



New report says nearly half of WV registered tanks located near surface water

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By Mandi Cardosi, Government Reporter [CONNECT](#)

A new report shows nearly half of the aboveground storage tanks registered with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection are located within one thousand feet of surface water.

The report, released by the consulting firm Downstream Strategies and the West Virginia Rivers Coalition shows of the 47,000 tanks registered, 16 of them contain MCHM — the chemical that leaked into the Elk River on Jan. 9, 2014.

The goal of the report, say the authors, is to help legislators, regulators, tank owners and operators as well as the general public make the best decisions possible, when it comes to the law the Legislature passed last year.

"In a very visual way, we present specific data on the locations of tanks, types of substances they store, and types of industries that have registered the tanks," Downstream Strategies President Evan Hansen said in a statement. "In a very visual way, we present specific data on the locations of tanks, types of substances they store, and types of industries that have registered the tanks."

Angie Rosser, executive director of the West Virginia Rivers Coalition called it "remarkable" how many tanks are close to rivers or streams.

"So while it's appropriate to look most closely at tanks closest to existing drinking water intakes, focusing protection efforts solely on those zones would miss thousands of tanks that could easily harm our water supplies," she said.

Other major findings from the report include:

- Nearly half of the tanks are located within 1,000 feet of surface water.
- About three-quarters of the tanks are owned by the oil and gas industry.
- Five of the six counties with the most tanks are clustered in North-Central West Virginia — Doddridge, Ritchie, Harrison, Lewis, and Gilmer Counties. Kanawha County has the fifth-most tanks.
- Sixteen tanks contain MCHM, the chemical that contaminated the drinking water supply across a nine-county area of West Virginia in January 2014.
- More than 1,100 tanks did not pass their initial inspections, and only 55 percent of registered tanks have been certified as fit for service.

"The good news is that for the first time we have this data available about all tanks located across the state," Hansen said. "As the Legislature considers adopting new Aboveground Storage Tank rules, it can use the tank database to inform its decisions."

"A lot of tank owners told DEP it would be impossible to register and inspect their tanks by the deadlines, and to the agency's credit, they stuck to the deadlines so that we would no longer be in the dark about where tanks are and the threat they pose," said Rosser. Now that the information is available, Rosser added, "We have a clearer picture to help move us ahead in preventing leaky tanks from contaminating water supplies across the state."

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