

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Morses Pond Water Treatment Plant back online after DEP approves new PFAS Interim Treatment System to treat elevated levels of PFAS found in Wellesley Water.

Mandatory Odd-Even Outdoor Watering Restrictions Still In Place

June 17, 2022 (Wellesley, MA) – A recently completed PFAS6 Interim Treatment system has successfully removed PFAS6 contaminants to the Non Detect level and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has approved resumed operations. The Morses Pond Treatment Plant will be brought back on line on Saturday, June 18, 2022.

The treatment plant was shut off in May 2021 due to elevated levels of PFAS6 compounds detected in the four groundwater wells at the plant. To address the issue, Town Meeting approved \$1.5M for the installation of a treatment system that would remove PFAS6 to the Non Detect level. The Town subsequently approved the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for this project and no tax payer or water rate payer funds were used to complete this project.

Recent samples confirmed that PFAS6 removal has been achieved to the Non Detect level and routine samples will be taken to ensure that that water leaving the plant continues to meet all drinking water regulations. The current funding will keep the system running for about 16 months and the results will be used to determine an appropriate long-term approach to dealing with PFAS.

Water Conservation Efforts Still Needed

According to Water and Sewer Superintendent William Shaughnessy, “with the new treatment system in place, the plant will now produce about 800,000 gallons per day which is about 40% less than what normally could be produced at that location.” Shaughnessy says that due to this limitation, Mandatory Odd-Even Outdoor Watering Restrictions are still in place and will likely remain throughout the summer to ensure that the water supply can meet essential community needs.

DPW Director David Cohen reminds all water customers that the Water Supply Conservation Declaration put in place on May 23th is still in effect. He urges all water customers to adhere to the Odd-Even restrictions, and especially to avoid outdoor watering on Mondays so that the system can recover from weekend water use which typically is higher than the rest of the week. To further help with this effort the DPW asks customers to reduce all water use by 20%.

To meet customer water needs while the treatment plant has been offline, the Town purchased additional water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). Those purchases over the last year have led to a significant rate increase for Wellesley water customers starting on July 1, 2022, the first water rate increase in over 10 years. Cohen said that “we know that this is a difficult time for rising prices... conserving water is one way customers can reduce their water bills in light of the anticipated rate increase.”

PFAS6, or **Per- and PolyFluorAlkyl Substances** are six identified chemical compounds that have been used since the 1950s to manufacture consumer products including stain- and water-resistant clothing, non-stick cookware, and personal care products. Due to health concerns, these compounds are no longer used in the United States, but PFAS are often referred to as “forever chemicals” as they stay in the environment for a long time and do not break down easily. As a result, PFAS may be widely detected in soil, water, air, and food. Most people have been exposed to them. Studies have shown that long-term exposure to high levels of PFAS can lead to adverse health effects. MassDEP says that “consuming water with PFAS6 above the drinking water standard does not mean that adverse effects will occur. The degree of risk depends on the level of the chemicals and the duration of exposure.”

In October 2020, MassDEP approved new drinking water standards for the sum of PFAS6 allowed in drinking water, requiring that the maximum contaminant level not exceed 20 nanograms per liter (ng/L), also equal to 20 parts per trillion. In June 2022, the EPA issued an even more stringent Health Advisory for certain PFAS compounds and the Town will work with the MassDEP to ensure that water delivered to our customers meets current regulations and advisory guidance.

“We are committed to providing our customers with safe and reliable water and are working to ensure the public water supply meets the state’s drinking water standards,” said David Cohen. “We will keep the public informed as we work with local and state officials to develop, design and implement a prudent long term solution for our community.”

The DPW has put together detailed webpages with PFAS information. That information is available at <https://wellesleyma.gov/1652/PFAS-Information>.

Officials are also working closely with the Health Department and advise that consumers concerned about potential health effects of PFAS should consult a medical professional.

Next Steps

Treating water to remove PFAS is one solution to this challenge. One other alternative is expanding the use of MWRA water. The Town is working with the MWRA and several surrounding communities to explore the feasibility of this option. The DPW expects to propose a recommended long term solution at an upcoming Special or Annual Town Meeting.

Questions and Additional Information

For specific information and questions, please contact Water & Sewer Superintendent Bill Shaughnessy at 781-235-7600 or email dpw@wellesleyma.gov

Town of Wellesley PFAS Information
(<https://wellesleyma.gov/1652/PFAS-Information>)

Water Conservation Information
<https://wellesleyma.gov/1665/Water-Conservation>

MassDEP Fact Sheet - Questions and Answers for Consumers
(<https://www.mass.gov/media/1854351>)

Massachusetts Department of Public Health information about PFAS in Drinking Water

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-drinking-water>

EPA PFAS Health Advisory.

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

EPA PFAS Roadmap.

<https://www.epa.gov/pfas/pfas-strategic-roadmap-epas-commitments-action-2021-2024>

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