



State of Utah

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Department of  
Environmental Quality

Alan Matheson  
Executive Director

Brad T Johnson  
Deputy Director

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**CONTACT**

Donna Kemp Spangler  
Communications Director  
Office: 801-536-4484  
Cell: 801-554-4944  
[dspangler@utah.gov](mailto:dspangler@utah.gov)

**DEQ Water Samples Show Metals Contamination in American Fork River**  
*Public Cautioned to Avoid Sediments*

SALT LAKE CITY -- Utah health officials are cautioning the public, especially children, to stay out of the American Fork River from Tibble Fork Reservoir and downstream after water samples analyzed by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) found elevated levels of lead in the sediments.

The samples taken above and below Tibble Fork Dam on Tuesday showed elevated levels of metals in the sediment, but lower concentrations in the water.

As a precaution, the Utah County Health Department (UCHD) plans to post “caution” signs along the river, urging people to avoid wading in the river and walking along the banks due to the potentially toxic sediments that were unleashed Saturday from a dam rehabilitation project.

UCHD also advises that if the members of the public experience exposure, or come into contact with the river bank sediment, that the sediment be washed from all skin, clothing, or equipment to avoid possible contamination of automobiles or homes.

Since elevated concentration of metals appear mostly in the sediment, not the water, agricultural users can continue to use the river for irrigation. Based on the sampling results, the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food issued a statement explaining that it does not believe the water poses a risk for livestock or crop irrigation.

Drinking water is not impacted because the river is not used for culinary purposes. Springs used by American Fork residents for drinking water are not connected to the impacted areas. However, American Fork City is testing the springs as a precaution. At this time, there is no indication that any culinary water was impacted.

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is urging anglers to practice “catch and release” as a precaution. DWR biologists collected live fish from the creeks to determine whether the sediment releases had any long term effects. Biologists will work with DEQ and the Utah Department of Health to monitor potential impacts to aquatic wildlife and to ensure that fish are safe to consume.

DEQ’s Division of Water Quality took water column and sediment samples from four locations,  
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including above and below the reservoir and mouth of American Fork Canyon. Two data sondes have been deployed above and below the dam to continuously monitor water quality parameters.

Located in American Fork Canyon, Tibble Fork Reservoir is fed by the American Fork River, Deer Creek, and Tibble Fork Creek. The reservoir is a popular fishing, hiking, canoeing, and boating area.

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**About DEQ**

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality’s (DEQ) mission is to safeguard public health and quality of life by protecting and enhancing the environment. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah’s air, land and water. For more information, visit [www.deq.utah.gov](http://www.deq.utah.gov), follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)), or call 1-800-458-0145.



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