UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

September 1, 2020

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

Thank you for your July 28, 2020 letter requesting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's assistance in addressing sewer system and drinking water challenges occurring in the City of Centreville, Illinois. EPA Region 5 remains committed to protecting public health and assuring compliance with federal environmental regulations. In addressing these challenges, EPA is actively engaged in outreach, action, and coordination with federal, state and local partners. I trust the information provided below is helpful to you and the citizens of Centreville, Illinois.

On May 18, 2020, EPA hosted a call with Centreville community advocates to discuss the environmental justice challenges associated with the stormwater flooding and sanitary sewage issues identified in your letter. Most recently, on July 31, 2020, EPA led a call with Illinois EPA and Centreville community advocates to discuss the next steps in addressing these environmental justice challenges. This call resulted in agreement to include Centreville residents, along with partners in East St. Louis, in discussion of watershed-scale planning and to keep community advocates appropriately informed about compliance assurance activities. As EPA coordinates and convenes the next stakeholder call with Centreville community advocates, we will ensure that members of your staff are invited to participate on your behalf.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency is leading implementation of Clean Water Act (CWA) and Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) programs including watershed planning, control of sanitary sewage discharges, and protection of drinking water. Although Illinois EPA is the lead agency on these matters, we are committed to our cooperative partnership and to fully supporting their efforts. Thus, to respond to the challenges facing the City of Centreville and nearby communities, EPA is actively engaged with Illinois EPA to identify the root causes of the identified water problems and to develop plans to address them, including assuring compliance with the federal CWA and SDWA. EPA and Illinois EPA recently began sharing compliance information regarding the City of Centreville and the neighboring communities.

To aid in drinking water efforts, Illinois EPA and its field office staff are monitoring the efforts of the Illinois American Water Company (IAWC)-Metro East, the water system that supplies water to the City of Centreville. According to the Illinois EPA, based on IAWC-Metro East sampling and analysis data, the drinking water supply currently meets SDWA standards. Illinois EPA also reports that IAWC-Metro East has been conducting preventive maintenance on the water distribution system and is closely monitoring chlorine residuals to further ensure the safety of the drinking water.

As part of our continued efforts to coordinate regional resources, we have also been engaging with the City of East St. Louis, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois EPA, and interested community partners to help facilitate a whole-government response to residential flooding due to stormwater and sanitary sewage. These discussions have included the need for coordinated watershed planning and identification of needed infrastructure improvements. EPA has a series of programs that provide low-interest loans to help communities improve their water infrastructure, including the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs, and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program, that may be available to help support planning and implementation. The Region will continue to work with Illinois EPA in coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers and other potential federal partners to assure compliance with the CWA and SDWA.

Again, thank you for your letter. We are committed to continued dialogue and in keeping you informed about our participation in responding to the requests in your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Ronna Beckmann, Region 5 Congressional Liaison, at (312) 886-3000.

Sincerely,

Kurt A. Thiede
Regional Administrator