

Michigan publishes 1st statewide study of PFAS in water supplies

EGLE
The Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) posted Aug. 16 the final report from last year's statewide sampling of community, school, child care provider and tribal water supplies for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

The \$1.7 million study is the first of its kind in the nation.

Overseen by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), the effort included samples from 1,723 public water systems statewide, such as community water supplies, schools on their own well, child care providers (and MI Head Start programs) on their own well, and tribal water systems. The sampling tested the water for 14 different PFAS compounds.

Test results show that roughly 90% of these supplies showed no detection for PFAS. Very low levels of PFAS below 10 parts per trillion (ppt) were detected in nearly 7% of systems tested. PFAS levels between 10 and 70 ppt were detected in roughly 3% of systems tested.

Only the city of Parchment and Robinson Elementary School near Grand

Haven had test results exceeding the U.S. 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 resulted in 3,500 people in Parchment and Robinson Township being protected from high levels of previously unknown PFAS contamination in their drinking water last year," MPART executive director Steve Sliver said in a statement. "We believe the data we've collected will be useful as EGLE moves forward with the development of drinking water standards."

In addition to last year's testing, MPART continues to fund quarterly monitoring for community water supplies, schools and child care providers with total PFAS levels of 10 ppt or higher, and monthly monitoring of community water supplies using surface water sources. MPART also has expanded the statewide PFAS survey to cover additional types of public water supplies representing sensitive populations and to address worker safety.

"Protecting the public remains our top priority," Sliver 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."



Frozen PFAS foam in Van Ettan Lake located next to the former Wurthsmith Air Force Base near Oscoda, Michigan in Iosco County. The PFAS is attributed to fire fighting foam routinely used at the base, which operated there from 1923 until it was decommissioned in 1993. | Photo by DEQ

The report is available for downloading 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 indus-

tries such as tanneries, metal platers and clothing manufacturers. The discovery of PFAS contamination is a nationally growing trend across the United States.

In 2019, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer strengthened MPART by re-establishing it under Executive Order 2019-3 as a permanent body within EGLE.



Pictured: Sandy, Bob and Meghan Potter | Courtesy Photos

MAEAP Verification Inspires Customer Confidence

Participating in MAEAP is good for business and the environment, as this farmer can strongly attest

MAEAP

Keeping a family tradition alive and well is the name of the game at Tuckers Farm. Bob Potter and his wife Sandy took over the farm from Sandy's parents in 2003. They are proud to carry on the family business started by Sandy's grandparents in 1919 and hope to keep the tradition going with their daughter. Since its founding, Tuckers Farm has grown vegetables of all kinds. Today, Bob and Sandy's top crops are tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant. However, visitors to their roadside stand and farmers market booths can count on finding a colorful array of vegetables.

"We eat what we grow, so we are our customers too!" says Bob. "Tuckers Farm isn't certified organic, but we do a lot of things to reduce or eliminate chemical sprays. Our customers appreciate that we

use sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices on the farm."

Bob and Sandy take pride in doing what they can to reduce their impact on the environment. That's why they participate in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). A voluntary program, MAEAP helps Michigan farmers adopt cost-effective practices that reduce erosion and runoff into ponds, streams, and rivers.

Bob learned about MAEAP from a display at a Michigan State University Extension office. At first, he was hesitant to have someone come out to his farm. However, the MAEAP tech put Bob at ease and convinced him to give the program a go.

"Farmers who aren't familiar with MAEAP may think it's a government snoop program. Or, they're concerned it will cost

too much and impact their operations," says Bob. "That wasn't our experience. Our MAEAP tech helped us out quite a bit. We made some changes, but none were too difficult or expensive."

Bob earned his first MAEAP recognition in 2011 in the Farmstead and Cropping categories. He and Sandy proudly display their MAEAP sign at the farmers market and beside their roadside stand. Both have noticed an uptick in business since getting verified.

"People ask a lot of questions when they stop by. 'What does that sign mean?' 'What does it take to get verified?' Now, we have customers buy from us specifically because we are MAEAP verified," says Bob. "They recognize that MAEAP makes sense and are happy to see we are doing our part to be good stewards of the land."

Bob points out that another benefit of MAEAP is the protection it provides from nuisance lawsuits.

"With more people moving into the region, the area around Tuckers Farm isn't as rural as it was 100 years ago," says Bob. "Being verified by MAEAP is proof we are following all safety and environmental regulations on our farm and are tending to the land in a sustainable way."

Bob urges farmers who are on the fence about the program to speak with a MAEAP tech.

"Step through the checklist and find out where your farm stands. If you decide not to go through with it, that checklist stays with you and the farm," says Bob. "But hopefully, the experience will convince you that MAEAP really isn't as tough as you initially thought."