A²H₂O Quality Water Matters

Brought to you by the City of Ann Arbor

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Let me be one of the first to wish you a Happy New Year! Like many of you, I am ready to put 2020 behind me and look forward to a healthy and less socially distanced year. My guess is that we will be well into 2021 before we can feel comfortable returning to some version of normalcy.

On the water front, let me recap some important highlights from 2020.

The State of Michigan passed PFAS regulations that are among the lowest in the U.S. In anticipation of these regulations and to ensure adequate protection of public health, the city had already implemented treatment modifications that allowed us to achieve internal water quality goals that are even lower than the state's regulations.

This summer, the city began a project to replace approximately 26,500 water meters within the city that are reaching the end of their useful life. In addition to replacing these meters, we are using this time to conduct water service line inspections to comply with Michigan's new Lead and Copper Rule, as well as a survey to gather critical information about potential cross connections of potable and non-potable water. Since June, the city's contractor, UMS, has replaced more than 3,400 meters. More information about the project can be found at www.a2gov.org/meterupgrade.

The city completed several capital improvements to the water system during 2020. This included completion of the $3.3 million UV Disinfection Project, which added an additional treatment barrier at the water treatment plant to address microbial contaminants. We also completed many water main improvements in the distribution system along the following streets: Longshore/Indianola/Ottawa/Argo, Amhurst, Dunmore/Waverly/Weldon, Fifth Avenue, Hoover/Hill/Green, and William St.

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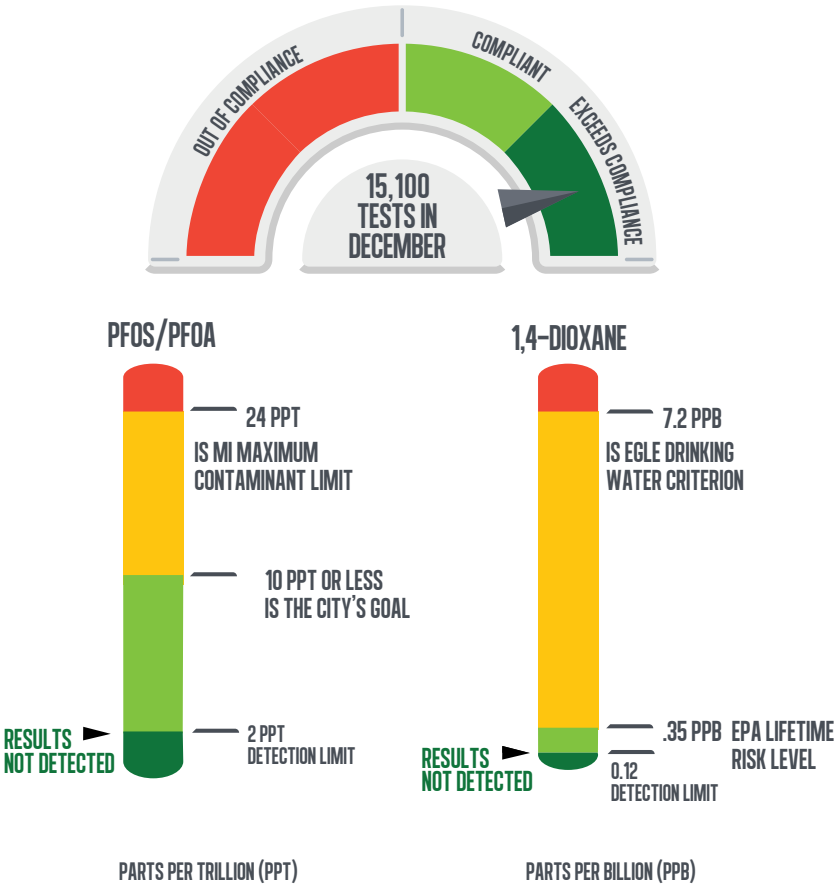
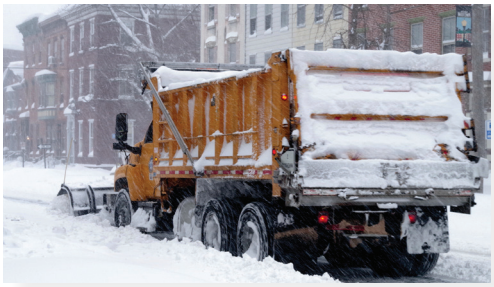
MONTHLY WATER QUALITY DASHBOARD



Let it snow!



