To: Martin Brennan[martin_brennan@schumer.senate.gov]
From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Thur 1/21/2016 4:43:53 AM
Subject: Fwd: News Clips (Hoosick Falls)

Subject: News Clips (Hoosick Falls)

Times Union

Timeline of Hoosick Falls water danger

January 19, 2016

Hoosick Falls residents face a growing concern that their water may have been contaminated for decades with Perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, a toxic chemical linked to kidney and testicular cancer, as well as thyroid diseases. The PFOA may have seeped into the village's underground wells over a period of decades from a nearby plastics plant.

•A string of rare cancer deaths in Hoosick Falls has residents concerned about their water supply. Click through the slideshow to view a timeline of how this issue has developed.

•Starting in the 1940s: Perfluorooctanoic acid, or "PFOA," has been used since the 1940s to manufacture industrial and household products such as non-stick coatings and heat-resistant wiring. It has been linked to kidney and testicular cancer, as well as thyroid diseases.

•2006: The EPA reached an agreement with DuPont and other manufacturers to stop producing or using PFOA. The agreement came less than a year after DuPont agreed to pay $10.25 million in civil penalties to settle a complaint brought by the EPA regarding the company's PFOA pollution in the Midwest.

•DuPont continued producing PFOA because the agreement did not call for the end of production of the chemical until 2015.

•In Hoosick Falls, it is believed this toxic chemical may have seeped into the village's underground wells over a period of decades when workers at a nearby plastics plant cleaned smokestack filters and other equipment on the ground outside the facility, including flushing manufacturing byproducts into a storm drain.

•Several people who worked at the McCaffrey Street plant recalled how a powder-like smoke plume that seemed heavier than air often settled in the valley around the small plant. The facility is several hundred yards from the village's water treatment plant.

•Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, which purchased the plant at McCaffrey Street in 1999, said they phased out its use of PFOA more than 10 years ago amid growing

international concerns about the chemical's health and environmental effects.

•Through the years, many stories have surfaced about Hoosick Falls residents who have suffered and died from rare cancers. Wilbert J. Allard (in photo), who lived in Hoosick Falls since the 1960s, died in May 2011 at the age of 81 from an aggressive form of thyroid cancer. His wife, Elizabeth, who lived in the village since 1962, died at 54 from pancreatic cancer.

•March 2014: Michael Hickey, an insurance underwriter who grew up in the village and still lives there, started researching the village's cancer rates after the death of Isabel M. McGuire, a 48-year-old math teacher at Hoosick Falls High School. She died 14 months after the cancer death of Hickey's father, John.

•In that same year, Dr. Marcus E. Martinez was diagnosed with an aggressive and rare form of cancer. Following surgery and chemotherapy, Martinez said his prognosis is good, but he remains suspicious of the village's water supply. He said he has seen an extraordinarily high number of cases of aggressive cancer and thyroid diseases in the village's population.

•Hickey used his own money to purchase testing kits from a Canadian company to test for PFOA levels in water, but was prevented by the mayor, David B. Borge, from retrieving samples of raw water from the water plant. Undeterred, he collected water samples from his kitchen sink and other locations and submitted them. Results showed that the water in his home had PFOA levels well above the federal guideline for safe drinking water.

•After Hickey presented his results to the mayor, Borge expressed concern about the stigma the apparent water pollution may have on the village's efforts to revitalize its struggling downtown area, part of a campaign called "Hoosick Rising."

•Hickey and other residents formed a grass-roots group, Healthy Hoosick Water, and pressured the village and Saint-Gobain to conduct their own tests. Results mirrored Hickey's and Saint-Gobain recorded PFOA levels of 18,000 parts per trillion (ppt) in the groundwater under its McCaffrey Street plant. The EPA advisory level for short-term exposure is 400 ppt.

•November 2015: Saint-Gobain makes free bottled water available to residents of Hoosick Falls through Tops Friendly Markets and agrees to pay $2 million to install a carbon filter at the water treatment plant.

•November 2015: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sent Hoosick Falls Mayor David B. Borge a terse letter warning that the village's water is unsafe for human consumption. The EPA also urged the mayor to take down what the agency said is inaccurate and misleading information on the village's website about the potential health effects of PFOA.

•December 2015: Tensions remained between many residents and the Village Board, which declined to meet with members of Healthy Hoosick Water, whose leaders include Hickey and Martinez.

•At a recent public information meeting on the water situation at Immaculate Conception

Church on Wednesday Dec. 2, 2015, and at a Village Board meeting a week later, the mayor and other village leaders declined to hand out copies of the EPA's letter.

•Many residents who attended the meeting said the event was confusing.

•Two state Health Department officials handed out "fact sheets" to residents at the meeting that said "health effects are not expected to occur from normal use of the water."

