

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

---

Mark L. Wetzel, P.E., Superintendent  
Dan Van Schalkwyk, P.E. Town Engineer  
Pamela J. Martin, Business Manager

25 BROOK STREET  
AYER, MASSACHUSETTS 01432  
T: (978) 772-8240  
F: (978) 772-8244

## Memorandum

Date: November 3, 2017

To: Ayer Board of Selectmen

From: Mark Wetzel P.E., Public Works Superintendent

Re: Grove Pond Wellfield Water Quality

The Town of Ayer Grove Pond Wellfield provides approximately 60% of the Town's water supply. Due to the wellfield's proximity to Devens, the Army Corp. of Engineers sampled the wells for an unregulated contaminants PFOA and PFAS in September 2016. The results at the Grove Pond Wells were positive for these compounds with Well 8 over the EPA "health advisory" level. As the water from the three wells in the wellfield is mixed prior to treatment and distribution into the town, the water supply is below the health advisory limit. However, this is an issue that the DPW and MassDEP are monitoring and The DPW is developing an action plan in case the contamination levels increase.

**What are PFOS and PFOA and why are they a problem?** – The EPA has developed a fact sheet regarding PFOS and PFOA in drinking water. I have attached a copy of the fact sheet. It states *"PFOA and PFOS are fluorinated organic chemicals that are part of a larger group of chemicals referred to as perfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs). PFOA and PFOS have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals. They have been used to make carpets, clothing, fabrics for furniture, paper packaging for food and other materials (e.g., cookware) that are resistant to water, grease or stains. They are also used for firefighting at airfields and in a number of industrial processes."*

The fact sheet also states that PFOA and PFOS have been found in the blood of nearly all people tested for these compounds, due to our exposure in consumer products.

**What is a Health Advisory?** From the fact sheet – *"EPA develops health advisories to provide information on contaminants that can cause human health effects and are known or anticipated to occur in drinking water. EPA's health advisories are non-enforceable and non-regulatory and provide technical information to states agencies and other public health officials on health effects, analytical methodologies, and treatment technologies associated with drinking water contamination."*

The Health Advisory level for PFOA and PFOS combined is 70 parts per trillion (a part per trillion = one square inch in 250 square miles). It should be pointed out that this level is based on long term exposure.

**What is the level in Ayer's water?** The most recent sample from the Grove Pond Wellfield has a result of 53 PPT for PFOS and PFOA combined.

**What is the DPW Action Plan?** In order to protect the public health and continue to provide an adequate water supply for the Town, the DPW is implementing the following actions:

- Quarterly sampling of Grove Pond Wells individually and blended
- Sampling of water in the distribution system for PFOS/ PFOA
- Evaluate long term alternatives / costs should the levels increase (Treatment, purchasing water from Devens, develop new wells)
- Fast track the Devens interconnection on Barnum Road (approved at Annual Town Meeting)
- Work with MassDEP, EPA and Army Corp of Engineers to determine the source and remediation.
- Provide information (EPA Fact Sheets) to the public via web site and at Town Hall, Board of Health and Town Library.

The Ayer DPW is committed to providing safe and reliable water to all of our residents and businesses and will continue to monitor this issue and update the Board on a regular basis.