



Pa.: Dissolved solids in river too high

W.Va. DEP says water is safe

BY ALEX LANG

The Dominion Post

The levels of total dissolved solids (TDS) in the Monongahela River exceed acceptable standards set by Pennsylvania and federal authorities.

West Virginia doesn't have a measure for acceptable standards for TDS in water, said Pat Campbell, assistant director of Water Quality and the West Virginia Department

of Environmental Protection.

But, Campbell said there is little cause for panic.

"There is not an immediate human health risk," he said.

TDS measures all the elements dissolved in water and can include sulfur, nitrates and sodium. The river water was tested at Point Marion, Pa., according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

The results showed the TDS levels ranged from 500 to 600 milligrams per liter. Acceptable numbers are below 500, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Campbell said they first learned of the issue about a year ago, when river levels were dramatically low.

They have been monitoring it since.

If TDS levels remain high, the water could taste salty and can cause spotting on glassware.

Morgantown Utility Board (MUB) General Manager Jim Green said he wasn't aware of the issue, and MUB has not received any complaints about the taste of the water. MUB treats and supplies drinking water for the area.

There currently is no way to filter out TDS, Green said. The only way to remove the TDS would be to

build a new plant.

The area saw a lot of rain in the past few days, Green said, which will help lower that concentration.

There is no harm in drinking the water, he said, and residents should not hesitate to drink tap water.

Campbell said TDS isn't as big of a concern as other increases, such as iron, but it is still something that the DEP will have to manage.

To fix the problem, he said they have to do some fact-finding to try to figure out what is causing the increase in the TDS levels in the river.

Some of the causes could be acid mine runoff and other manufac-

turing waste.

Once they determine the problem, Campbell said they can run into a couple different issues. It could cost a lot of money to fix the problem or the technology to do so might not be readily available.

He said both Pennsylvania and West Virginia need to work at finding ways to reduce the amount of TDS going into the river.

The agency has done a lot of work to clean up the river the past few years, Campbell said.

He didn't think the latest findings would drive boaters and swimmers out of the river.

"We would hope not," he said.