

MEMORANDUM



To: Bedford Town Council
From: Rick Sawyer, Acting Town Manager
Date: April 7, 2016
Re: **PFOA Drinking Water Contamination Update**

During the month of March it became known that the water we receive from the Merrimack Village Water District (MVD) had become contaminated with a chemical best known as Perfluorooctanoic Acid or PFOA at a level of 36 parts per trillion (PPT). This chemical compound was used historically in the manufacturing of materials like non-stick cookware and it is my understanding that it became a byproduct that was released to the air. New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has identified the most likely source of the contamination as being the Saint Gobain facility on Daniel Webster Highway in Merrimack.

Saint Gobain reported finding the PFOA contaminate in the drinking water supplied to them by the Merrimack Village Water District and reported it to DES. From there DES began an investigation into the public water supply and private wells within a mile radius of the plant and found PFOA levels ranging from base background levels (3.1 PPT) to approximately 900 PPT. MVD water tests ranged from 17 to 90 PPT. DES immediately started supplying bottled water to those with levels of 100 PPT or more and Saint Gobain has now taken over that responsibility. DES also scheduled two public information meetings in Merrimack and Litchfield where the highest number of impacted residents were located. PFOA contamination has been identified around two Saint Gobain plants in other states.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has not set an enforceable drinking water standard for PFOA under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. EPA's Office of Water has, however, established a Provisional Health Advisory (PHA) of 0.4 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g/L}$) or 400 parts per trillion for PFOA. That level is set based upon short-term contact and the EPA is currently developing guidance for long-term exposure levels, which EPA is expected to release in the near future and the Governor and US Senators have encouraged EPA to expedite their decision.

PFOA's, are a perfluorochemical (PFC) and studies have shown that nearly all people have some level of PFCs in their blood. Potential health effects from exposure to low levels of PFCs are not well understood. To date studies have not provided consistent answers as to whether PFCs can affect growth and development, hormone levels including thyroid hormone, liver enzyme levels, cholesterol levels, immune function or occurrence of certain types of cancer.

Bedford has 378 connections to the water supplied by Pennichuck Water Corporation which they purchase from the MVD for the areas in and around Greenfield Farms, Cabot Preserve, Brick Mill Road, and Jenkins Road (please see attached map). Pennichuck has been in touch with their customers through two letters dated March 11th and 25th.

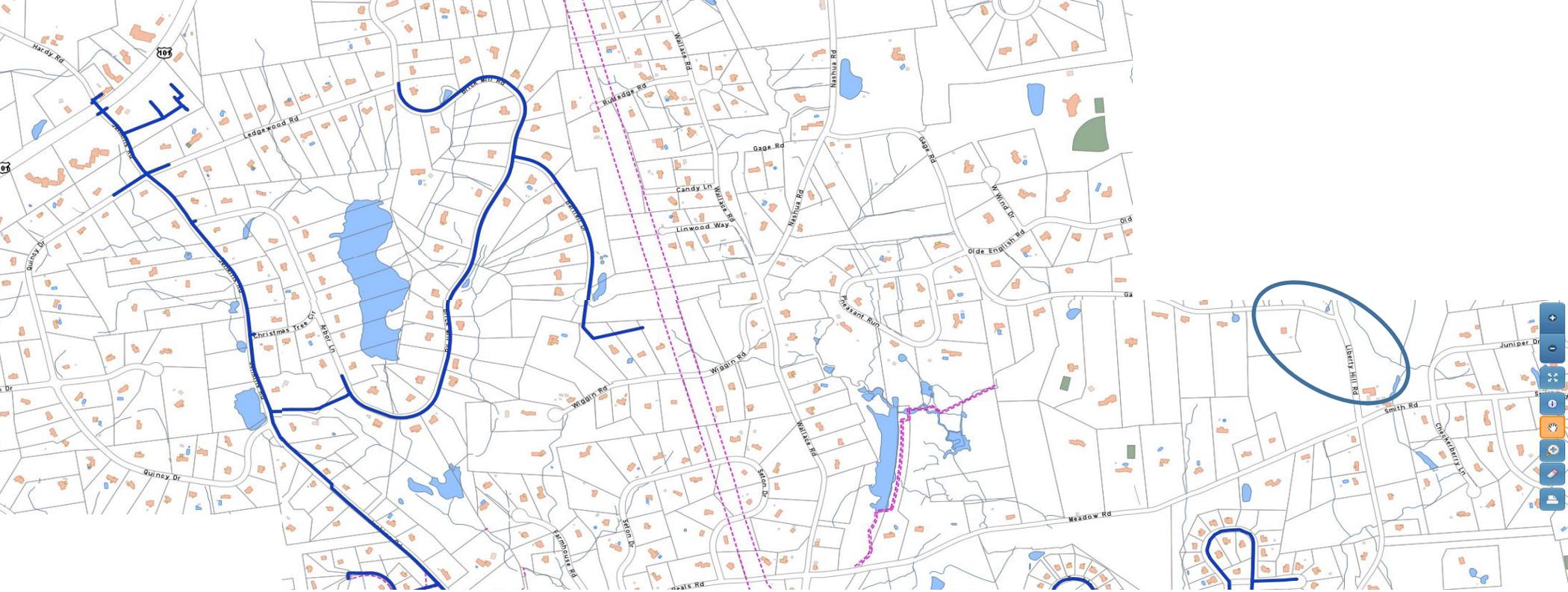
It became clear to me that Bedford would need to hold its own public information meeting when I started seeing Facebook posts and email messages during the Merrimack meeting from Bedford residents concerned that the focus was being primarily made to the issues in Merrimack. Immediately the following morning I made the request to DES and Pennichuck to hold a forum in Bedford and all parties quickly agreed and it was held six days later on March 30th. The forum was attended by over 300 people and lasted over 3 hours. A great deal of thanks go out to Bill Jennings and the SAU staff for finding a venue and working together to make the meeting happen so quickly. Additionally we quickly developed a website as a resource for our residents which now includes a link to the video recording of the meeting and the presentation materials.

DES continues to investigate this serious situation while everyone awaits health standards to be set by EPA. DES has requested that Saint Gobain develop a water treatment solution by August 1, 2016. Pennichuck has indicated that they will complete testing every week which will be posted to their website, but at the time of writing this memo a new result is not available. To date I am not aware of any groundwater wells in Bedford having been tested as no part of Bedford is within the initial 1-mile radius being investigated and the wells closest to Bedford have come back testing around the background level. Pennichuck and I have both made a request to Manchester Water Works who supplies water to the remaining people and business in Bedford through their own system and a separate Pennichuck system for the PFOA level in their system which is being completed but is not yet available. The Manchester water, which comes from Lake Massabesic, is expected to be consistent with background levels.

This continues to be an evolving situation which is evident by a DES announcement today that bottled water will be supplied to over 400 properties, up from the 26 previously, for all people living in Litchfield within the 1-mile radius and several additional street where the highest contamination levels have been found. It was stated at the Bedford forum that Litchfield is likely seeing the highest contamination due to the west to east prevailing winds carrying the contaminate to the east. Many fact sheets have been provided on the DES website for how to test your water and filtration option.

We will continue to monitor the situation daily and provide updates as they become available and as appropriate.

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PFOA Water
Contamination
Area