While the city's winter road maintenance objective is to provide surfaces that are safe to use at reasonable speeds for all modes of transportation, Public Works staff also need to balance the environmental impact of over application of salt. As a result, the city does not treat all roads to bare pavement. The city is in a multi-year process of fully equipping its fleet to more widely utilize liquid brine solutions for anti-icing and de-icing. Brine solutions are less impactful to the environment and are more effective in certain situations than rock salt alone. More information about city snow removal is available at www.a2gov.org/snow.

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January marks more than 18 months of Quality Water Matters issues that have kept our customers informed of about the quality of their drinking water. I am proud of this effective communication tool and the popularity with which it has been received by customers. We have more than 8,400 subscribers of this monthly publication and traffic to the city's water system website has increased by 50% since the launch of the publication.

It is part of our mission to ensure our customers are informed about their water system and if you are a member of a group or association that would like to have a water system staff person address your group, please reach out to us with a request via email at water@a2gov.org. We would welcome the opportunity. While we would prefer to meet with you in person, we have been conducting information sessions and presentations to customer groups virtually during the past nine months and we are more than happy to engage with you in this way.

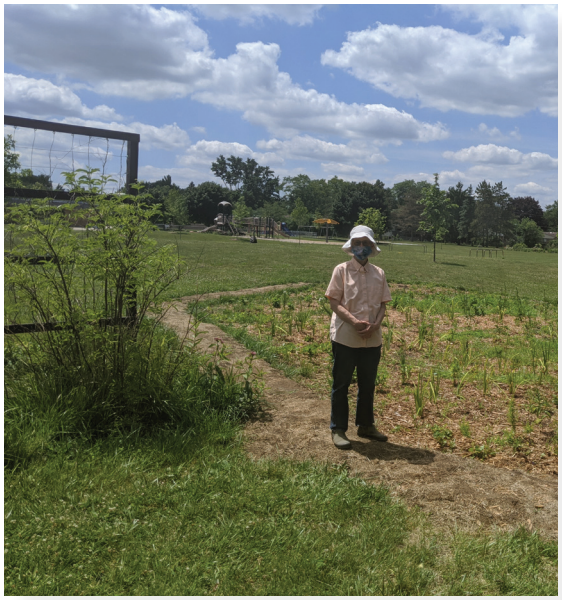
Be well.

Brian Steglitz

Brian Steglitz, P.E., Drinking Water
License F-1, Water Treatment Plant Manager, Ann Arbor resident

JANUARY WATER CHAMPIONS

Thurston Elementary School has long been a champion of rain gardens. There are three rain gardens throughout the schoolyard that capture stormwater runoff and filter it clean before the water ends up in the Thurston Pond. Each year during Earth Week, students from all grades get outside and do interactive projects in the Thurston Nature Center, the vegetable garden and in the rain gardens.



Congratulations to January's Water Champion **Sandy Breck** who has been a steward since 2016 by caring for the Butterfly Rain Garden on the north side of the school. This large rain garden was built on clay soils and water enters the garden from all sides. With very wet tolerant plants like a mixture of rushes and sedges, Blue Flag Iris and Rose Mallow, the garden stays very lush and beautiful even during times of drought and times of flooding.

This spring, Sandy and fellow steward, Cat Adams, worked together to secure a mini-sponsorship from the Community Partners for Clean Streams program to build an extended native plant bed adjacent to the Butterfly Rain Garden. More than 750 square feet of new native plants are now working to soak in stormwater and provide wildlife habitat.

Did you know?

The Ann Arbor Water Treatment Plant is open 24/7, 365 days a year. Staff answers calls from customers on a wide range of water topics.

Question: What is the reddish-pink residue I found in my bathroom?

Answer: This pink residue is not caused by bacteria in the city's drinking water but is caused by the growth of an airborne bacterium called Serratia marcescens or commonly referred to as bathroom mold. Construction and remodeling activities can stir up dust and other airborne particles carrying the Serratia bacteria. Open windows can allow airborne bacteria into a house. As a moist and warm environment, a bathroom is a place where bacteria can thrive. The recommended cleaning method is scrubbing the area with bleach and allowing the area to thoroughly dry.

Do you have a question related to the city's drinking water you would like answered? Email water@a2gov.org.