Resident Request Brought ATSDR to Vieques

A resident of Vieques asked ATSDR to find out if activities at the Navy bombing range on the island could affect the health of island residents. ATSDR accepted the request and began gathering information to conduct a public health assessment. ATSDR decided to focus first on evaluating the water that people drink on the island.

ATSDR
AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES AND DISEASE REGISTRY

Drinking Water Supplies and Groundwater Pathway Evaluation

Vieques Water Supply System

Most residents of Vieques get their drinking water through a pipeline supply system from the mainland of Puerto Rico. Drinking water from this system was tested by the Puerto Rico Department of Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). It was also tested by a private environmental company hired by the Navy. ATSDR analyzed the results of all of these tests and concluded that the water from the public water supply system is safe to drink.

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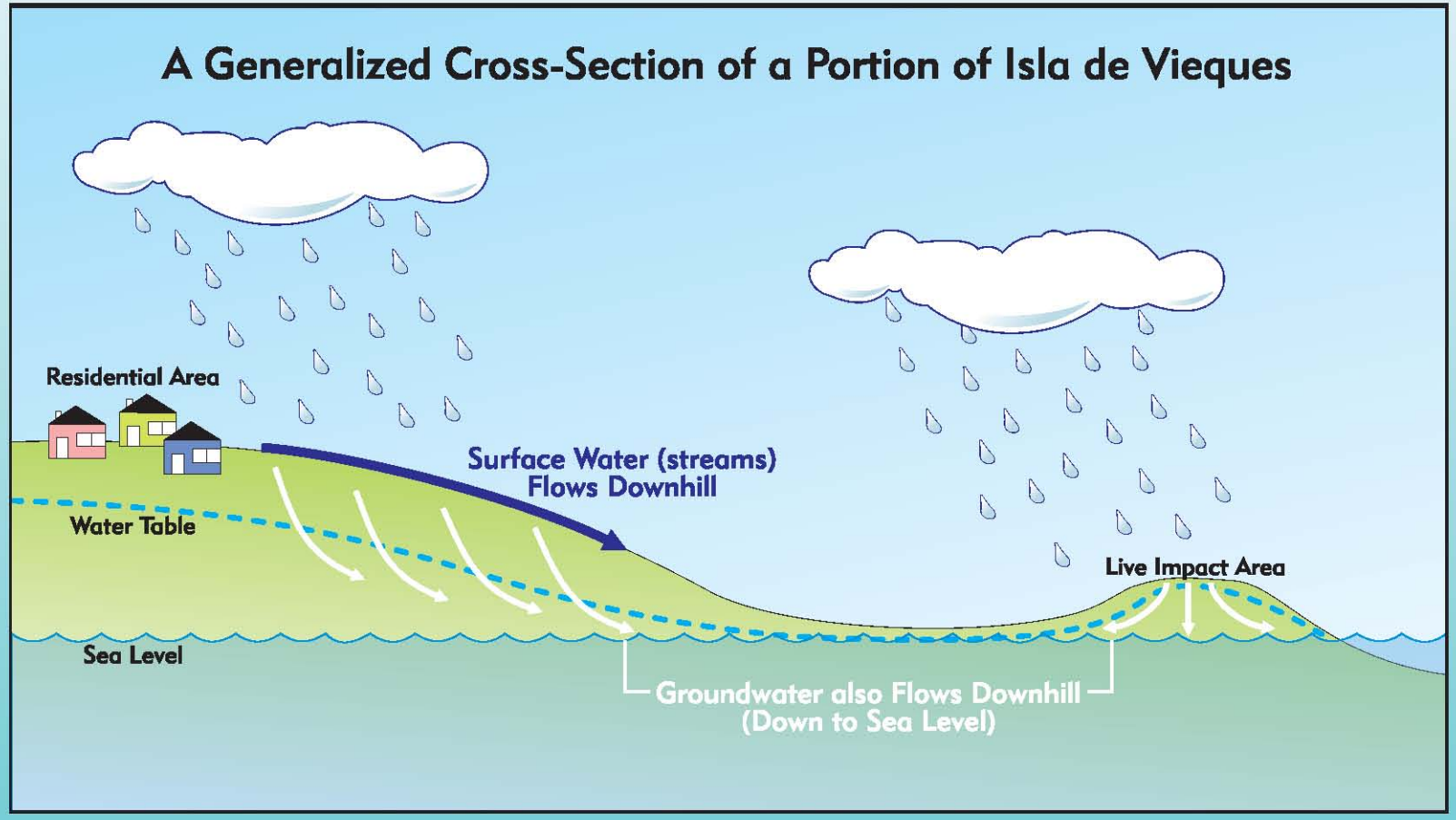
Drinking Water Supplies and Groundwater Pathway Evaluation

Groundwater Wells on Vieques

One Private Well Contains Nitrates and Nitrites
One private groundwater well tested (Well 3-7) was found to contain water that was not safe to drink and residents were notified that they should not drink water from this well. Nitrates or nitrites, commonly found in agricultural fertilizers or wastes, were detected in the water at levels of health concern. Contamination of this well appears to be localized problem. PRDOH has issued a health advisory on this well and notified the well users.

ATSDR also evaluated water from groundwater wells in the area. Residents may use water from these wells to supplement their water supply in emergencies when the island's public water supply is temporarily unavailable.
Water from the primary groundwater wells on the island was tested by EPA and the Puerto Rico Department of Health. Although the water tends to be salty, the water is safe to drink, except for people on sodium-restrictive diets.

Water From the Bombing Range Cannot Reach Groundwater Wells



Groundwater that is underneath the bombing range is prevented by gravity, geology and topography from reaching the residential area and the groundwater wells.

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