

PFAS community update

May 2025 | Blue Mountains catchment

WaterNSW investigation findings

WaterNSW has completed its initial investigation into the source of PFAS contamination in the Adams Creek and Medlow catchments. The investigation has identified three potential sources of contamination – two separate motor vehicle accidents on the Great Western Highway and the Medlow Bath Rural Fire Brigade station. Potential secondary sources of contamination such as soil, sediment and concrete were also identified. WaterNSW extends its gratitude to the Blue Mountains community groups and individuals who provided their time and valuable local knowledge to assist the investigation.

Investigation findings

The WaterNSW investigation into the source of PFAS contamination in the Blue Mountains catchment has identified three potential sources of PFAS contamination – two motor vehicle accidents on the Great Western Highway which occurred in 1992 and 2002 near the Medlow Bath township, and the Medlow Bath Rural Fire Brigade station.

The investigation involved an extensive sampling program with more than 250 samples taken in 37

different locations. It also examined potential historical use of fire retardant in the catchment, including in earlier vehicle accidents and bushfires.

An analysis of Rural Fire Service (RFS), Fire and Rescue NSW and Transport for NSW records related to historic activities in the area was also conducted.

The chemical compound signature identified from sampling is consistent with that used in Aqueous Fire Fighting Foam (AFFF). Analysis indicates that PFOS and PFHxS were the dominant PFAS chemicals identified.

Investigation findings indicate that PFAS levels were highest in the upper Adams Creek catchment, closer to the identified potential sources of contamination. Concentrations decreased downstream, in line with expected levels of dilution. An evaluation of stormwater drainage pathways suggested contamination may be moving downstream via rainfall and surface water runoff, and previous water transfers between dams (the process of moving raw water throughout the [Blue Mountain System](#) to supply the Cascade Water Filtration Plant).

Some potential secondary sources of contamination identified include soil, sediment and concrete, as they can retain and release PFAS over time. While firefighting foam has historically been identified as a source of PFAS in the environment, it has also been confirmed that low-level PFAS contamination is present throughout the environment, with detections at various



Greaves Creek Dam

concentrations in the catchment.

All water samples for PFOS exceeded the national ecological guidelines outlined in the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP) but were below the recreational guidelines.

Findings from the investigation have been reviewed by the NSW PFAS Technical Advisory Group and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), who concur with the findings.

Next steps

The EPA has recommended that a detailed site investigation should now be undertaken consistent with the National Environment Protection Measure 1999. The outcomes will help inform potential remediation options. Detailed investigations are likely to involve a number of agencies, with support from the NSW EPA.

Medlow Dam and Greaves Creek Dam, of which Adams Creek is a tributary, will remain disconnected from the Blue Mountains water supply system.

The dams will only be returned to the raw water supply network once we are confident appropriate permanent mitigation measures are in place.

Current testing program

WaterNSW is continuing to carry out testing of the [Blue Mountains System](#) and [Greater Sydney storage dams](#). These results are published on our website monthly.

NSW Health and Sydney Water have advised drinking water in the Blue Mountains meets the existing Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and is safe to drink.

Visit nsw.gov.au/pfas to learn more.

WaterNSW, as the operator of dams in the Blue Mountains, is working closely with NSW Health and Sydney Water to ensure drinking water remains safe.

Community drop-in

WaterNSW together with Sydney Water and NSW Health are holding community drop-in information sessions. Representatives will be available to answer any questions relating to water quality and investigation findings. Please walk in, no RSVP necessary.

Tuesday 27 May

10am – 1pm

**Phillips Hall, Blackheath
Area Neighbourhood Centre**

Corner of Gardiner Crescent
and Great Western Highway,
Blackheath

Tuesday 27 May

3pm – 6pm

**Seminar Room, Blue
Mountains Cultural Centre**

30 Parke Street, Katoomba

Thursday 5 June

10am – 2pm

**Blue Mountains Theatre and
Community Hub**

106 Macquarie Road,
Springwood