•Later that month, the EPA issued a statement warning residents in Hoosick Falls not to drink or cook with village water. In response, the village's mayor reversed his position, and adopted the EPA's recommendation. The state Health Department also recommended that village residents only drink bottled water.

•Meanwhile, Saint-Gobain officials said there has been no determination on the source of the contamination. They say soil-testing they did around the McCaffrey Street plant showed low levels of PFOA in the soil, which may indicate water pollution came from a source other than their plant.

•Healthy Hoosick Water continued to push for government agencies to conduct a health survey to determine whether cancer and other illnesses in the village can be attributed to the PFOA pollution. The group also called on the state or EPA to determine the source of the pollution and how far it may have spread.

•The EPA also pushed for a deep study of Hoosick Falls' water pollution. Judith Enck, regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said state and federal agencies are in early discussions about how to undertake an investigation in Hoosick Falls, which may include health surveys.

•January 2016: Village trustees voted to have temporary filters installed on the water system, until the long-term plan to install a charcoal filter system expected to remove PFOA from the water, funded by Saint-Gobain, is set to be done later this year. Saint-Gobain officials said their decision to help the village does not represent any acknowledgement of responsibility for the PFOA pollution.

•January 2016: Judith Enck, Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator, hosted a meeting to hear community concerns. Earlier in the day, the state departments of Environmental Conservation and Health requested the EPA add the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp. plant and other possible sources of contamination in Hoosick Falls to the National Priorities List under the federal Superfund program and investigate contamination sources.

•Enck told the standing-room only crowd, "A very detailed study of groundwater is needed in Hoosick Falls to know what we are dealing with and how to best address it," she told the audience. "There also needs to be sampling in the Hoosic River."

•Also at the meeting, David Engel, a lawyer for the grassroots group, Healthy Hoosick Water, referred to Michael Hickey as a "hero."

•Here are a few more photos from the Hoosick Falls water hearing. Residents attend a public meeting about PFOA contamination in the village's water system.

•Suzanne DiDonato poses her question about PFOA contamination in the water system.

•Toxicologist Dr. Mark Maddaloni addresses questions on PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls.

•Toxicologist Dr. Bob Michaels speaks during a public meeting to address PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls.

•High school senior Jeff Brewer, 17, poses his question about PFOA contamination in the water system.

•Judith Enck, Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator for Region 2, center with microphone, addresses questions on PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls.

•Scores attend the EPA's informational hearing on the Hoosick Falls water system.

•A standing-room only audience attends a public meeting about PFOA contamination in the village's water system.

PHOTO CREDITS: BY PAUL BUCKOWSKI, MICHAEL P. FARRELL, CINDY SCHULTZ, MARIE D. DE JESUS, ASSOCIATED PRESS, SETH PERLMAN

WNYT

Hoosick Falls mayor weighs-in on unsafe water

01/15/2016 5:46 PM

HOOSICK FALLS - Initially the mayor told residents it was their choice if they wanted to drink the water.

Now that the EPA speaking out, the mayor has changed his tune.

Residents in Hoosick Falls have been coming to the Tops Supermarket to get their water all day, frustrated about the inconvenience -- but more importantly they say they're angry they weren't told sooner there was a major problem with the municipal water.

Janis Yurewitch is not able to make it to the local supermarket. However, thanks to a team of volunteers, she's getting her allowable five gallons a day delivered.

“I think it's very sad that they have had this problem for so many years in Hoosick Falls and now they're just coming to light with it,” she admitted.

The problem is with the municipal water. On Thursday evening, the Environmental Protection Agency revealed that the water has a cancer causing chemical in it called

PFOA, and they don't know how long it's been there. Yurewitch says her husband died of cancer and she always suspected it was the water -- the EPA solidified her belief.

“There's a lot of people in this town that have died of cancer and I've always said it's because of the water,” Yurewitch asserted.

The EPA told residents not to drink, cook or even brush their teeth with the water. That's why residents are getting free bottled water for everyday use. Mayor David Borge -- who previously said it was a personal choice to use tap -- says the EPA has spoken.

“Both the EPA and Department of Health are saying don't drink the water right now and don't cook with it. There are some concerns. Now do we have all the answers. No we don't,” he acknowledged.

The exact source of the contamination is still under investigation. However, the focus has been at Saint Gobain -- a plastic manufacturing plant in the village. NewsChannel 13 is told high levels of the man-made chemical PFOA were found in the ground water under the plant.

Saint Gobain is paying for the bottled water. The company is also paying for a temporary water filtration system to fix the problem and plan to spend millions for a permanent solution. A spokesperson says their decision to help doesn't mean they're responsible -- they just want to help the resident of Hoosick Falls.

WAMC

EPA Discusses Water Contamination In Hoosick Falls

By Lucas Willard

Jan 15, 2016

Credit Lucas Willard / WAMC

The Hoosick Falls High School auditorium was filled to capacity Thursday night. Hundreds gathered to hear EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck provide details about the chemical contamination of the village water supply.

