways in the Camp Fire burn zone.

The most recent round of samples indicates increased concentrations of some metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Surface waters are those waters that flow on the ground surface and do not include water that comes from wells.

This second round of surface water samples, collected on March 27, was timed to assess pollutant concentrations following a five-day storm event. This is noteworthy because sustained rainstorm activity would have triggered erosion issues – charred and possibly contaminated soil being swept into the waterways.

Preliminary laboratory analyses found concentrations of aluminum, antimony, arsenic, cadmium, lead, and selenium exceeding Primary Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) at most monitoring stations. These concentrations were higher than previous sample results. PAH concentrations also increased compared to previous sample results but did not exceed Primary MCLs. Primary MCLs are drinking water standards that protect public health.

“We are working closely with local, state and federal partners to better understand the impacts to surface water, groundwater, and drinking water resulting from the Camp Fire. It is very likely that we will be expanding the surface water monitoring program to include locations further downstream,” said Clint Snyder, Central Valley Water Board assistant executive officer. “It’s important that the public not drink or cook with untreated surface water.”

The [Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board](#) is conducting targeted sampling of surface waters at various locations throughout the Camp Fire burn area and downstream of

the burn area in coordination with Butte County, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Department of Transportation.

PAHs are a class of chemicals that occur naturally in carbon containing substances such as coal, crude oil, and gasoline. PAHs are also produced when wood, garbage and other carbon-based substances are burned.

Additional data are required to determine if the concentrations detected during the January and February sampling are representative of post-fire surface water quality in the burn area. Our agencies will continue to monitor surface waters and will provide updates to the public regarding these monitoring efforts as results become available.

Homeowners with shallow wells along Butte Creek and Little Butte Creek should review their well construction details and consider testing their well water if they have not already done so. Visit www.ButteCountyRecovers.org to download the Private Well Safety and Testing guidance or call the Butte County Environmental Health Division at (530) 552-3880 for more information.

The public should direct any questions regarding the quality of their drinking water supplied by a public water system to their local water purveyor or the State Water Board's [Division of Drinking Water](#) at (530) 224-4800.