PULLMAN GROUNDWATER

What We Know.
Why It Matters.
What Comes Next.

A public summary of Beautify Pullman's 2025–2026 community groundwater investigation into longstanding contamination from industrial solvents—including TCE and PCE—as well as newly identified concerns of PFAS and arsenic. The study was undertaken to understand what contamination remains today, how far it may extend, and what additional testing, monitoring, and actions are needed.

The Central Finding

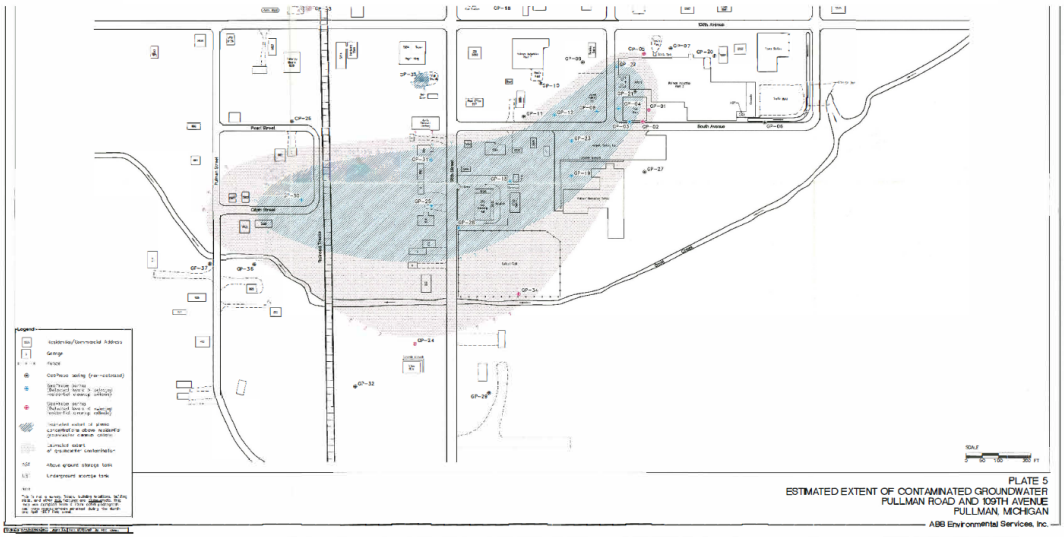
Contamination remains in Pullman groundwater, important data gaps remain, and the community still does not have a current, complete picture of the plume.

15 YEARS since documented state monitoring ended	**4 OF 25** private wells showed elevated VOCs or arsenic	**11 WELLS** monitoring wells sampled in June 2026
91% of survey respondents concerned about water/soil quality	**90%** drink bottled water or use filters	**89%** reported a private well as primary water source

What this study brought together

- A review of 1,147 historical Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy/ Remediation Information Data Exchange (EGLE/RIDE) records covering the 1991-2011 contamination response.
- Laboratory testing of 25 private residential wells in 2025-2026.
- Sampling of 11 groundwater monitoring wells on June 17-19, 2026.
- A 56-response community survey documenting water use, concerns, and trust.
- A review of known health effects, exposure pathways, data gaps, and next-step recommendations.

Map of Horizontal Extent of the Plume 1997 (EGLE ID245)



In 1991, residents of Pullman, MI reported odors in their well water. In 1997, the source of groundwater contamination was determined to be Pullman Industries.

In 1997, the first map was made of the extent of the contamination, known as the "plume".

Contamination had spread west from Pullman Industries to Pullman Avenue and south to Scott Creek.

A 35-YEAR HISTORY

How did we get here?

The historical record shows a long-running contamination problem, partial corrective actions, and a cleanup system that was planned but never built.

1991	Residents report odors in well water; first formal contamination detection notice appears in state records.
1993-94	State sampling finds contamination in dozens of wells; bottled water is supplied to affected households; a 1994 health advisory follows.
1996-97	State funding is approved; the contamination source is linked to the Pullman Industries site; 29-37 deeper replacement wells are installed.
2000	A $1.3 million groundwater pump-and-treat remediation system is authorized.
2006	The remediation contract closes before the groundwater treatment system is built; no successor contract is documented.
2008	The project is classified as "Approved Partial Closure," with records warning that downgradient and replacement wells remain at risk.
2011	Documented state monitoring records end.
2022	Beautify Pullman is denied a park well permit because of possible groundwater contamination, renewing community questions.
2025-26	Beautify Pullman conducts a community-led investigation using historical records, private-well testing, monitoring-well sampling, and resident survey data.

