

APRIL 2023

# FLY CREEK WATER SAMPLING UPDATE

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## WATER SAMPLING UPDATE

On Wednesday April 26th, 2023 Seanna Torske of NRCS and Edie Vogel from YCD completed the first round of water sampling for the collaborative Fly Creek water quality project. Fourteen livestock suitability samples were successfully taken and delivered to Energy Labs in Billings for analysis.

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The objective of the project is to provide water sampling of ground and surface water sources along Fly Creek on a twice-yearly schedule for five years. Annual water quality reports for water sources along Fly Creek in BigHorn and Yellowstone County will be shared with Montana NRCS' State Geologist and Hydrologist specialist.

Surface and groundwater in the area are documented to have levels of sulfates greatly exceeding the recommended levels for livestock. Hardin and Billings USDA-NRCS field offices have a Targeted Implementation Plan (TIP) focused along Fly Creek to provide safe drinking water for livestock, and to prevent livestock access from Fly Creek.

The project is aimed at providing landowners and ag operators access to affordable water quality monitoring of surface and groundwater along Fly Creek.

## **Project**

Currently eight landowners have signed up and completed paperwork to participate in the twice yearly testing that will be provided as part of Fly Creek initiative.

## **Results**

Of the 14 sites sampled on 4/26/23:

- 2 surface water samples right out of Fly Creek
  - The first on the Frontage Rd. at I90 (North Surface)
  - The other located in the creek on Osness' near well #5 (mid-surface)
- 10 samples were taken from cooperating landowner wells (primarily hydrants at or near stock tanks)
- 1 was in a culvert/collection
- 1 was a spring

The turn-around from Energy Labs is approximately 10 business days for results. Account information with Energy Labs is under the BHCD as they will be administering funds associated with the grant. Copies of the results will be shared with all participating organizations including NRCS, BHCD and YCD-who is providing their employee to complete sample collection. Results will also be shared with the state hydrologist and geologists.

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The second round of sampling for the year should occur sometime in late August or early September. There was some discussion about the best time to collect samples due to the influx of irrigation water coming in from the canals at that time of year.



Above Edie Vogel, NROC from YCD takes a surface water sample along Fly Creek for livestock suitability testing.