



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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John Lee Junk Yard Fire Response 3 Month Update

Necedah, WI – On April 12, 2023 an 87-acre wildfire burned northwest of Necedah, west of the Necedah Airport, and through a former junk yard. The junk yard, currently uninhabited, had potentially hazardous waste including several large tire piles and drums of unknown contaminants. Many of these items were destroyed during the fire. Nearby residents were evacuated during the fire. The fire was put out by Thursday, April 13, 2023. Thanks to the efforts of local fire departments, no homes were destroyed and residents safely returned home on Friday, April 14, 2023.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM), Juneau County Health Department (JCHD), Land and Water (JCLW), and Emergency Management (JCEM) worked together to investigate the environmental and human health impacts from this fire and ensure the safety of nearby residents.

Starting Friday, April 14, 2023, nearby residents were directed to use bottled water for drinking and cooking out of an abundance of caution due to the unknown conditions at the junk yard and the potential for chemicals to move into private wells. Water samples were collected from nearby residents on April 20, 2023. The samples were collected by JCLW and analyzed by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH). The collected water samples were analyzed for metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs.)

Metals can be found naturally occurring in our environment or in industrial waste. VOCs are found in various chemicals such as industrial solvents, paints, pesticides, or hydraulic fluid. PAHs are chemicals found in gasoline and crude oil.

Water samples collected from Property 1 indicated manganese and zinc levels at or above the public health groundwater quality standards. Property 2 and Property 3 water samples' had salt levels at or above the public health groundwater quality standards. No other metals, VOCs, or PAHs were detected at or above the public health drinking water levels in the other collected water samples from the nearby residents. Water sample results are displayed in the table below – only values with exceedances are shown.

Property 1 4/20/2023	Property 2 4/20/2023	Property 3 4/20/2023
Manganese: 1480 ug/L	Salt: 44.3 mg/L	Salt: 24.9 mg/L
Zinc: 2120 ug/L	Intentionally left blank	Intentionally left blank
Public Health Value Manganese: 300 ug/L Zinc: 2000 ug/L	Public Health Value Salt: 20 mg/L	Public Health Value Salt: 20 mg/L

*ug/L= micrograms/liter mg/L: milligrams/liter

The public health groundwater quality standard for salt is only a concern for individuals on a no sodium diet as prescribed by a medical professional.

Additionally, soil samples were collected by the DNR from the former junk yard property on April 24, 2023. These samples were analyzed for metals, VOCs, and PAHs. No PAHs were detected in the collected soil samples. VOCs and metals were detected

in surface soils at the site and are indicative of a hazardous substance discharge likely related to activities at the former junk yard. The soil sample results are attached at the end of this report.

Based on the soil samples and initial water sample results, DHS and JCHD determined that PAHs would not be analyzed for the second round of water sampling. On June 6, 2023, water samples were collected from nearby residents of the former junk yard site by JCLR. These samples were analyzed for metals and VOCs by WSLH.

Manganese levels were detected at or above the public health groundwater quality standard at Property 1. Zinc was not detected at or above the public health values during the second round of sampling at Property 1. Only Property 3 water samples had salt levels at or above the public health drinking water levels. Again, the public health groundwater quality standard for salt is only a concern for individuals on a no sodium diet as prescribed by a medical professional.

Property 1		Property 2		Property 3		Property 4
4/20/2023	6/6/2023	4/20/2023	6/6/2023	4/20/2023	6/6/2023	6/6/2023
Manganese: 1480 ug/L	Manganese: 1170 ug/L	Salt: 44.3 mg/L	Salt: 1.99 mg/L	Salt: 24.9 mg/L	Salt: 26.6 mg/L	Lead: 37.2 ug/L
Zinc: 2120 ug/L	Zinc: 794 ug/L	Intentionally left blank		Intentionally left blank		Intentionally left blank
Public Health Value Manganese: 300 ug/L Zinc: 2000 ug/L		Public Health Value Salt: 20 mg/L		Public Health Value Salt: 20 mg/L		Public Health Value Lead: 15 ug/L

*ug/L= micrograms/liter mg/L: milligrams/liter

Lead was detected at Property 4 at or above the public health groundwater quality standard. The lead contamination is thought to be present from collecting the sample from an outside faucet that contained plumbing components manufactured with lead. Lead was not detected in the first-round samples; lead is not an ongoing concern.

The elevated levels of manganese and zinc detected on Property 1 may not be from environmental contamination from the former junk yard site. Both of these elements are commonly found in the natural environment of Juneau County.

Manganese is a common element found in minerals, rocks, and soil. Manganese is often found along with iron. Manganese and iron can make drinking water turn a brown or rust color. This can cause staining of faucets, sinks, or laundry. These two elements may cause your drinking water to have an off-taste or odor. While manganese is part of a healthy diet at low levels, high levels may affect the nervous system, kidneys, and reproduction. Manganese levels over 1,000 ug/L pose an immediate health risk for everyone. When levels are this high, everyone should stop using the water for drinking, making beverages and formula, and preparing foods that take up or use a lot water.

JCHD and JCLW are working with Property 1 to apply for the DNR Well Compensation Grant Program. For more information on this program visit: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/wellcompensation.html>.

Additionally, the Juneau County Well Water Nitrate Program Reverse Osmosis Filtration Cost Sharing Program criteria has been modified to include wells impacted by the John Lee junk yard fire property. Wells with a test above any DHS public health groundwater quality standards would be eligible to participate in the County program. For further information, contact JCLW at 608-847-7221 extension 3.

Nearby residents were notified of their water sample results and if any next steps are needed. Based on the water sample results and soil sample results, DHS and JCHD determined that no additional water sampling is needed, and bottled water usage can end except at Property 1.

If Juneau County residents notice any changes in the taste, color, or smell of their water, stop using it for drinking and preparing foods that contain a lot of water and notify the JCHD. People who are concerned about how their health may be impacted from this event, other wildfires, or other natural occurrences should talk with their health care provider.

Private drinking water wells should be tested annually by a Wisconsin certified drinking water laboratory. This is the only way to know if your private well is safe for drinking. Some substances that may be present in drinking water may not affect the color, smell or taste of the water. Example of common substances that may be present in private wells in Wisconsin due to them being natural occurring in the environment are arsenic, bacteria, lead, manganese, and nitrate.

JCHD currently offers free testing of nitrate and bacteria for private well owners of residential properties in Juneau County. Free testing is available while funding last. Test kits can be picked up and returned to JCHD Monday to Friday, 8 am to 4:30 pm.

To test drinking water, private well owners will need to contact a Wisconsin certified drinking water laboratory. This information can be found at the DHS website listed below.

To learn more about drinking water testing and quality, please visit the DHS website:
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/drinking.htm>.

The DNR was notified of the former junk yard site after it stopped operating as a junk yard. The site does not have a property owner and is tax delinquent. The former owner passed away in October 2020 and the heirs indicated they had no intention of exercising any rights to the land. With no property owner, there is no responsible party for the DNR to issue property cleanup notices or other enforcements action to. Juneau County completed a DNR Brownfield Assessment Grant – Wisconsin Assessment Monies Application. If this application is approved, an environmental site investigation can be conducted at the junk yard site regardless if there is a property owner listed. Any future investigation and cleanup activities will be dependent on State or Federal grant funding the County receives.

To learn more about how the DNR manages, regulates, and licenses waste facilities in Wisconsin, please visit the DNR website:
<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waste>.

DHS, DNR, WEM, JCHD, JCLW, and JCEM continue to meet monthly to discuss the former John Lee Junk Yard site. Juneau County residents will receive updates on this site via social media and/or press releases.

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