

Benner Township PFAS HSCA Investigation

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's ("DEP") Bureau of Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields Program in the Northcentral Regional Office has prepared this information sheet to provide additional details to the public on the investigation into a groundwater contamination plume located in the vicinity of Fox Hill Road and High Tech Road in Benner Township, Centre County, PA, currently being conducted in accordance with the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act ("HSCA").

What is DEP Investigating?

DEP is investigating a groundwater plume located in Benner Township, Centre County, PA. The primary goal is to determine the extent of the plume and whether there are any potential impacts to residents living within the vicinity of the plume or the environment. Public drinking water is available in part of the area of concern and the water supplied by the public drinking water system has not been impacted by the contamination. DEP is also aware that a number of residences and businesses rely on private drinking water supply wells in the area. Ingestion of potentially contaminated groundwater is therefore considered a potential risk.

What Are the Contaminants?

The contamination consists of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), specifically perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), for which an EPA Health Advisory Limit (HAL) was set at 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for the combination of these two compounds. PFAS compounds are commonly found in many household and industrial products that repel water or oil or are heat resistant. These include some fabric protectors such as Scotchgard, non-stick cookware containing Teflon, some fire-fighting foams, and food packaging, among other products.

What Are the Concerns?

DEP's investigation will primarily focus on determining whether the contaminant plume poses any risk to residents and businesses who are utilizing the groundwater from private wells for consumptive purposes. During our investigation, we plan to collect soil samples, and later install groundwater monitoring wells and collect area surface water and spring samples, to delineate the extent of the plume and identify any potential exposure pathways. We may also collect additional samples from existing private water supply wells in the area of concern. The sample results will be compared to the EPA HAL and other appropriate cleanup standards.

How Was the Groundwater Plume Discovered?

DEP has established a PFAS Task Force following EPA's adoption of the HAL. A primary goal of the Task Force was to begin sampling public drinking water supplies for PFAS compounds to identify any that exceed the HAL. During the first round of sampling in 2019, a business in Benner Township was found to contain PFAS in excess of the HAL, and DEP reached out to them for further testing. Once the results were confirmed, DEP conducted sampling at two additional businesses in close proximity and again PFAS was detected above the HAL.

What Will the Investigation Involve?

DEP's next phase of investigation will include the collection of soil samples in areas where PFAS compounds were known or suspected to be used historically. Once the results of these samples are evaluated, DEP contractors will begin assessing the geology of the area to determine groundwater flow conditions and define the best locations for



*To learn more
about PFAS in
Pennsylvania, scan
the QR code
above.*

installation of groundwater monitoring wells. Sampling of the groundwater wells will hopefully permit us to further delineate the plume containing PFAS compounds. This data will help to pinpoint any residents or businesses who may be at risk of consuming impacted groundwater and also to better identify the source(s).

Who is Paying for the Investigation?

The Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act ("HSCA") provides DEP with the funding and the authority to conduct investigations at sites where hazardous substances have potentially been released and a responsible party has not been determined or is not able to perform the cleanup. HSCA funding will be used for all aspects of DEP's investigation and may be applied to any remediation or mitigation of the groundwater contamination. HSCA allows DEP to seek recovery of the costs it expends from the parties responsible for the contamination, in cases where they can be identified.

Where Is the Investigation Being Conducted?

The initial area of investigation is depicted in the map below. Existing data has been collected along High Tech Road, which will be the focus of the first phase of our investigation. Following evaluation of these first results, the investigation will likely extend outward to ensure the plume has been fully defined.

How Long Will the Investigation Take?

There is no specified time frame for the investigation and any potential mitigation activities. Data will first be collected from soil samples and any further activities will be determined based on the initial data collected and will follow the processes outlined in the HSCA program. For more information on the HSCA program, please visit the HSCA web page at <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/SiteRemediation/Hazardous-Sites-Cleanup-Program/Pages/default.aspx>.

Figure 1: Map of Project Area

