

Next phase of investigation into the source of PFAS contamination in the Blue Mountains catchment

AUGUST 2026

Sampling is underway for a detailed site investigation of the Upper Blue Mountains Drinking Water Catchment

The Blue Mountains PFAS Project Control Group, consisting of key NSW Government agencies, including WaterNSW and the EPA, is overseeing a Detailed Site Investigation (DSI) of PFAS contamination in the Upper Blue Mountains Drinking Water Catchment.

The DSI was recommended after WaterNSW's initial investigation identified two separate historical motor vehicle accident sites on the Great Western Highway and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Medlow Bath Fire Station as potential sources of PFAS contamination in the Medlow catchment.

The DSI includes a comprehensive sampling program of areas near the potential sources, and will also consider other potential sources and risks in the Adams Creek area. Testing will include soil, groundwater, surface water, and sediment sampling and analysis.

The sampling analysis and quality plan (SAQP) has been developed in accordance with the Contaminated Land Guidelines 2020, NSW EPA Sampling Design Guidelines 2022, PFAS National Environmental Management Plan 3.0 2025, and the NSW Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Groundwater Contamination.

Previous community updates on PFAS can be found here: <https://www.waternsw.com.au/water-services/water-quality/pfas/blue-mountains-investigations>

What will the sampling involve?

The comprehensive sampling program includes testing of soil, groundwater and surface water, as well as undertaking sediment analysis. This work will occur near potential source areas in Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Katoomba.

This work includes the following activities:

- Installation of twelve new groundwater monitoring wells;
- Collection of surface water from creeks and lakes, and stormwater samples from stormwater pits;
- Collection of surface soil samples with hand tools;
- Collection of soil samples from borehole locations, using a hand auger or drill rig; and
- Collection of groundwater samples from existing and newly installed groundwater wells.

Sites will be selected to avoid services and minimise impacts on sensitive areas. Sampling on private properties is not proposed at this time but may be considered as part of future investigation work, once potential PFAS concentrations and distribution across the catchment is better understood.

When and how will this occur?

The sampling activities will occur between 7am and 5pm, Monday to Friday, during August and September 2026. The community can expect to see people and vehicles within the local area while the collection of soil, surface water and stormwater samples occurs.

Drilling activities for installation of groundwater monitoring wells will be undertaken using a track mounted drill rig. A trailer mounted air compressor may also be required for air hammer work, depending on the geology encountered during the drilling process.

Next steps

Temporary traffic management controls will be in place on Coach House Lane in Medlow Bath for approximately two days, with a contraflow in place to assist managing potential impacts to traffic flows.

All sampling works will be undertaken by suitably qualified personnel in accordance with relevant health, safety and environmental requirements. Reinstatement of any disturbed areas will take place following these works.

Given the complexity of the works, it is anticipated that the DSI sampling work will be finalised prior to the last quarter of 2026. Findings will be shared with the local community following completion of the DSI.

Safety of drinking water supply

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.

A water treatment system designed specifically to remove PFAS has been operating at the Cascade plant since December 2024.

Greaves Creek and Medlow dams have been isolated from the supply network since September 2024.

WaterNSW are instead supplying water to the Cascades from Oberon Dam, via the Fish River Water Supply Scheme. Regular testing of drinking water supplied to the Blue Mountains community by Sydney Water shows it remains compliant with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

More information

For more information on other NSW Government work underway to manage PFAS in waterways, visit www.nsw.gov.au/pfas