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***What Lies Upstream* Premieres on *Independent Lens*  
Monday, April 16, 2018 on PBS**

**Online Streaming Begins April 17**

**Documentary Thriller Investigates the Largest Chemical Drinking Water  
Contamination in a Generation**



Credit: Hyrax Films

(San Francisco, CA) — In this unsettling exposé, investigative filmmaker Cullen Hoback travels to West Virginia to study the unprecedented loss of clean water for over 300,000 Americans. Upon examination, he uncovers a shocking failure of regulation from both state and federal agencies and a damaged political system where chemical companies often write the laws that govern them. While he's deep into his research in West Virginia, a similar water crisis strikes Flint, Michigan, revealing that the entire system that Americans assume is protecting their drinking water is fundamentally broken. ***What Lies Upstream*** premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, April 16, 2018, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

In January 2014, West Virginians noticed that their tap water had a peculiar smell. It was soon discovered that a mysterious chemical, MCHM, has leaked into the Elk River from a damaged tank at a nearby chemical plant, poisoning the drinking water supply for nearly half of the state's citizens. Hoback — whose interest was piqued by family ties to the state and a desire to understand why the contamination happened — embarked on an investigation that would lead him down a rabbit hole of an unimaginable scale.

As Hoback continues his investigation, several leading players in the drama come forward including Randy Huffman, the head of the State's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Dr. Rahul Gupta, who runs the local health department, and several scientists, lobbyists, politicians, and industry insiders-turned-whistleblowers. Disillusioned, Hoback travels to Flint, Michigan to see if there is a connection between the recent lead contamination there and the water contamination in West Virginia. With the guidance of the key whistleblowers in Flint, Dr. Marc Edwards and Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, the connection becomes clear: the regulatory agencies charged with protecting citizens are too often beholden to political interests over scientific facts.

"You may want to watch this documentary before you drink that glass of tap water," said Lois Vossen, *Independent Lens* Executive Producer. "In his quiet, earnest way, Cullen lifts a nonpartisan lid off state and federal regulatory agencies to show a persistent link between contaminated drinking water in West Virginia and government negligence and cover-ups and



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industry malpractice. We want to believe the people working inside our government agencies act in the best interest of ‘we the people.’ Regrettably, that’s not always the case.”

Visit the [What Lies Upstream](#) page on [Independent Lens](#), which features more information about the film. The film will be available for online viewing on the site beginning April 17, 2018.

### About the Filmmaker

**Cullen Hoback (Writer/Director/Producer/Editor)**, originally from Los Angeles, spent many summers as a child with his family in West Virginia. His films, which have won multiple awards, include *Monster Camp* (2007) and *Terms and Conditions May Apply* (2013), which were shown in top festivals and theaters around the world. *Terms and Conditions May Apply*, a humorous but chilling documentary about digital privacy, had a significant theatrical release, was picked up by Participant’s PIVOT network, and has been viewed by millions. Hoback has appeared on MSNBC, CNN, NPR, Fox, and HuffPost Live and has written op-eds for *The Guardian* and other major media outlets. He is also a Film Independent Fellow.

### CREDITS

Director	Cullen Hoback
Producers	John Ramos Cullen Hoback Nitin Khanna
Executive Producers	Nitin Khanna Karan Khanna Jaswinder Grover Jay Walia
Co-Producer	Alina Solodnikova
Writer	Cullen Hoback
Cinematographer	Vincent Sweeney
Editor	Cullen Hoback
Consulting Editors	Geoffrey Richman Greg Finton
Composer	John Morgan Askew

### About *Independent Lens*

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).



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