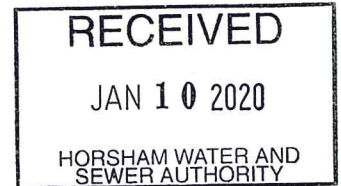


http://www.montgomerynews.com/news/money-freed-for-pfas-treatment-at-horsham-base/article_ce48b292-30f5-11ea-a78a-2bee87b9b67a.html

Money freed for PFAS treatment at Horsham base

By Linda Finarelli For MediaNews Group Jan 6, 2020 Updated Jan 7, 2020



HORSHAM — Funds to construct a system to steeply reduce the amount of PFAS-contaminated water leaving the Horsham Air Guard Station have been released, moving the project forward.

U.S. Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-4, announced Jan. 3 the Air Force has disbursed \$2.8 million to allow the former Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove to partner with the Warminster Municipal Authority to build a permanent containment and filtration system for surface water contaminated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), flowing from the base.

PFAS chemicals, long used in a range of consumer products and in firefighting foams on military installations, have been linked to a range of serious health effects, including immunological disorders, infertility, and certain cancers.

“For years, we have been deeply concerned by the ongoing contamination flowing from the Willow Grove base and into our region’s groundwater,” Dean said in a release. “Now, base leaders — including [base commander] Colonel Griffin, who has partnered with us in this effort — have the funds they need to stop it.”

Dec. 16, Dean sent a letter to the comptroller of the Air Force, emphasizing the ongoing risks to her constituents and urging final approval of the Willow Grove project.

“Right now, when it rains hard, PFAS-contaminated water on the Horsham base spills over minimal containment they have there,” said Matt Bieber, communications director for Dean. The unfiltered water makes its way to Park Creek, Little Neshaminy Creek, Neshaminy Creek and then into Aqua’s water treatment facility, he said.

“Our understanding is the outflow from the base is the source of surface water contamination in this area,” Bieber said.

“By the time it appears in Aqua wells, it is below 70 ppt [parts per trillion]. EPA’s recommended level,” he said. “The leading science is that 70 ppt is too liberal a number. The best science is that 10 or 13 ppt is safe.”

According to the Aqua PA website, the latest testing of its wells in Montgomery County show PFAS levels ranging from low of 5.8 ppt to 10.2 in Flourtown, 11.9 in Abington, 13.8 Neshaminy treated water and a high of 25 in Hatboro.

“Horsham installed an expensive filtration system for its residents, but it’s not something every township has done,” Bieber said. “Where water systems are privately owned,” as in Cheltenham, Warminster and Upper Dublin, which sold their water systems, “the local government can’t unilaterally decide to filter the water.”

The system being built by WMA will “more effectively catch and filter heavy rains,” Bieber said. “It won’t catch everything, but it will catch much more surface water than the filtration system there now.”

The new system, which will have four large filters and a second series of filters, will replace an existing small, temporary system, said Timothy Hagey, general manager of the Warminster Municipal Authority.

It will treat 500 gallons of stormwater per minute — “the majority if not all the stormwater” — as well as make changes to the basin “to hold back water, so it can be treated at a much slower rate,” he said.

Some of the effluent leaving the base is 400 ppt or higher, Hagey said, noting “the number is in the thousands in the Park Creek as it leaves the base.”

“The new system will cut down significantly the amount of PFAS to under 70 ppt, the limit the permit is for all water leaving the base through stormwater outfall,” he said.

Hagey said he was “hopeful the \$2.8 million will pay for the entire project.”

“We won’t know until final design and it’s bid,” he said. Final design will take about six months, bidding two months and about a year to construct the building housing various systems to filter out the PFAS from the surface water and groundwater, he said.

Prior to the new system coming online, additional temporary treatment measures should be in place by mid-year, Hagey said.

“The net result is much more of the water will be caught, contained and filtered,” Bieber said. “Now the water overwhelms the filtration system there.”

“Dean and her staff have been advocating for the base to address this for nearly two years,” he said. “There was a lot of interest to address it, but it wasn’t getting addressed.”

“Part of the issue is that the EPA has refused to set a maximum nationwide drinking water standard,” Bieber said.

Some states have set their own, some a zero limit, but not Pennsylvania, he said.

Bieber termed a PFAS action plan put out by the EPA “a foot-dragging effort — they continue to push the deadlines back,” with “levels they think are safe, but are not, and they don’t appear to be willing to do anything about it.”