

Elevated Nitrates in the Wye/O'Keefe Area

Revised Policy regarding subdivisions and septic applications

Effective Date: May 28, 2008

Replaces previous nitrate policy for the O'Keefe Drainage

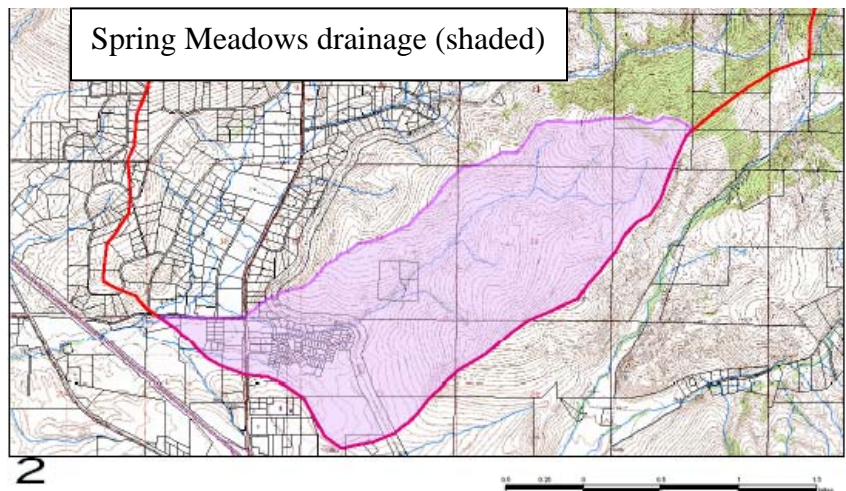
Area Description

The area affected by the policy is west of the city of Missoula, in the lower O'Keefe Creek Drainage just north of the Wye (the intersection of I-90 and Hwy 93 North). It encompasses a portion of Sections 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22 and 23 in Township 14 North, Range 20 West in the Spring Meadows drainage as shown on the map below.

New Subdivisions & Septic Systems

Before the Department can issue a subdivision approval or a septic permit for new or increased use in the Spring Meadows drainage, persons proposing the subdivision or septic system must demonstrate that nitrates from the proposed septic(s) will not increase nitrate levels in the well where the groundwater standard has been violated.

- This is different from (and in addition to) non-degradation requirements.
- This policy applies to all property in the drainage including but not limited to undeveloped parcels exempt from Subdivision and Sanitation Review and parcels with a DEQ Certificate of Subdivision Approval.
- The Department will evaluate each submittal on a case-by-case basis. The amount and type of information necessary is based on the project's proximity to the affected well, the density of development, whether wastewater will be concentrated in an area, proposed wastewater flows, etc.
- Information to be submitted must be signed off by a groundwater hydrologist or someone with similar expertise.
- Health Department acceptance of an argument that wastewater will not increase nitrate concentrations in the affected well is specific to each project. If the project changes, the Department may require a more strenuous justification (i.e., the Department does not have to automatically accept an argument that was accepted for a different project on the same parcel.)



New Wells

All new subdivision proposals within the area outlined on the map must show that the drinking water source will reliably and consistently have nitrates below the standard. In some cases, the Department may require wells be drilled and tested before the subdivision will be approved. This decision will be based on submitted nitrate samples, proximity to wells that have shown high nitrates, and other relevant factors.

Subdivisions in the rest of the O'Keefe Drainage, and other similar areas

Nitrate levels are a concern in this and similar drainages where complicated hydrogeology may lead to preferential flow paths, less dilution and poor treatment of septic system effluent. The Department and Water Quality District will evaluate subdivisions on a case-by-case basis. Subdivisions proposing multiple small lots, concentrated flows or that are close to areas of high nitrates may be required to do additional sampling or other work to show that groundwater and drinking water will be protected.

More information will be available at www.co.missoula.mt.us/EnvHealth and at the Health Department at 301 West Alder in Missoula.