

Potts Creek in Kings Mountain Not to be Used for Recreation

Health officials warn of presence of unsafe chemicals

SHELBY, NC – On April 25, 2023, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) collected surface water samples from a portion of Potts Creek adjacent to the City of Kings Mountain Park and west of North Sims Street as part of an ongoing effort to monitor the safety of water for recreational use.

A Health Risk Evaluation (HRE) was completed on August 7, 2023, using the collected water samples. Results of the HRE identified the presence of tetrachloroethene at a threshold above what is considered safe for recreational use.

A variety of industries that use tetrachloroethylene such as dry-cleaning produce liquid wastes that contain the compound, which may then end up in ground water when not remediated appropriately. Tetrachloroethylene evaporates quickly from water into air, although some tetrachloroethylene may remain in the water. The tetrachloroethene detected in this portion of Potts Creek has been linked to the former Cinderella Knitting Mills site.

If you are exposed to tetrachloroethylene continuously, over a long period of time, you may be at a higher risk of developing certain types of cancer. In NCDEQ's latest round of sampling and health risk evaluation, it was assumed that individuals swimming in the stream would be exposed to the highest concentration of chemicals detected. It was also assumed that individuals would swim in the stream 90 days/year for 2 hours each day from birth to 26 years of age.

As a result of the health risk evaluation findings, health officials are discouraging residents from using this portion of Pott's Creek to swim, wade, drink or fish. Signs with a health risk warning will be placed along the impacted areas of the creek to discourage its use.

The NC Department of Environmental Quality, the Cleveland County Health Department, and the City of Kings Mountain are working together to fully investigate and monitor this situation in an effort to ensure all proper precautions are taken to prevent exposures. Because potential health risks associated with tetrachloroethene typically result from continuous exposure over a long period of time, there is not currently reason to believe individuals are at risk for adverse health effects.

If you have questions or concerns about potential exposure to tetrachloroethene in Pott's Creek, you may contact Kennedy Holt, NC Department of Health and Human Services, at (919) 707-5910 or kennedy.holt@dhhs.nc.gov.

If you have questions concerning the environmental status of the Cinderella Knitting Mills site, you may direct Catherine Jacobs, NC Department of Environmental Quality, at (336) 831-6569 or catherine.jacobs@deq.nc.gov.

To learn more about tetrachloroethylene, you may visit the CDC's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at <https://wwwn.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsDetails.aspx?faqid=264&toxid=48>.

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