



Media Release

Elevated Concentrations of Some Pollutants Persist in Streams Following Camp Fire

Public Warned Not to Drink or Cook with Untreated Surface Waters

For Immediate Release:

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REDDING – State water quality officials continue to monitor surface waters throughout the 153,00-acre burn area that destroyed Paradise, Magalia, Concow and outlying areas last fall, and said today that while water quality hasn't gotten worse, the public should continue to avoid using, cooking with or drinking water from streams in this burn area.

"We are pleasantly surprised by lower than expected concentrations in surface waters following this devastating fire," said Clint Snyder, Central Valley Water Board Assistant Executive Officer. "To be clear, this water remains unsafe for drinking or any use due to continued detection of bacteria and other contaminants. We will continue to monitor pollutant concentrations and provide the public with information as it becomes available."

This second and most recent round of surface water sample collection on January 17 was timed to assess pollutant concentrations in peak flows following a recent storm event, Snyder said. Samples were collected on Jan. 17 throughout the burn area. Laboratory analyses found concentrations of bacteria (E.Coli), aluminum, iron, manganese, and some polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) exceeded water quality standards for drinking water.

These surface waters are not a source of drinking water for homes, with the exception of some shallow wells along Butte Creek where creek water may seep into the wells. Home owners with shallow wells along Butte Creek should review their well construction details and consider testing their well water.

The State Water Board's Division of Drinking Water who in part, regulates the quality of water originating from drinking water plants is also collecting samples. Recent samples indicate local plants are operating as designed and are producing water that meets regulatory standards.

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.

Although testing found elevated levels of aluminum, iron, and manganese these metals are also naturally occurring, explained Snyder. Further study will be required to determine what



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percentages are naturally occurring and what percentages are attributable to runoff from the burn area.

During the Jan. 17 sampling event, only aluminum was detected above the primary maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). Primary MCLs are drinking water standards adopted as regulations to protect public health.

Concentrations of iron and manganese exceeded secondary maximum contaminant levels in some samples. Secondary MCLs are aesthetic standards, meaning the public might notice changes in the taste, odor, or color of the water.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (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. The State Water Board analyzed samples for 22 PAHs and of those, five were detected above applicable thresholds.

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

Home owners with shallow wells along Butte Creek should review their well construction details and consider testing their well water. 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.

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