*** Michigan Department of Environmental Quality***

 ***News Release***

May 18, 2018

For More Information:

DEQ Media Office, deq-assist@michigan.gov, 517-284-9278

**Michigan embarks on statewide study of PFAS in water supplies**

The Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) today announced plans to conduct a state-wide study of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) levels in public water supplies. The $1.7 million survey is the first comprehensive, state-driven study of its kind.

PFAS compounds are a group of emerging and potentially harmful contaminants used in thousands of applications globally including firefighting foam, food packaging, and many other consumer products. These compounds also are used by industries such as tanneries, metal platers, and clothing manufacturers.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) this week began sending out letters to Michigan’s 1,380 public water systems outlining the water testing study which will be administered by the MDEQ. The goal is to complete this statewide study by the end of 2018.

In addition to public water systems, some 461 schools that operate their own wells will be considered priority testing sites under the study. Roughly 75 percent of the state’s drinking water comes from public systems.

In January 2018, the MDEQ acted to set a new clean-up standard of 70 parts per trillion for PFAS in groundwater used for drinking water. PFAS chemicals include perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). Michigan is one of only a handful of states to establish a clean-up standard.

“Michigan has moved quickly to protect people from potentially unsafe drinking water in communities with known PFAS contamination from historical industrial or military activities,” said MDEQ Director C. Heidi Grether. “MPART is taking this next proactive step to survey other parts of the state and gather important baseline data on the presence of this emerging contaminant in the environment.”

MPART is helping to coordinate the state’s $23 million effort to locate PFAS contamination, identify sources, and oversee remediation activities aimed at protecting the state’s water resources and mitigating risks to the public.

The state has already sampled water at more than 30 sites including industrial, military, and landfills known to have used or disposed of PFAS-containing materials and acted to protect drinking water supplies. In addition to these sites, many larger water systems serving multiple communities – like those in greater Detroit, Saginaw, and Grand Rapids – already sample for PFAS.

“Although acceptable PFAS exposure levels continue to be debated nationally, the right thing to do here in Michigan is advance our knowledge of this emerging contaminant,” said MPART Director Carol Isaacs. “We will share what we learn with the public and are prepared to advise communities, if necessary, on steps they can take to reduce PFAS levels in their water supplies.”

Although private residential wells are not within the scope of the study of public water supplies, information on independent testing and filtering options is available from MPART at: Michigan.gov/PFASresponse.