Why the old history still matters today

The plume was never fully remediated The contamination source was removed, but the planned groundwater treatment system was never installed.	**The plume map is old** The most recent plume map in state records is from 2005, so its current extent and migration pathway are unknown.	**Depth matters** PCE can sink through an aquifer. Existing monitoring wells are relatively shallow, so deeper contamination may not be captured.

CURRENT EVIDENCE

What did the 2026 testing find?

1	**VOCs are still present** TCE and PCE were detected in monitoring wells at concentrations exceeding Michigan residential drinking-water criteria. Vinyl chloride, a breakdown product of PCE/TCE and a known human carcinogen, was also detected.
2	**PFAS were detected** PFAS had not been part of the historic state investigation. In 2026, PFAS were detected throughout the monitoring-well network, and PFOA exceeded applicable criteria at select wells. The source is not yet known.
3	**Some private wells need attention** Four of 25 private wells tested (16%) showed elevated VOCs or arsenic. Arsenic was found in the deepest wells tested (>80 feet), raising questions about deeper aquifer conditions.
4	**The network still has gaps** Two planned monitoring wells were unavailable; the plume has not been mapped since 2005; deeper groundwater and vapor intrusion have not been fully assessed; Scott Creek has not been formally evaluated for this contamination.

How exposure can happen

1	2	3	4
Drinking water	**Plume movement**	**Vapor intrusion**	**Continuing source**
Contaminated private-well water can be a direct exposure route.	Groundwater contamination can migrate beyond older mapped boundaries.	VOCs can move from groundwater/soil into indoor air through building openings.	PCE can persist underground and slowly replenish a plume over time.

What residents told us

- *Smells gross every spring, it's real strong, lasts for a very long time then smells gets lighter.*
- *Full of minerals and black stuff. Smelly.*
- *The smell of the water as it leaves the faucet or when you flush the toilet has become more pungent.*
- *More of a sulfur smell.*
- *After a heavy rain, my water gets a bad odor.*
- *Our water keeps getting worse. I believe it's more iron, but I don't know for sure. Also, the water smells bad and keeps getting worse.*
- *Silver smell.*

Resident observations are not laboratory results, but they help explain why trust remains low: 91% of respondents expressed concern, and 90% said they already use bottled water or filters.

FROM INFORMATION TO ACTION

What the report recommends next

The study does not claim to have fully characterized Pullman groundwater. Its strongest conclusion is that more systematic investigation, monitoring, public communication, and remediation planning are needed.

Re-engage state oversight Ask the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to reopen or update the site status, add 2026 data to the state record, and convene a public meeting with local health officials.	**Update the science** Delineate the current plume; investigate PFAS sources; assess vapor intrusion; test deeper groundwater, Scott Creek, additional private wells, soil, and 1,4-dioxane.
Build a monitoring plan Establish regular testing of groundwater, private wells, vapor intrusion pathways, and residual soil contamination, with results shared publicly.	**Plan for long-term solutions** Evaluate remediation and water-supply options, including filtration, community or regional supply options, deeper wells where appropriate, and active groundwater remediation.
Strengthen advocacy and funding Brief local, state, and federal decisionmakers; seek additional technical assistance and funding; build a regional coalition around water quality and environmental justice.	**Keep residents involved** Use transparent, plain-language updates and community engagement so costs, timelines, trade-offs, and responsibilities are clear.

What residents can do now

- Know your water source and keep copies of any well-testing records.
- If you have a private well, ask the Allegan County Health Department or a qualified water professional about appropriate testing based on your location and well depth.
- Do not rely on taste, odor, or appearance alone to determine whether water is free of chemical contaminants.
- Follow public updates from Beautify Pullman and state/local agencies as additional investigation is pursued.

THE COMMUNITY ASK

Pullman needs a current picture of its groundwater, a regular monitoring program, and a funded path toward long-term remediation and safe water.

This handout is a synopsis. The full report contains the historical record review, laboratory methods and results, health information, maps, sources, limitations, and detailed recommendations.

Beautify Pullman

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