



Maryland Department of the  
Environment

## FACTS ABOUT: EXTENDING WATER SERVICE

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### **BACKGROUND**

Groundwater contamination by trichloroethylene (TCE) has affected homes in the Morris Mill area near Salisbury, Maryland. A comprehensive fact sheet describing the actions taken to date by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Wicomico County Health Department can be found on MDE's website (<http://bit.ly/MDremediation>) under the heading "Morris Mill Road TCE Plume." Affected homes have been provided with treatment systems or bottled water until a permanent solution can be identified and implemented.

### **PROVIDING WATER FROM A PUBLIC SYSTEM**

Extending public water service to the residents of the Morris Mill Road area who are experiencing well contamination has been identified as the best way to provide these homes with clean drinking water. A number of different agencies are working cooperatively to make this happen as soon as possible. The process, however, is not simple, quick or inexpensive.

### **WHAT HAS TO HAPPEN**

Before anyone can put a shovel in the ground, certain things must be settled. A route must be selected for laying the water mains to get water to the affected households. A source of water with adequate water pressure must be secured. The project must be designed, rights of way obtained, the construction contract awarded, and the work done. There also must be a way to pay for the project.

- Wicomico County has overall authority for water and sewer planning, and it must select an option for extending the water service and amend its water and sewer plan to include the chosen option.
- Fruitland or Salisbury, or possibly both, could supply the drinking water.
- MDE has the responsibility for approving the water and sewer plan and issuing construction permits. MDE can provide some grant and loan money.
- Residents will be responsible for making the connection from the water main and for charges from the utility providing the water.



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Larry Hogan, Governor | Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor | Ben Grumbles, Secretary

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## **WHAT HAS BEEN DONE**

The County, MDE, Salisbury and Fruitland have been exploring different possibilities for providing water service. An engineering consultant for the city of Fruitland developed an initial concept for an \$8 million project that would:

- Install 38,780 feet of water main piping in a loop around the area;
- Require a 500,000 gallon capacity elevated water storage tank;
- Serve 256 existing residences;
- Serve 16 undeveloped lots scattered among developed lots; and
- Potentially serve 314 future residences on currently undeveloped land.

The law places restrictions and limitations on MDE's ability to fund projects, whether through grants or low interest loans. Grants and loans can be given only for projects in areas designated as Priority Funding Areas. An exception can be made for projects that correct existing public health problems, such as contaminated drinking water, but this exception would not be available for the undeveloped land. State regulations, COMAR 26.03.09.05, place a limit on the amount of grant money MDE can award: MDE can provide a grant for up to 87.5% of the project costs, but the total grant cannot exceed \$1.5 million.

The funding gap for this initial concept is more than \$6 million. It is unlikely that even a low interest loan for the shortfall would be affordable for a project serving about 256 existing households.

## **WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS**

MDE, the County, Salisbury and Fruitland are working cooperatively to find a practical, affordable solution. This may involve phasing the project, scaling back on the original proposal, and having Fruitland or Salisbury provide water to the affected area, with or without annexation. A grant from MDE could fund up to \$1.5 million of a project that provided water service to the affected homes. Funds could also be sought from other sources.



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