

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 27, 2020

TO: Ted Corrigan, CEO and General Manager

FROM: Michael J. McCurnin, P.E., Director of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: PFAS Update

For the past sixteen months, DMWW has been engaged in a variety of ongoing discussions and efforts regarding a PFAS contamination threat to the Fleur Drive Water Treatment Plant (FDWTP). Long-standing firefighting products, practices, and training efforts at the Iowa Air National Guard (IA ANG) base have resulted in the release of PFAS to the environment. Environmental studies conducted at the base indicate elevated levels of PFAS drain from the property. A variety of drainage paths exist off the property. Of particular interest to DMWW is drainage northward toward Frink Creek which ultimately drains to the Raccoon River in close proximity to both the infiltration gallery and surface water intake for the Raccoon River at FDWTP. While detectable levels of PFAS have yet to be detected in the finished drinking water, trace levels have been found in the infiltration gallery and significant levels have been found in Frink Creek that are more than 10 times the present health advisory level, defined by the Environmental Protection Agency, for drinking water. Given the persistent nature of the contamination, there is concern it may migrate into our source waters at higher concentrations.

A coarse summary of efforts to date is as follows:

1. Staff and legal counsel worked closely to create communications and correspondence in the first half of 2019 that were sent to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Iowa Attorney General, and to Representative Cindy Axne’s office to create awareness and notice of our concern.
2. A working group was created in the summer of 2019 that included DMWW, DNR, IA ANG, and the Des Moines Airport Authority. Two primary efforts or outputs have resulted from the working group sessions:
 - a. IDNR completed a Conceptual Site Model analysis to assess the situation. This effort included sampling and analysis from multiple groundwater and surface water sites to better understand the migration of the pollutant. This effort resulted in a recommendation that two monitoring wells be installed between the far western reaches of the gallery system and Frink Creek. It was further recommended that ongoing samples be taken under a range of weather and hydraulic conditions (warm, cold, wet, and dry).

- b. DMWW staff have, on multiple occasions, been able to meet directly with local and state IA ANG leadership personnel to express our concerns in person. The PFAS contamination issue is a nation-wide issue for a variety of military installations. There are at least 100 sites within the country with higher levels of pollution leaving respective military installations. While other sites have higher levels of pollution, DMWW has countered that the pollution in Des Moines and its proximity to a drinking water source should be considered. Clean-up of the pollution at the base will take federal funding and prioritization.
3. DMWW recently installed the two monitoring wells recommended by IDNR. The wells were installed this summer by an environmental services contractor and DMWW collected the first round of samples in late July with detectable levels of PFAS measured. Ongoing sampling and analysis will be conducted.
4. Communications from IA ANG were received in August that informed DMWW the Des Moines IA ANG base site failed to make the initial list of military installations that would receive federal funding to complete remedial investigations.

Moving forward, DMWW will continue to sample and analyze from the new well locations and communicate with the working group members as needed.