VIA E-MAIL

Mr. James J. Turner, State Director
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development
3001 Coolidge Road, Suite 200
East Lansing Michigan 48823

Dear Mr. Turner:

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), and District Health Department #2 (DHD #2) are dealing with a site of known perfluorinated compound (PFC) contamination at a U.S. Department of Defense installation, the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base (WAFB), in Oscoda Township, Michigan.

Due to activities at WAFB, PFCs have migrated off-site and impacted two Type I water supply wells at a mobile home park and numerous private drinking water wells located downgradient of WAFB. Additional wells are being sampled as the above agencies, along with the U.S. Air Force, work to understand the nature and extent of the contamination.

In a letter dated March 11, 2016, to Health Officer Denise Bryan of DHD #2, the MDHHS expressed concerns over PFC-impacted drinking water. In that letter, the MDHHS concluded that continued exposure to PFCs in the groundwater-derived drinking water near WAFB could harm human health. As described in that letter, the basis for MDHHS’s conclusion is that the release of PFCs at WAFB has created a plume of contaminated groundwater that has not yet been fully characterized or controlled and that testing results for at least 50 private wells in the area have indicated the presence of PFCs at levels greater than those found in the municipal drinking water system operated by Huron Shores Regional Utility Authority.

PFCs cause adverse health effects in both laboratory research with animals and in studies of human populations exposed to these chemicals. Most of the health concerns are based on two PFCs, which are PFOS and PFOA. However, there are numerous other PFCs found in both the contaminated groundwater and the drinking water samples. PFHxS is commonly found at the highest concentrations in both the groundwater and well water samples. The toxicity of these additional PFCs, specifically PFHxS, is not explicitly accounted for in the current U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Health Advisory level.
In order to be protective of public health, DHD #2 has issued a health advisory to property owners whose wells are:

- known to be downgradient of the contamination plume,
- apparently downgradient of the plume and testing results show the presence of PFCs, or
- not apparently downgradient of the plume but had testing results showing the presence of PFCs in their drinking water at concentrations higher than the U.S. EPA lifetime Health Advisory levels.

The MDEQ, MDHHS, and DHD #2 continue to adjust to changing conditions with this ongoing situation and work toward a long-term solution to this issue. We appreciate your consideration and assistance with this matter.

If you have questions, please contact Ms. Mary Ann Dolehanty, Interim Chief, Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance, MDEQ, at 517-284-6524 or dolehantym@michigan.gov; or Dr. Linda Dykema, Environmental Public Health Director, MDHHS, at 517-284-4799 or dykemal@michigan.gov.

Sincerely,

Jim Sygo, Chief Deputy Director
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

cc: Senator Jim Stamas
Representative Peter Pettalia
Ms. Denise Bryan, Health Officer, DHD #2
Mr. Keith Creagh, Director, MDEQ
Mr. Nick Lyon, Director, MDHHS
Ms. Amy Epkey, Deputy Director, MDEQ
Ms. Maggie Pallone, Deputy Director, MDEQ
Ms. Susan Moran, MDHHS
Dr. Linda Dykema, MDHHS
Ms. Mary Ann Dolchany, MDEQ
Mr. Robert Wagner, MDEQ