



WHAT WILL WE SEE IN THE SEWERS?



An Overview of Wastewater Testing in Michigan

Why is sewage and wastewater being tested for COVID-19?

Public health agencies have been using a variety of tools to monitor COVID-19 cases, track trends, and slow community spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Quickly finding the virus in a community is important for the success of prevention strategies, especially because people can spread the virus before they become ill.

The SARS-CoV-2 virus can be detected in wastewater, as the virus is shed in human feces (stool) of infected persons for several weeks, including before people become ill and in individuals who are infected but not showing symptoms. Laboratory tests have been developed to determine the presence and amount of the virus in wastewater. Test results are communicated to public health agencies and can be available before these agencies might be notified of positive cases. This can provide an early warning of disease in a community and allow for precautions to be put in place to prevent further spread of the virus. Since nearly 70 percent of Michigan residents rely on public wastewater systems, monitoring those systems has the potential to provide data on COVID-19 transmission in a large proportion of Michigan's population.

What will we learn from testing wastewater for SARS-CoV-2?

The rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2 in communities from wastewater and sewage testing will:

- Confirm the presence of virus and determine the trend of viral concentration through local projects;
- Provide additional data to support local COVID-19 testing strategies; and
- Better inform local and statewide healthcare and public health response stakeholders.

Who is part of this COVID-19 wastewater testing project in Michigan?

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is coordinating a wastewater monitoring project, called the State of Michigan SARS-CoV-2 Epidemiology—Wastewater Evaluation and Reporting Network, that uses 19 local projects across 58 counties, plus the City of Detroit, to test wastewater treatment plants and/or congregate living facilities (nursing homes, university dorms, etc.). These projects represent:



**36 Local Health Departments
and Five Native American
Tribal Nations**



**18 Public, Private,
and Academic
Laboratories**



**434 Community &
Congregate
Sample Sites**

Additional partners include the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, wastewater treatment agencies, colleges and universities, local municipalities, and other organizations with individual congregate facilities.

How is this project funded?

Funding for this project from June 2021 through July 2023 comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Enhancing Detection Expansion grant supported through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260).



Visit the [COVID Wastewater web page](#) to learn more about wastewater testing at Michigan.gov/COVIDWastewater.



Michigan Department of
Health and Human Services

