



The Coldwater Creek Signage Act

Coldwater Creek runs 19 miles through north St. Louis County, including Hazelwood, Florissant, Black Jack, unincorporated St. Louis County and Berkeley. During the Second World War, the Creek passed near prominent military sites for the development of nuclear weapons during the Manhattan Project — and nearby areas eventually became a dumping ground for leftover radioactive waste. Decades later, and despite attempts to clean up the water, those same toxic contaminants can still be found in and along the Creek. As residents have moved in and out of North County, and as rare cancers and flooding have taken hold, the need to raise public awareness of the dangers of radioactive waste exposure in Coldwater Creek has never been greater.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 350,000 people have potential radioactive exposure from Coldwater Creek — that's nearly 1 in 2 residents in Missouri's First District. Over the years, residents who have swam in Coldwater Creek or been otherwise exposed have developed rare cancers, including leukemia, and cancers of the lungs, brain, kidney, and bladder.

The Creek runs through backyards, churchyards, public parks, and elementary schools' grounds. Furthermore, Coldwater Creek floods frequently, inundating public school playgrounds, garden beds, and sites of easter egg hunts with potentially radioactive water that seeps into the soil our children play in. It's clear that the Creek poses a significant public health threat to children, families, and individuals across North County — particularly Black residents.

Right now, there is no public signage in place warning of the dangers the Creek's potentially radioactive areas pose to community health and safety, despite requests from county officials dating back to the mid-1990s. These safety hazards threaten the lives of our children, including recent events that caused fatal drownings due to storm floods and emergency rescue efforts by local first responders. We need to mitigate these harms and limit preventable toxic exposure as clean up efforts of the Creek are underway.



The Coldwater Creek Signage Act would:

- Require signage to be posted, informing residents of the dangers of radioactive waste in Coldwater Creek;
- Fund a study by the Comptroller General of the United States to review ongoing efforts to clean up the Creek; and
- Generate a report on the status of clean up efforts, including recommendations for further action.

As we work to ensure that the ongoing clean up of Coldwater Creek remains an urgent public and environmental health priority for federal officials, we must also prioritize public awareness of the dangers of radioactive exposure. Posting signs along the Creek, especially at public access points, is a baseline requirement of what's needed at the site. The Coldwater Creek Signage Act is a critically important first step toward reducing harm and making sure our neighbors across the St. Louis region are informed of the dangers the Creek poses and able to stay healthy and safe.