



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY  
LANSING



LIESL EICHLER CLARK  
DIRECTOR

August 18, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Elin Betanzo  
Safe Water Engineering, LLC  
4444 2nd Avenue, Suite 201  
Detroit, Michigan 48201

Nick Leonard, Executive Director  
Great Lakes Environmental Law Center  
4444 Second Avenue  
Detroit, Michigan 48201

Dear Elin Betanzo, Nick Leonard, and Petitioners:

Thank you for your series of emails and letters received last month regarding best practices and regulatory compliance around public health protection of drinking water in Benton Harbor. We share your continued commitment to ensuring the people of Benton Harbor are receiving the resources and public services they need and deserve. Our commitment is demonstrated by the time and resources we continue to direct to Benton Harbor.

The concerns you raised have been shared with regulatory and public health staff at relevant levels of government for consideration and potential action. We continue to support Benton Harbor with their goal of continued compliance with the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act, 1976 PA 399, as amended (SDWA); implementation of best practices; and gaining security and reliability of high-quality drinking water. We, along with other partners, are working diligently to reduce Benton Harbor's risks for lead exposure, not just from the drinking water, but from all pathways, including soil and lead-based paint. The following are some relevant ongoing efforts that may be of interest to you:

- The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) continue to work with city and community partners to provide public education, outreach, and engagement through a variety of sources. Weekly community partner coordination meetings, community resource fairs, farmer's market presence, local media interviews, ongoing broadcast, print and online advertising campaigns, and educational information distribution through various boots-on-the-ground community workers are just a few examples of our commitment to ensuring the residents of Benton Harbor are provided with the necessary information and resources to empower them to take appropriate action to protect their health and wellbeing.

- The DHHS, along with local partners, continues to work toward hiring additional education specialists with the intent of providing door-to-door filter education and outreach. The outreach includes ensuring residents have the appropriate filter and are trained on proper filter installation and maintenance, as well as providing leave behind educational information on proper maintenance, replacement, and contact information for further assistance.
- The DHHS has a multi-year lead abatement program that focuses on all lead exposure pathways within the city. These wrap-around services include lead inspections and restorations at no charge to any resident of the city, regardless of income. Restoration efforts include full plumbing system upgrades, including fixture replacements, lead paint removal, and leaded soil abatement.
- EGLE and the DHHS have embarked on a line-by-line review of both the SDWA and the Public Health Code, 1978 PA 368, as amended, primarily aimed at improving response to drinking water issues as described in Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Executive Directive 2021-9 (ED 2021-9). We invite you to review ED 2021-9 and participate in the series of stakeholder and public meetings occurring this month and next month. In addition, there will be opportunities to submit your input outside of the scheduled events.
- EGLE and the DHHS, along with local levels of government, continue efforts to maintain the greatest level of transparency by continuing to provide data and information concerning regulatory compliance and best practices in Benton Harbor. This data and information will continue to be posted online, as it becomes available, for the foreseeable future.
- EGLE, the DHHS, and our state and local partners continue to support Benton Harbor as the city continues to make significant progress replacing lead service lines at an accelerated pace. Benton Harbor embarked on the effort with the goal of replacing all lead service lines within 18 months, much faster than the 7% per year regulatory requirement. The project is currently ahead of schedule with over 80% of the lead service lines replaced with copper.

Thank you for sharing your perspectives and insights. Your engagement is appreciated as we work toward progress for the people of Benton Harbor.

Sincerely,



Liesl Eichler Clark

Director

517-284-6700

Elin Betanzo, Nick Leonard, and Petitioners

Page 2

August 18, 2022

cc: Debra Shore, Regional Administrator, United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Region 5  
Radhika Fox, Assistant Administrator, Office of Water, USEPA  
Elizabeth Cisar, Senior Advisor, Office of Water, USEPA  
Elizabeth Hertel, Director, DHHS  
David Knezek, Senior Chief Deputy Director for Administration, DHHS  
Richard Kuhl, Michigan Department of Attorney General  
Aaron B. Keatley, Chief Deputy Director, EGLE  
James Clift, Deputy Director, EGLE  
Regina Strong, Environmental Justice Public Advocate, EGLE  
Kristina Donaldson, Clean Water Public Advocate, EGLE  
Eric Oswald, EGLE