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June 22, 2012

Ms. Stephanie Swart
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Office of the Great Lakes
Lansing, MI

Dear Ms. Swart

Re: Recommendation to Remove the Restrictions on Drinking Water Beneficial Use Impairment

The Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership (MLWP) would like to recommend removal of the Drinking Water Restrictions BUI, based on lengthy discussion and a vote taken at its May 10, 2012, public meeting.

The MLWP is recommending this action because:

- 1) The MLWP determined that the City of Muskegon public supply consistently meets drinking water standards, as documented by the Water Filtration Plant monitoring reports.
- 2) According to the Department of Environmental (DEQ) criteria, all targets have been met.

The MLWP submitted criteria for Restrictions on Drinking Water BUI removal as part of its target-setting process, but these criteria go beyond what is required by the state. This is because groundwater is a very important drinking water resource for a significant population of residents who live within the AOC boundary, who do not have access to public water supply. This unique threat to drinking water is due to the presence of a historic, abandoned oil exploration field that was active from the early 1920's – 1970. Although the number is not known, many wells were not properly plugged and they continue to pose a risk to safe drinking water -- a threat that is in some cases quite clear and visible.

The state determined that the local criteria are beyond the allowable parameters of the AOC program because the local groundwater/drinking water concern is not related to the "public" supply, so the MLWP is now basing its removal request on the state criteria.

There remains significant work to be done to protect groundwater as an important source of drinking water to residents with private wells within the Muskegon Lake AOC boundary. The Michigan DEQ Drinking Water Division and Office of Geological Survey have extremely limited resources to address the extent of this problem. The MLWP intends to continue to work with the DEQ and other agencies to address this ongoing concern in our watershed, but will do this work outside of the AOC program.

Therefore, please consider this letter as a formal request to remove the Beneficial Use Impairment of Drinking Water Restricts in the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Price". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Cynthia Price, Chair

CC: Kathy Evans, MLWP Support Staff
West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission