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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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1,4-Dioxane Detected in Storm Sewer - Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner To Work With MDEQ For Additional Monitoring

ANN ARBOR Mich., November 20, 2018 – Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner Evan Pratt announced today that surface water sampling results provided by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) showed no substantive changes in surface water concentrations of 1,4-Dioxane at 17 repeat sampling locations in Scio Township and the City of Ann Arbor. Pratt said, “We were glad to hear that 10 of the locations sampled continued to detect no 1,4-Dioxane, including the three surface waters connected to Allen Creek.”

There was an increased concentration inside one storm sewer pipe near West Park on a branch of Allen Creek drain. Pratt met with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Monday to discuss details for more frequent sampling of 1,4-Dioxane at expanded storm sewer locations to establish baseline levels in the area. Pratt continued “Right now we don’t know if the higher reading is a trend, the norm, or an anomaly – we’ve only got two data points a year apart.”

In 2017, Pratt asked the MDEQ to begin sampling storm sewers for 1,4-Dioxane near the contaminated groundwater plume. MDEQ sampled one storm sewer near West Park in December 2017 and September 2018 for 1,4-Dioxane.

In 2017 the 1,4-Dioxane concentration at the storm sewer location was 4.4 parts per billion (ppb) but increased to 19 ppb in the 2018 sample. No one is in immediate danger from the increased 1,4-Dioxane level observed in the storm sewer near West Park. The levels are well below any relevant exposure pathway but raise the question of whether sampling annually is often enough. “We plan to see a series of six (6) monthly samples at 4-5 additional locations on Allen Creek to better decide on a long-term plan. I appreciate MDEQ’s willingness to partner on better characterizing the situation.” Pratt stated.

Pratt also indicated “We need more data from the branches of Allen Creek that are within the known plume. More data at several storm sewer locations will establish a better picture of where we are now. From there we can identify trends long before 1,4 Dioxane is at a level that might impact people or the environment.”



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The MDEQ's website for Gelman Science Recent Analytical Data is available at <http://bit.ly/2RX2H4S>

Storm water pipes in the plume area are separated from sanitary sewage pipes. Where sewage pipes are to convey indoor plumbing discharges, storm water pipes are to generally convey excess rainfall to the Huron River (in the Ann Arbor area). It is common for storm water pipes, especially the age of Allen Creek (built circa 1925) to not be tightly sealed and therefore also convey groundwater. This groundwater conveyance is often viewed as a side benefit to underground pipe systems. In this situation, it is generally believed that the contaminated, deeper part of the groundwater in the plume area may intersect with pipe depths in the near West Side of Ann Arbor that is within the plume area. (Plume map - <https://bit.ly/2PHjzzG>)

A plume of 1,4-Dioxane is underground in parts of Washtenaw County, which includes parts of Scio Township and western Ann Arbor. From 1966 until 1986, Gelman Sciences (now Danaher Corporation) used 1,4-Dioxane in their manufacturing process. 1,4-Dioxane is a chemical that can be found in paint strippers, glues, pesticides, and many other things. It is also found in some makeup, lotions, detergents, bath products, shampoos, medicines, and foods and food additives. 1,4-Dioxane is an industrial solvent that has been linked to human health concerns at certain concentrations given long-term exposure. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and Washtenaw County Health Department have been tracking the 1,4-Dioxane plume for over 20 years and will continue to track it. For a detailed map of this area, visit washtenaw.org/card

The mission of the Office of the Water Resources Commissioner is to provide for the health, safety and welfare of Washtenaw County citizens and the protection of surface water and the environment and to promote the long term environmental and economic sustainability of Washtenaw County by providing storm water management, flood control, development review and water quality programs. Visit www.washtenaw.org/drains.

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