

PFAS Chemicals

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, also known as PFAS, are commonly used, human-made chemicals that persist in the environment for long periods of time. PFAS are present in air, water, sediment, and biological communities within contaminated areas. Due to their widespread presence and slow degradation times, PFAS have been found in the blood of humans and animals worldwide, and have the potential to cause adverse health effects when exposure occurs via ingestion, dermal contact, or through breathing contaminated air. Of particular concern in the Great Lakes region, namely near Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, are contaminated fish containing some of the highest PFAS concentrations in the US due to the region's industrial history. There are ongoing scientific studies aimed at quantifying the health impacts caused by PFAS exposure to better understand their associated risks and to outline the actions that need to be taken.

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Water Resources Division (WRD) works to identify sources of PFAS by conducting water sampling on lakes and streams across the state, while also working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to collect and analyze fish for contamination. These analyses inform the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS)'s decisions on fish consumption advisories.

Under Executive Order 2019-03, Governor Whitmer permanently established the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) to address the developing threat of PFAS in Michigan. MPART operates within EGLE and advises seven state agencies on PFAS action.

Identifying PFAS in a lake or stream via sampling is best left to professionals. PFAS can sometimes be visually identified as it can appear as a foam along shorelines, but this is not always the case. Additionally, there are also naturally occurring types of organic foam that have a similar appearance to foam caused by PFAS chemicals. PFAS foam is often a bright white color that can be sticky and behave similar to shaving cream. Naturally occurring foam tends to be more of an off-white color and has earthier characteristics. The MDHHS recommends that everyone avoid foam on lakes and streams known to be contaminated with PFAS. If the presence of PFAS is suspected in your lake, contact the State of Michigan Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278 or by email at Assist@Michigan.gov to discuss options for sampling, reporting, and remediating.

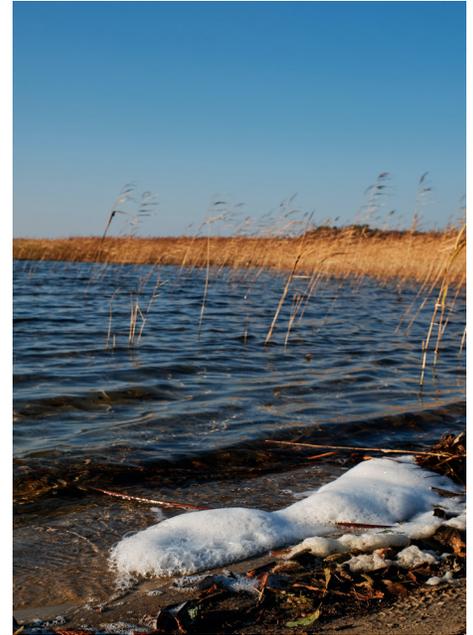
For more information about PFAS, visit michigan.gov/pfasresponse.

References:

Brown, D. (2020, April 27). What to do if you find suspicious foam. Huron River Watershed Council. Retrieved April 27, 2022, from <https://www.hrwc.org/what-to-do-if-you-find-suspicious-foam>

Brown, S. (2023, January 31). *Great Lakes Region State Governments Confronted with a Significant Challenge in Working to Mitigate an Increasingly Widespread PFAS Contamination Problem*. MWAI. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <https://michiganwaterfrontalliance.com/2023/01/31/great-lakes-region-state-governments-confronted-with-a-significant-challenge-in-working-to-mitigate-an-increasingly-widespread-pfas-contamination-problem/>

Pfas sampling in lakes and streams. SOM - State of Michigan - Michigan PFAS Action Response Team. (n.d.). Retrieved April 27, 2022, from <https://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/investigations/lakes-and-streams>



PFAS can appear as foam on shorelines and are often a bright white color and look similar to shaving cream.

- Huron River Watershed Council

For more information regarding Michigan's inland lakes, please visit michiganlakeinfo.com

