



## Update on Northern Kent County PFAS Investigation



### KCHD to add PFAS Response Staff MDHHS issues Eat Safe Fish Guidelines Resources

#### KCHD Hiring Proposal Approved by Commission

The Kent County Board of Commissioners has approved the addition of two full-time Public Health Epidemiologist positions for the health department. One of the positions will be dedicated to the opioid epidemic and the other will assist current staff working on PFAS, vapor intrusions, lead and other emerging environmental health issues.

“The staff at the Health Department has been on the front lines of informing and educating residents regarding test results, the known health consequences of PFAS, and ways to limit exposure,” said Jim Saalfeld, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. “As more areas of contamination are discovered, it is clear we need to adjust staffing levels to meet the needs of our residents.”

The person hired for this Epidemiologist position will be expected to provide subject matter expertise, conduct health surveillance, coordinate specimen collection, exercise legal authorities when applicable under direction of the Health Officer, communicate with residents and health providers and be the primary intermediary with other agencies. In addition to PFAS, this role is also necessary to assist in the investigation and response of other environmental public health threats such as vapor intrusions and lead.

The second position will provide leadership and administration of the Kent County Opioid Task Force (KCOTF). This Task Force convened three years ago under the coordination of the Red Project. “In Kent County, the rate of overdose deaths has increased four-fold since 2000, with 70 opioid related deaths and over 680 opioid overdose-related Emergency Department visits in 2016,” said Adam London, Administrative Health Officer for Kent County. “In 2017, Kent County reported 93 opioid-related deaths with an average age of 39 years old, and we still are awaiting toxicology reports on a number of suspicious deaths. The staff of the Health Department are in a unique position to provide leadership in efforts to address education, prevention and access to recovery services.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently called the opioid issue “the largest man-made epidemic in the history of the world.”

The cost of both full-time positions will be funded by General Funds previously appropriated to the 2017-18 Health Fund budget for Emerging Issues. The Board is continuing to work with State lawmakers to make additional funding for these issues a priority in the 2019 Michigan budget.



#### Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Issues Fish Guidelines

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has issued eat safe fish guidelines for fish caught from Freska and Versluis Lakes. The guidelines are set to be protective for everyone including children and pregnant and breastfeeding women. They are also set to be protective for people with existing health problems such as cancer or diabetes. For more information about eating safe fish, visit [www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish).

Bluegill, sunfish, largemouth bass, and smallmouth bass filets were collected from Freska Lake in 2017. The filets were tested for PFAS, including PFOS, and mercury. PFOS and mercury was found in all the fish species.

Northern pike were collected from Versluis Lake in 2017. The filets were tested for PFAS, including PFOS, and mercury. PFOS and mercury were found in the fish.

As a result MDHHS has issued recommendations for limiting the amount of fish consumed from either lake.

The recommendations can be found here,

<https://www.accesskent.com/Health/PFAS/pdf/Versluis-and-Freska-Lake-ESF-Guidelines.pdf>.

#### Resources

##### Wolverine Worldwide

[HouseStreet@wwinc.com](mailto:HouseStreet@wwinc.com)

(616) 866-5627

“We are Wolverine” [website](#)

##### For information regarding possible health effects of PFAS and PFOA

[The Kent County Health Department](#)

616-632-7100 or email [KCPFAS@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:KCPFAS@kentcountymi.gov)

##### Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)

1-800-648-6942

##### For information about the status of the investigation

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Environmental Assistance Center

online form [HERE](#) or call 800-662-9278

[MDEQ and MDHHS Belmont Specific PFAS Site](#)

[MDEQ and MDHHS combined PFAS site](#)

##### For House Street specific site information

[Rose and Westra, a Division of GZA](#)

Mark Westra/Lori Powers

<mailto:House-Street@gza.com>

(616) 258-7234

##### For information about the Plainfield municipal water system

Plainfield Water Department

(616) 363-9660

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