

# Blades Groundwater Superfund Site

Community Update | Blades, Delaware | June 2023

## EPA Proposes Plan to Provide Clean Water to Affected Residents

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing a Proposed Remedial Action Plan (Proposed Plan) for Operable Unit 2\* at the Blades Groundwater Superfund Site. The Proposed Plan presents potential actions to protect homes from contaminated groundwater in residential wells. The Proposed Plan also includes EPA's preferred action. EPA is focusing on the residences outside of the Town of Blades to the south and southwest, bounded by Morgan Branch and the Nanticoke River. EPA will address the contaminated groundwater cleanup in a future decision document for Operable Unit 1.

This fact sheet shares a summary of EPA's analysis of five different potential actions for Operable Unit 2. EPA refers to these actions as "Alternatives." **EPA's preferred action is Alternative 5 - connecting residents to a public waterline.**

EPA will hold a 30-day comment period on the Proposed Plan from June 29 to July 28, 2023. The public comment period is an opportunity to provide input on EPA's Proposed Plan.

After the public comment period, EPA will consider all comments received. EPA will consult with Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and select the most appropriate Alternative. The chosen Alternative will go into Record of Decision for Operable Unit 2. EPA will include all comments and EPA responses in the Responsiveness Summary section of the Record of Decision.

The complete Proposed Plan can be viewed at [www.epa.gov/superfund/BladesGroundwater](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/BladesGroundwater).

The Proposed Plan and other site documents can also be viewed with assistance on a public computer at:

Seaford District Library  
600 N. Market Street Extended  
Seaford, DE 19973  
Phone: (302) 629-2524

## Hybrid Public Meeting



We invite you to learn more about EPA's Proposed Plan and share comments at an upcoming hybrid public meeting:

**July 20, 2023**  
Blades Fire Company  
200 E. 5th Street  
Blades, DE 19973  
6:00 - 7:30 PM

To join the public meeting virtually on the Microsoft Teams app, please visit the EPA Blades Groundwater webpage for detailed instructions.

[www.epa.gov/superfund/BladesGroundwater](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/BladesGroundwater)

Or scan the QR Code:



To join via phone, please call the conference number and enter the passcode when prompted. EPA presentation materials will be available on the webpage in advance of the meeting.

Phone line: (484) 352-3221  
Passcode: 883 336 174#



### \*What is Operable Unit 1 and 2?

EPA organizes sites into Operable Units to make distinct areas of cleanup depending on site issues. At Blades Groundwater, there are two Operable Units. **Operable Unit 1** refers to the entire site, including the groundwater. **Operable Unit 2** refers to a remedy to protect residential drinking water wells.





## The Story of Blades Groundwater

There are two electroplating facilities in the Town of Blades. One is currently vacant land and one is still in operation. Historical operations at these facilities contributed to groundwater contamination at the site. EPA and DNREC studied various environmental conditions across the site before EPA placed the site on the National Priorities List in 2020. Since then, EPA continues to study the area to further define the contamination. EPA will continue these studies, including looking into other areas potentially contributing to contamination. EPA will work towards a site-wide cleanup plan in a future decision document.

EPA and DNREC considered five Alternatives for protecting exposure to contaminated groundwater in private wells. **EPA's preferred action is Alternative 5.** The following table summarizes these Alternatives. The "Summary of Remedial Alternatives" section in the Proposed Plan contains more information about each option.

<i>ALTERNATIVE</i>	<i>ACTION TYPE</i>	<i>ACTION DESCRIPTION</i>
Alternative 1	No Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline for comparison; only chosen if current site conditions are already protective</li> </ul>
Alternative 2	Bottled Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver bottled water to affected or potentially affected residents until groundwater is cleaned up, which can take decades to complete</li> <li>EPA would <b>not</b> maintain filter systems that some residents received in 2022 after bottled water delivery</li> </ul>
Alternative 3	POETS/POUTS <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install POETS/POUTS at all affected or potentially affected homes until future site cleanup is complete</li> <li>EPA would maintain treatment systems and monitor water quality</li> <li>Groundwater contamination remedies can take decades to complete and the systems would remain throughout</li> </ul>
Alternative 4	Install Deeper Water Wells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install new residential wells below the contaminant plume (250 to 300 feet deep)</li> <li>EPA would monitor water quality on a routine basis</li> <li>EPA would <b>not</b> maintain filter systems that some residents received in 2022 after well installation</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative 5</b> (EPA Preferred)	Connection to Public Waterline and Institutional Controls <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend a public waterline and connect affected and potentially affected residents</li> <li>Installation costs paid for by EPA; residents pay a monthly water bill</li> <li>EPA would <b>not</b> maintain filter systems that some residents received in 2022 after waterline installation</li> <li>Include institutional controls to prevent new residential well installations in the area of contamination</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> **What are POETS/POUTS?** - Point of Entry Treatment Systems (POETS) filter and treat water entering the household. Point of Use Treatment Systems (POUTS) treats water on a single faucet or spigot.

