MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

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Testimony of Steve Sliver

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Michigan PFAS Action Response Team

Good afternoon Chairman Rouda, Ranking Member Comer, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss what we are doing about PFAS contamination in Michigan. My name is Steve Sliver, and I am the Executive Director of the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team.

Interest in PFAS contamination began in Michigan with the discovery of very high levels of contamination in groundwater and surface water near military installations that used firefighting foam. The discovery of widespread contamination from the historic disposal of tannery wastes in Rockford grew that interest statewide.

As the extent of the challenge to understand the occurrence of the chemicals and how to address them became clear, the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team, or MPART, was formed to ensure state agencies were communicating and working together to ensure an efficient and effective response.

MPART is coordinating a rapid and comprehensive evaluation of PFAS in drinking water, groundwater, surface water, wastewater, soil, biosolids and industrial byproducts that are land applied, fish, and even deer.

We have 62 sites where groundwater contamination exceeds our state cleanup criteria of 70 ppt PFOA/PFOS, and we continue to investigate hundreds more. We have this many PFAS sites because we are looking, not because we have more contamination than anyone else. These sites include military installations, airports, landfills, and industrial facilities.

Our priority is protecting public health, so when we discover a site, we immediately evaluate whether drinking water supplies in the area have been impacted.

MPART and responsible parties have tested thousands of private wells. More than a third of those tested last year had some amount of PFAS contamination, and four percent exceeded the 70 ppt lifetime health advisory threshold. Alternate drinking water is offered whenever there is a detection during ongoing investigation and remediation of these sites.

We are studying the occurrence of PFAS in our surface waters by adding PFAS to the ambient testing of water and fish. This enables us to track down discharges with high concentrations of PFAS so they can be reduced, and to identify threats to public drinking water supplies with surface water intakes.

Much of the focus is on PFOS in surface water because it accumulates in the tissue of fish we consume. Our surface water quality standard for PFOS is 11 ppt in surface water that is also a source of drinking water. We have identified industrial discharges of PFOS in the thousands of parts per trillion range. We are realizing significant contaminant reductions in the impacted waterways by systematically working through our local wastewater treatment plants to get the industrial users to treat the problem at its source.

MPART is also systematically surveying our drinking water supplies. This data helps us to identify and protect residents who are exposed while helping us understand the occurrence of PFAS throughout Michigan. We know from statewide testing of all community water supplies that 97 percent do not have a PFAS contamination issue today. We are currently monitoring and investigating further the 62 supplies where we discovered elevated concentrations of PFAS and expanding our investigations to additional supplies.

Michigan is engaged in all these efforts with very little support from the federal government. USEPA has not established national, enforceable standards, despite evidence that PFAS are in our drinking water and that some PFAS have been associated with adverse health effects. At the direction of Governor Whitmer, Michigan, like several other states, is proceeding to develop our own standards because the USEPA has not acted in a timely manner.

Our MPART Science Advisory Workgroup just recently provided recommended health-based levels for seven PFAS in drinking water as a foundation for our rulemaking process on drinking water standards. The health-based values are lower than EPA's recommended 70 ppt advisory level for PFOA and PFOS, cover more compounds, and reflect the trend among states that are looking at establishing their own standards as well.

There is much more to be done, and the promulgation of drinking water standards will add to that. We need more resources. The state alone has already allocated $50 million over the past two years to investigate and remediate PFAS contamination and to identify responsible parties.

As Michigan's new drinking water standards are promulgated and take effect, the additional burden of dealing with this legacy contamination will fall squarely on the shoulders of the municipalities responsible for treating our drinking water and ensuring it is safe for their customers.

We will continue to hold responsible parties accountable for contamination they cause. And we will continue to manage the sites where no responsible party is known.

But we need to sample more water supplies, more chrome platers, more airports and fire stations. To treat PFAS at a single orphan, state-managed site can cost millions of dollars. Michigan urges the Federal government to move more swiftly in addressing PFAS issues. We also urge Congress to ensure proactive states, like Michigan, are provided financial assistance to ensure that our citizens are protected from these chemicals.

I commend this subcommittee for examining the levels of PFAS contamination across the country and industry efforts to clean up PFAS contamination. We have considerable information available on the web at www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse and look forward to assisting in any way we can.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Steve Sliver

Steve Sliver was named Executive Director of the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) in February 2019. He is responsible for coordinating Michigan's unique, multi-agency approach to address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances contamination across the state. A 32-year veteran of state government, he is the former assistant director of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Materials Management Division, responsible for promoting recycling and waste utilization, pollution prevention, ensuring the proper management of materials under the hazardous waste and liquid industrial by-products, solid waste, scrap tire, medical waste, and e-waste programs, and protecting the public and environment from the hazards associated with radioactive materials. Steve obtained his bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from Michigan Technological University in 1985.