"So what does this mean for you, the residents of Hoosick Falls, at this time? Do not drink the water from the Hoosick Falls public water supply. Do not cook with the water from the Hoosick Falls water supply."

The reason is the discovery of a chemical called perfluorooctanoic acid, also called PFOA (or puh-foh-ah).

PFOA is used to make household and commercial products to repel substances like stains and grease. It's often found in non-stick pots and pans.

The chemical was found in high concentrations in the groundwater at the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics facility in the village of about 3,500 residents.

EPA was approached by local resident Michael Hickey, whose father, a longtime employee at the chemical plant, died of cancer.

"And then one of our local teachers passed away in January of last year, so I started doing a bit of digging at that point in time. With the rumors about the water always being, I said 'why not take a look to see if there's anything to it.'"

During his research, Hickey found PFOA was used in factory where his father worked. Studies have shown those exposed to high concentrations of the chemical are at risk of cancer and other health effects. Hickey's own sampling led to more studies by local and state government. What was found in the village water system is many times higher than the EPA health advisory level.

For the past several months, people on the village water system have been using a daily allowance of 5 gallons of bottled water for drinking and cooking, provided by Saint-Gobain.

Enck apologized to the crowd for their hardship.

"I'm very, very sorry that you have been going through this. I'm sorry we don't know how long you've been drinking contaminated water. I think it's good that this is all out in the open."

A panel of experts that included members of the EPA and the state Department of Health and Department of Environmental Conversation took questions from the concerned public.

Residents asked about how the chemical affects food grown in contaminated soil, if it's dangerous to bathe their children, and if a planned filtration system will be able to handle the amount of contamination in the water.

But there a lot of unknowns. Government agencies pledged to sample soil and study it. The EPA says there is a shortage of studies on human health effects from skin exposure and breathing the chemical in, though EPA belives showering and bathing would not give significant exposure.

The exact source of the chemical has not been found.

It can be filtered out of the water supply. Local officials are working to get a temporary filtration system in place in February. A permanent filtration system is expected to be completed by October. But the extent of how private wells are affected remains unknown.

Dr. Nathan Graber, with DOH's Center for Environmental Health, said the state will continue to expedite approvals for steps to clean up the water supply.

"In the future we'll continue to prioritizes our review of engineering plans for any changes to the village water system and any additional interventions that are put into place."

The state has begun an investigation of cancer cases in Hoosick Falls. Officials are

seeking to add the contamination to the federal superfund list. A lawsuit is being considered on behalf of village residents against the companies alleged to have caused the problem.

As for now, there's no end in sight to the contamination issue and the full effects on the village remain to be seen.

Again, Michael Hickey...

"You know, it's going to be so long a process to get to, really, where everyone is feeling comfortable every day. Obviously our property values are going to be affected and people are going to be concerned about jobs . So that's unfortunate that we had to get to that point. But, obviously, everybody is here and it's about the health of the community."

Those interested in testing private wells call 518-402-7860. For more information visit: www.EPA.gov/aboutEPA/Hoosick-Falls-water-contamination.

News 10

Hoosick Falls property values dip after news of water contamination

By Trishna Begam

January 15, 2016

HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. (NEWS10) – The water contamination issue in Hoosick Falls is also negatively affecting the real estate market in the village.

The water in the village of Hoosick Falls has tested positive for a chemical called PFOA. Samples near Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics showed levels were 45 times higher than what's considered safe.

The chemical has been linked to serious health issues such as cancer.

The contamination has many people wanting to sell, but it's also stopping new people from moving in.

Gale Leva has been a real estate agent since 1982. She knows how to sell a home in Hoosick Falls.

"We are a great little village," she said.

But driving around on Friday, the outlook didn't look good with the number of 'For Sale' signs spotted in the community.

"A lot of the houses I'm going to show you have been taken off the market because of the water situation," she said.

Leva said many of her clients chose to rent their home in the meantime because they know no one wants to move into a community where the water has been contaminated. Therefore, property values have taken a huge dip.

“I think it’s going to drop ten or 20 percent,” she said.

It’s one of Terry McGuire’s biggest concerns.

“I’m in the process of selling the Old Homestead,” she said.

She said the process has not gone well. She also owns a salon and spa in the village.

“One of my concerns is I work with water every day,” she said.

McGuire’s prediction includes more than just property values dropping.

“I think there will be a small exodus after this water issue,” she said. “Taxes will go up; values will go down.”

Meanwhile, Leva expects the homes to stay on the market for a while. But she hopes the water issue is resolved quickly.

“I’m a little concerned it’s the only thing anyone’s ever going to remember about Hoosick Falls,” she said.

Due to the contamination, people in the village must use bottled water every day to drink, cook with, and brush their teeth.

The Environmental Protection Agency has recommended a temporary filtration system be put in place until a permanent one is completed in October.

# # #