

Gustavus PFAS Action Coalition (GPAC)

08/08/2022 Quarterly Report

Submitted by Sally McLaughlin, GPAC Secretary/Treasurer

We did not submit a report in May, so this report will cover the last six months.

-The Legislature adjourned with neither SB121 or HB171 passing so these will need to be introduced again next year as new legislation, and likely with major edits given EPA's June 15th announcement. Both bills received hearings in their respective finance committees and we did gain bipartisan support by continuing to bring attention to the issue.

-The article on Gustavus residents' blood testing was published in April. For this study, Alaska Community Action on Toxics and Gustavus PFAS Action Coalition collaborated with Indiana University in a study to assess PFAS exposure and potential health effects in Gustavus in 2019. The study found fourteen distinct PFAS in Gustavus water samples and seventeen different PFAS in serum, and also found that contaminated drinking water from private wells and blood serum levels are directly and positively correlated, meaning that PFAS contributes negatively to the overall health of Gustavus residents.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35367506/>

National attention is on this issue as well; just a few days ago, an article came out about a report that calls for expanded blood testing and ongoing health monitoring for those with high PFAS exposure.

https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2022/07/new-report-calls-for-expanded-pfas-testing-for-people-with-history-of-elevated-exposure-offers-advice-for-clinical-treatment?fbclid=IwAR1KceWwRzN7P-HqdY1tEprbe5MHB5JA7CEkeJbmDniaWWI3ai5q_dT2RJo

-Gustavus also made national news in this Guardian article in which the author shows that analysis of water samples are likely missing significant levels of PFAS pollutants. Fortunately, for us, this study shows that our legacy compounds are generally accounted for with the 537.1 method.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jul/06/us-drinking-water-pfas-toxic-forever-chemicals-epa-tests>

-The biggest news came in June when the EPA issued this report in which they announced the new Lifetime Health Advisories (LHA's) for four PFAS chemicals to below the current detectable levels.

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-new-drinking-water-health-advisories-pfas-chemicals-1-billion-bipartisan>

As you can imagine, these new LHA's will significantly change the State's approach and focus; the state is expected to follow EPA's lead in lowering health and safety levels. Hopefully some of the \$5 billion that the EPA is making available for mitigation will be available to Alaska. While the Plumestop evaluation (based on data supplied by GPAC from the passive flux meters we installed and extracted last winter) was a priority for DOT, it has been sidelined by this recent announcement and another airport with very high levels of PFAS that needs attention. DOT is hopeful that the evaluation will continue this summer. DOT has been awarded an environmental mitigation pilot study federal grant at Fairbanks airport. Aquagga, an emerging PFAS remediation company with roots in Alaska, would use their "pump and treat" technology as part of that study. Aquagga has expressed interest in using their technology at the highly contaminated (20,000 ppt) DOT shop well here in Gustavus as well, should this study prove successful in Fairbanks.

-Evaluation of the Flux Meter data and use of PlumeStop is now out of our hands while DOT and Shannon and Wilson assess the data and the associated costs. We can support these efforts by writing letters and supplying additional data. To that end, GPAC will be asking the City to support our request to shift our available EFG funds from purchasing more FluxMeters to instead purchasing several water test kits for residents whose wells would have previously been considered safe. Further water testing beyond the current areas of known contamination will be demonstrative of Gustavus' urgent need for PlumeStop in light of the new LHA's set by the EPA. With this information mapped, we can show that a much larger portion of Gustavus is affected than previously acknowledged, which in turn could provide more immediate and extensive remediation.