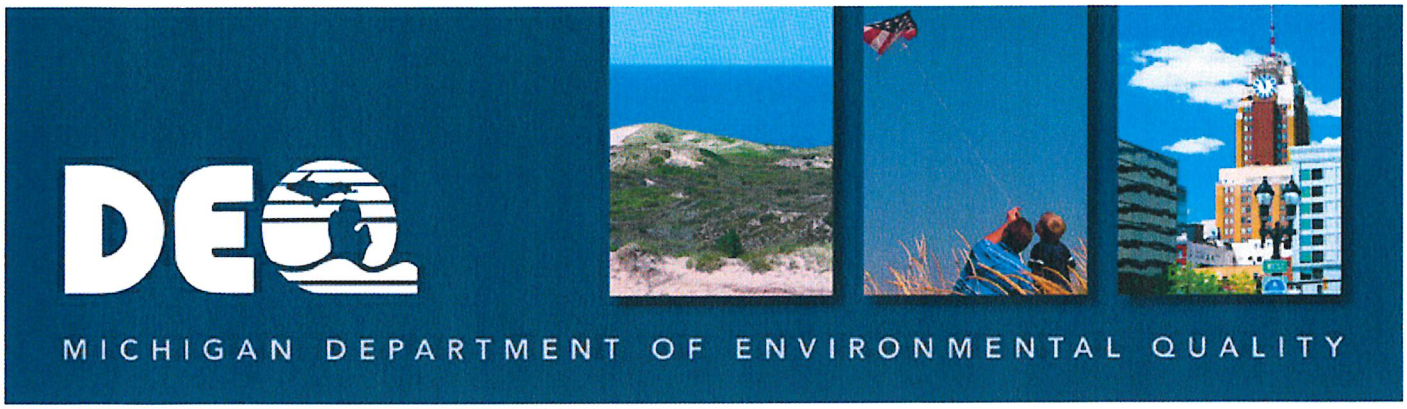

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Michigan completes first statewide study of PFAS in water supply

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) today announced the results from the 2018 state-wide sampling of public, school and tribal water supplies for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The $1.7 million study is the first of its kind in the nation.

The MDEQ oversaw the sampling of 1,114 public water systems, 461 schools that operate their own wells, and 17 tribal water systems. Test results show that 90 percent of these supplies showed no detection for any PFAS. Very low levels of PFAS below 10 parts per trillion (ppt) were detected in 7 percent of systems tested. PFAS levels between 10 and 70 ppt were detected in 3 percent of systems tested.

Only the city of Parchment and Robinson Elementary School near Grand Haven had test results exceeding the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Lifetime Health Advisory (LHA) of 70 ppt for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) individually or combined in drinking water.

"This first-in-the-nation study of all public water systems in the state has resulted in 3,000 people in Parchment and an additional 300 students and teachers at Robinson Elementary being protected from high levels of previously unknown PFAS contamination in their water supply," said MDEQ Director Liesl Clark.

These findings have also led to environmental investigations and protections for many families on their own wells in the affected areas.

The Parchment system was connected to the city of Kalamazoo's municipal water system in August of 2018. Robinson Elementary is currently supplied with bottled water and plans to install a carbon filtration system later this year.

In addition to public water systems, schools, and tribal systems, the MDEQ has expanded its PFAS testing to include 168 childcare providers and Head Start programs in the state that operate their own wells. To date 152 of these test results have been received and 89 percent have been

non-detect, 6 percent less than 10 ppt, and 5 percent at 10 ppt or higher for total PFAS. None have been above the LHA of 70 ppt.

Clark also announced today that MPART will pay for quarterly monitoring this year of municipal systems, schools and daycares with total PFAS levels of 10 ppt or higher. The MDEQ will oversee the continued sampling of 35 municipal systems, 19 schools and 8 daycares. The MDEQ will also take initial samples of 12 Head Start programs that were closed for the winter and three community water systems that could not be scheduled in 2018.

"Protecting the public remains our top priority," Clark said. "MPART will continue to work with communities with detections of PFAS in their water to help them investigate and take action to drive down exposure levels."

Statewide testing results are published on the MPART web site. Roughly 75 percent of the state's drinking water comes from public systems. Although private residential wells are not within the scope of the study of public water supplies, information on independent testing and filtering options is available from MPART at Michigan.gov/PFASresponse.

PFAS compounds are a group of emerging and potentially harmful contaminants used in thousands of applications globally including firefighting foam, food packaging, and many other consumer products. These compounds also are used by industries such as tanneries, metal platers, and clothing manufacturers. The discovery of PFAS contamination is a nationally growing trend across the United States.

In January 2018, the MDEQ acted to set a new clean-up standard for PFAS in groundwater used for drinking water of 70 parts per trillion for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) individually or combined. Michigan is one of only a handful of states to establish a clean-up standard.

Prior to launching the public water system sampling program in May 2018, the MDEQ had sampled dozens of locations across the state including industrial facilities, military bases, and landfills known to have used or disposed of PFAS-containing materials and acted to protect drinking water supplies. MPART is now investigating more than 43 sites with known sources of PFAS contamination across the state.

In 2019, Governor Gretchen Whitmer strengthened MPART by reestablishing it under Executive Order 2019-3 as a permanent body within the MDEQ.

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