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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 23, 2019

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Michigan finalizes PFAS deer testing report, recommendations remain the same

LANSING, Mich. – Today the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) released the final report detailing the findings from the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) deer testing in Michigan. The recommendations issued in October 2018 based on the initial data review remain the same, with only one 'Do Not Eat' advisory in place for deer taken within approximately five miles of Clark's Marsh in Oscoda Township.

As part of the state's effort to identify and address PFAS issues in Michigan, MDHHS and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) took samples from 128 deer across Michigan to test for PFAS. Only one of those deer came back with elevated levels of PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonic acid) in muscle tissue. That deer was taken near Clark's Marsh, which resulted in the 'Do Not Eat' deer advisory. The advisory encircles the five-mile radius around the Wurtsmith base property and covers what the DNR has estimated to be the expected travel range of deer living in or near the marsh. The area covered by the deer consumption advisory issued can be described as:

> From Lake Huron west along Aster Street, west on Davison Road, north on Brooks Road, east on Esmond Road, north on Old US 23, north on Wells Road, west on River Road, north on Federal Forest Road 2240, north on Lenard Road, north on Indian Road, and East on E. Kings Corner Road (along the county line) toward Lake to Lake Road, to Lake Huron (map attached).

Residents should not eat deer that came from within five miles of Clark's Marsh. In addition to the Clark's Marsh deer advisory, MDHHS continues to recommend not eating kidneys or liver from any deer because many chemicals including PFAS can accumulate in their organs. The advisory does not apply to cattle, chickens, or other livestock raised in the area.

The report released today includes all of the finalized deer muscle, kidney, and liver data collected for the 128 deer sampled as part of this effort. DNR and MDHHS developed this investigation in response to questions from hunters concerned about harvesting deer in contaminated areas. This is believed to be first study of its kind and very little scientific information exists on white-tailed deer and PFAS chemicals.

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It is unknown how PFAS could accumulate in deer. The State of Michigan is investigating the circumstances of the one deer with elevated levels and doing further analysis to learn more about PFAS in deer and other wildlife. In addition, the state will be doing further testing on deer from the Clark's Marsh region and performing modeling studies to learn about PFAS consumption in wildlife. Michigan also regularly monitors fish in Michigan for PFAS, including PFOS.

A deer that has been exposed to PFAS may not show any signs or symptoms of being sick. If you see a deer that appears to be sick, contact the DNR hotline at 800-292-7800. If you have health related questions, contact MDHHS at 1-800-648-6942.

While PFAS testing is not possible locally, the State of Michigan did confirm three labs that will analyze PFAS samples from deer tissue. The State does not endorse or recommend any lab. Contact the following labs for information on the cost and how to send deer tissue:

- Vista Analytical Laboratory, 916-673-1520, www.vista-analytical.com
- Battelle, 781-681-5565, www.battelle.org
- GEL Laboratories, LLC, 843-556-8171, www.gel.com

PFAS are chemicals that are in Class B fire-fighting foam that was used at the air force base near Wurtsmith and other sites in Michigan. These chemicals are also found in stain and water repellants, personal care products, and many other consumer goods. Some health studies have linked PFAS to health issues such as thyroid disease, increased cholesterol levels, impaired immune system function, reproductive issues, high blood pressure in pregnant women, and increased chance of kidney and testicular cancers.

For more information about PFAS in wild game and fish, visit Michigan.gov/pfasresponse and go to the Fish and Wildlife button. For more information about wild game consumption in general, visit Michigan.gov/eatsafegame and go to the Eat Safe Wild Game button.

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