

Drinking Water Concerns in Cheltenham and Springfield

Dear Neighbors in Cheltenham and Springfield,

Last week, Aqua Pennsylvania took one of its area water wells—the North Hills well—offline and is evaluating treatment options for a second—the Aidenn Lair well—after receiving the results from their most recent testing for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs), a group of chemicals that includes PFOA and PFOS, in our area’s water supply. You can access the updated results here:

www.waterfacts.com/monitoring.

The area impacted in Cheltenham is most of Ward 1; in Springfield, it is Ward 7, Precinct 2. Together, it is an area of about 2.5 miles, between Route 73 (Church Road) and Mount Carmel Avenue from Paper Mill Road to Easton Road.

PFASs are man-made chemicals that have been used for decades in the manufacture of products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water such as nonstick cookware, stain-resistant carpets and fabrics, coatings on some food packaging such as fast food wrappers and firefighting foam. It is the latter, used at nearby military bases, that is believed to have contaminated groundwater in certain areas of eastern Montgomery County, including Horsham, Warminster and Warrington.

Although PFOA and PFOS are no longer manufactured in the United States, they are still produced internationally and can be imported into the country. And both chemicals are very persistent in the environment and the body, meaning that they don’t break down (in the environment, exposure remains possible due to their legacy in groundwater) and can accumulate over time. Because of this tendency to accumulate, they have the potential to adversely affect human health depending on the amount ingested, the concentration and the time span of exposure.

This is why the presence of PFOA and PFOS in drinking water has become a concern across the country and around the world in recent years.

In May of 2016, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) updated its health advisories for PFAS to lifetime health advisories of 70 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS combined. This is also the limit the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has adopted for the commonwealth. However, at the end of June, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a federal public health agency that serves in an advisory, not a regulatory, capacity, revised downward what they call “minimum risk levels” for both chemicals.

Aqua has been monitoring local levels of the chemicals, and while their reported levels fall well below the EPA’s recommended guidelines, they chose to take their North Hills well offline because, they say, it was the well within their system with the highest levels of the chemicals *and* they believe that the chemicals will eventually be regulated at a lower level than what is currently in the North Hills well.

Like you, I am deeply concerned that our drinking water is safe. I also believe Pennsylvania should lead on this issue by lowering our own health advisory limit.

My colleague, Rep. Tom Murt, who represents Horsham Township, has introduced legislation to do exactly that: House Bill 705, of which I am a cosponsor, seeks to lower the ceiling for PFCs in our drinking

water from 70 ppt to 5 ppt. It is currently in the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, which is a committee on which I sit. It has my full support.

In the meantime, I am planning to host an information session on water quality issues in our area at 7 p.m. this Tuesday, August 7, at Glenside Memorial Hall, 185 S. Keswick Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038. If you are interested in attending, RSVP by calling my office at (215) 572-5210 or by emailing me at RepMcCarter@pahouse.net.

My colleague, state Rep. Madeleine Dean, is also hosting a session at 7 p.m. **tonight** at Antioch Baptist Church, 200 Logan Avenue, Glenside, PA 19038.

I hope you can attend one of these meetings. I will continue to share updated information as soon as I am able.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve McCarter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" and "M".

Steve McCarter

State Representative

Serving Cheltenham Township, Springfield Township and Jenkintown Borough