

Private Well Contamination in Plumstead Township
Update: October 19, 2010

Anticipated timeline of upcoming work

October 20	DEP re-samples 10 private wells where residents are currently using tanker water
October 21	Tetra-Tech begins sediment removal from ponds, weather permitting
October 22	DEP selects drilling contractor
October 27	DEP expects to receive sampling results for 10 private wells
November 1	Contractor expected to begin drilling of new wells

New wells for impacted residents

Residents whose wells were impacted by the June 29 fire and who continue to have elevated levels of fire-related contaminants will have new wells installed prior to the onset of winter. On October 5, drilling companies interested in bidding on the job were at the site to learn more about the scope of work. Three bids were received on October 18. DEP is currently evaluating the credentials of the bidders and expects to select a contractor by the end of this week.

Drilling of new drinking water wells and monitoring wells will begin on or about November 1 for those residents whose latest sampling results indicate ongoing impacts. The new lab data will be used to determine whether DEP's response for previously impacted homeowners will be a new well, an individual treatment system or no action.

The new wells will be drilled into the existing deeper aquifer, which has been tested and where no contamination has been found. The new wells will be approximately 300 or more feet deep (most existing wells are in the 60-120-foot range).

The replacement of wells or the installation of treatment systems is being done as a Prompt Interim Response of the state's HSCA (Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act) program. A public hearing will take place within 30 days after the remedy is completed.

Status of pond water and sediment removal

The removal of sediment from the ponds has been hampered by wet weather; however, DEP's contractor is expected to begin work on October 21, if conditions permit. The removal of the sediment can be accomplished over a period of 10 days if weather conditions are favorable. The excavated material will be stockpiled on site and covered until it can be hauled away, in accordance with DEP waste regulations. There is also the possibility, based upon testing, that the sediment may be directly loaded and taken away as it is removed from the ponds.

Sampling of private wells

DEP and the Bucks County Health Department sampled 35 private wells on October 5th and 6th. In general, benzoic acid contamination levels have dropped significantly. An additional round of sampling of 10 private wells (at homes where tanker water is currently being supplied) will be conducted on October 20. The data gathered from both rounds of sampling will be reviewed to determine the actions the Department will take to provide safe water for individual residents. While benzoic acid and antimony remain the major contaminants of concern, DEP is working to gain a better understanding of the presence of manganese in sample results.

#