

Response to Public Comments
Immediate Response Action Status Report #3
RTN 2-21866

Following are responses to public comments received concerning the January 13, 2023 RTN 2-21866 Immediate Response Action Status Report #3. Please note that in accordance with directives from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the public comments have not been modified, edited, or clarified in any way whatsoever (with the exception of a formatting correction, noted below). Accordingly, while some of the comments do not relate to the January 13, 2023 Immediate Response Action Status Report #3, we have nevertheless provided responses. Additionally, we have not omitted any editorial commentary or opinions contained in the comments, to which we have not responded.

1. Thus far, the responses to public comment from the LSP responsible for the contamination at 65 Bean Porridge Hill Rd, Westminster, MA have been either inaccurate and/or blatantly false. For example, in the initial public comment for this IRA it was stated when the question was asked if the work for remediation was to be performed by licensed professionals the response was, “Yes, any work with remediation systems is performed by professionals licensed to perform that type of work.” We now know this is an incorrect answer as POET systems have demonstrated ineffective filtration in addition to not being installed in accordance with building codes published by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This issue has been ongoing now for 6 months. The plumbing inspector for the Town of Westminster has finally begun to approve the subpar and incorrect work initially performed by the LSPs designees. Additionally, the response to our comments was consistently, and unsatisfactorily answered with “This comment relates to IRA activities, and has been incorporated into response actions.” Being the case please cite the page number in the amended IRA that explains the following:
 - A. The dimensions of the structure that will house this equipment
 - B. Sound levels in decibels that we can expect as output of the equipment housed in this structure.
 - C. Are we to expect any byproducts such as exhaust gas that may be expected from this process?
 - D. Will any structure be visible from the road? It is distressing enough to have placards now on our plumbing that states “Non Potable Water.” I don’t wish to have to see additional structures on the site that I must drive by everyday in order to support my livelihood to be reminded yet again of the damages that Mass Natural Fertilizer et al have caused.

If these answers cannot be found in the amended IRA, please provide a full explanation to each of the aforementioned questions.

Response: Prior responses to public comments have been accurate at the time of their publication. There have been no falsehoods in comment responses, blatant or otherwise. As further data is developed at the site, our understanding is adjusted accordingly. Therefore, weekly status updates are filed with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and placed on the www.westminsterpfas.com website; those weekly updates provide a plethora of the most up-to-date information available. The weekly reports include detailed scientific data concerning the efficacy of the POET systems, which are extremely effective at filtration. Further, all plumbing work has been appropriately and properly inspected.

Your question does not make clear what “structure” you are referring to. Currently, POET systems are installed at the point-of-entry for residential water systems. Long-term remediation of the release is being evaluated by the LSP and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Dimensions, Decibels, Byproducts & Exhaust and Structure Visibility are all factors that are considered for any potential structure or devices.

Any general questions regarding remediation and plans can be answered on the webpage: <http://westminsterpfas.com/FAQs>.

2. Is there any one else who feels they should be reimbursed for the extra electricity being utilized with the water dispenser as well as the UV light?

Response: At this time, there is no mechanism in place to reimburse residents for electricity associated with the water dispenser or Point-Of-Entry-Treatment system. The POET systems are provided and maintained by MNF and Lessard Environmental at no cost to residents.

3. Where is the mention of installation of town water? Do they plan on having Crystal Rock deliver water to us indefinitely? This is a short term remediation to reduce our risk. We need a long-term solution. Remediation of anything up on BPH Road will not resolve exposure for many years. Town water should be the only option.

Response: Installation of public water is not part of the currently approved Immediate Response Actions but is being evaluated outside of the IRA. It is too early to answer specific questions concerning connecting to public water supplies, in that this is one preliminary option being examined with respect to a long-term solution. Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer and Lawson & Weitzen have prepared conceptual plans and are meeting with town engineers to scope potential future town water expansion.