<sup>2</sup> **What are Institutional Controls?** - Administrative and legal controls that help protect human health, the environment, and the site remedy.



## Nine Criteria for Choosing an Alternative

EPA evaluates each Alternative using the nine criteria shown in the diagram.

EPA will make a final decision after considering input from state officials and the community regarding the preferred Alternative for Operable Unit 2.



## Why is Alternative 5 EPA's Preferred Alternative?

EPA recommends **Alternative 5** (*Connection to Public Waterline and Institutional Controls*) for Operable Unit 2. This alternative best protects human health because it provides a reliable, treated water supply. It is the **most effective long-term solution** for residents. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 are individual treatment systems. They would each need more monitoring, maintenance, and oversight than one public waterline system.

In Alternative 5, EPA would continue to maintain existing POETS/POUTS until residents connect to the waterline.

EPA expects that the waterline likely will be outside of the Town of Blades to the south and southwest. This area is bounded by Morgan Branch and the Nanticoke River, as roughly seen in the figure below. EPA would continue to collaborate with the Town of Blades and DNREC during the design and construction of the waterline. The Preferred Alternative could change in response to public comments or new information.

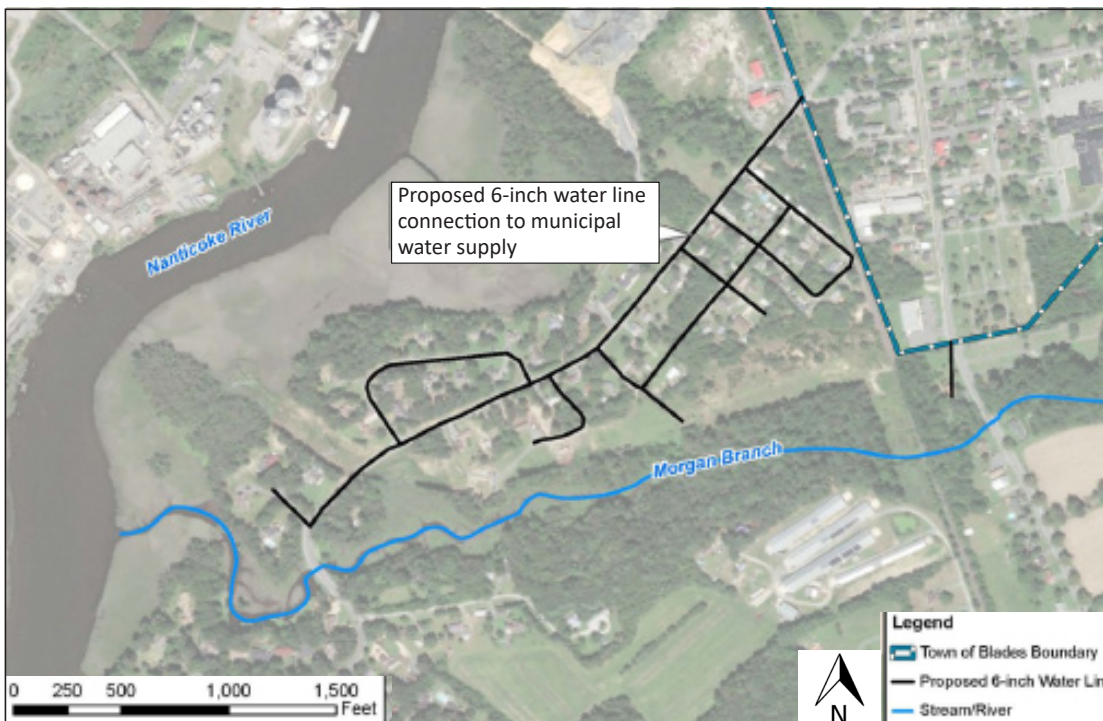


Figure 1: Map showing where the proposed waterline connections would take place if Alternative 5 is chosen.

## We Want to Hear From You!

The community is encouraged to review the Proposed Plan and submit comments to EPA from June 29 to July 28, 2023. Comments may be submitted in three ways. All comments will be treated equally.

- **Mail (postmarked no later than 07/28/2023):**  
U.S. EPA Region 3  
Four Penn Center  
1600 John F. Kennedy Blvd.  
Attn: Alan Geyer (3SD23)  
Philadelphia, PA 19103
- **E-mail:** Alan Geyer at [geyer.alan@epa.gov](mailto:geyer.alan@epa.gov)
- **Public Meeting:** Attend the public meeting on July 20 and share your comments in person or via phone. A court stenographer will create a transcript of the meeting, including any comments made during the meeting.



## EPA Contact Information

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