

NO CONTAMINANTS SO FAR, BUT TESTING OF WATER CONTINUES



DUNCAN ADAMS PHOTOS, THE MONTANA STANDARD

Sonja Nowakowski, director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, surveys a bottled water distribution site Sunday morning in the parking lot of Montana Resources of Butte. Testing to date has not revealed contaminants but more testing is required, she said. To her right is J. P. Gallagher, chief executive of Butte-Silver Bow County.

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Sonja Nowakowski slung a case of bottled water into the back of a Butte resident's SUV.

Nowakowski, director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, participated Sunday at the main office of Montana Resources in distributing cases of water to residents affected by current water use restrictions.

An errant hydrant connection at Montana Resources raised the possibility that process water from the sprawling copper and molybdenum mine in Butte might have mixed with municipal drinking water.

On Aug. 13, Montana Resources notified the Butte-Silver Bow Water Utility Division that an errant connection could have introduced unknown contaminants into the city's water supply.

A Do Not Consume order was issued and refined for people living in the potentially affected area — located south of Farrell, west of Continental, north of Ottawa and east of Farragut and Howard.

On Sunday morning, vehicles arrived steadily at Montana Resources to receive cases of water.

Nowakowski said she is aware of the burden imposed by the Do Not Consume order but said public safety is paramount.

She said sampling and testing to date have not detected contaminants but said DEQ believes additional analysis is required "in the off chance there are pockets



Distribution of bottled water continued Sunday in Butte outside the Montana Resources mine. A Do Not Consume order still affects some neighborhoods in Butte after a mishap at the mine might have mixed industrial process water with municipal water.

of contamination."

"We've got to be protective of human health," Nowakowski said.

She spoke highly of the work of local government during the water crisis.

"Butte-Silver Bow has done an outstanding job," she said. "They have been great to work with."

J. P. Gallagher, chief executive of

Butte-Silver Bow, participated in the bottled water distribution event Sunday.

As did Mark Thompson, vice president of environmental affairs at Montana Resources. He said water circuits at the mine include Silver Lake water, city water and process water used for industrial purposes.

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108,000 BLM acres in MT have possibility of disposal

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Along the West Boulder River in Park County is an 80-acre Bureau of Land Management parcel that has been identified for possible disposal.

Or has it? The acreage, surrounded by private land, is the only public parcel along the coveted trout stream where other access issues have been brewing over a fence stretched across the stream.

The land is among 6.08 million acres highlighted in an online map identifying Bureau of Land Management parcels scattered across 17 western states that have been identified for possible disposal.

Montana-based onX developed the map

in partnership with the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership to alert the public and policymakers.

"We created this map with TRCP to bring transparency to the land disposal process, to inform outdoor enthusiasts of nearby parcels, and to encourage lawmakers to uphold existing policies that safeguard the public interest when considering any land sales," said Laura Orvidas, onX CEO, in a statement.

BLM clarifies no sales occurring

However, a BLM official disputed the accuracy of the map that is based on flexible documents that can change the year after

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GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

A newly created online map identifies Bureau of Land Management parcels considered for possible sale in Resource Management Plans.