You will be provided with more information as soon as it becomes available.

http://WestminsterPFAS.com/FAQs#Public_Water_Supply

4. Bedrock investigation? When installing wells and conducting geophysical survey, are you collecting bedrock corings? Bedrock fractures dictate flow direction and oftentimes become preferential pathways for water migration. Remedial alternatives can also be focused to target bedrock flow pathways.

Response: Please see IRA Status Report dated 01/13/23, section 4.3.1 Borings, Test Pits, and Soil Analytical Results, Figure 3 (visual mapping of boring and coring locations), and Appendix B (boring logs). Lessard Environmental has conducted multiple bedrock borings some of which recovered bedrock cores.

Additional technical questions and comments regarding the geological surveying should be directed to Lessard Environmental.

Lessard Environmental can be reached by:

Email: Westminster@Lessard-Environmental.com

Phone: [978-338-5541](tel:978-338-5541)

5. Roughly half the houses which had POET systems installed have had PFAS re-entering their water system (PFAS removed after the first 2 charcoal tanks, and PFAS gets re-added after the sediment filter and UV filter). What is your plan to fix this?

Response: Please see IRA Status Report dated 01/13/23, section 4.7.3: “PFOS Detections in Certain POET Effluent Samples.”

Lessard Environment has detected PFOS in the effluent streams of approximately half the houses with POET systems installed. This issue mitigates over time, however, and there has been a substantial reduction of this issue. Specifically:

- Thru 9/15/22 there were 125 POET systems sampled and 52% has PFOS
- Thru 12/9/22 there were 156 POET Systems sampled and 28% had PFOS
- Thru 3/15/23 there were 162 POET systems and 12% has PFOS

Lessard has hypothesized that the UV Light installed in the POET system was not properly produced by the manufacturer allowing for PFOS to be reintroduced to the system, as further

explained in the above-referenced report. As time elapses, any residual PFOS is removed. We are in contact with the UV manufacturer in an attempt to ensure that this issue does not re-occur.

[**PLEASE NOTE: QUESTION #6 IS NON-EXISTENT. THIS IS AN ISSUE WITH FORMATTING. NO QUESTIONS WERE OMITTED.**]

7 Is there any data indicating how long this contamination has been going on?

Response: Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer Co. began operations in 1987 and the PFAS chemicals were detected along Bean Porridge Hill Road in 2022.

At this time, it is unclear if the chemicals pre-date Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer Co.'s operation on Bean Porridge Road, or if the release of PFAS began sometime during Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer's 35-year operation.

If and when more information becomes available regarding the origin and duration of the chemical release, you will be updated with the new information via www.WestminsterPFAS.com/FAQs

8. Ashley Rodgers - I recently reported horrible odor to the filtration man who worked with our builder. I now see that there are others having similar issues. This needs to be fixed, as our water smells absolutely disgusting even after being maintained. Secondly, yes we have a POET system and after countless water samples, it has finally cleared ND. I expect water deliveries indefinitely, as the water system is not reliable for getting rid of the chemicals.

Response: For a short period after installation, carbon dust may discolor the water. Passing water through the system abates this.

The system will be sampled for the first time two to three weeks after installation, then monthly for three months and quarterly thereafter. Sampling will be scheduled with you.

A limited number of installations have had persistent odors or staining. Testing has pointed to dissolved Iron in the groundwater. As these instances occur, we direct the project plumbing contractor to add additional filtration/treatment. As detailed in previous reports, six treatment systems were modified to test the efficacy of a solution. Unfortunately, most residents at those locations did not provide meaningful feedback after installation. Six additional systems are being modified and we hope for useful feedback from those residents.

If you are experiencing this issue, please contact Lessard Environmental so investigation can commence.

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Phone: 978-338-5541

Regarding the water deliveries, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has directed that bottled water deliveries continue until sampling data shows the POET system is effective in removing PFAS from water. Many locations meet this requirement. Please continue to use bottled water for household daily needs until the POET system treated water has been cleared for regular use.

9. Jackie Sylvester 28 Woodland- Our POET system was installed but is in bypass mode due to the issue of turning our house water orange and having a metallic odor. We were told they were going to investigate how to filter this out. We haven't heard from anyone and are still in bypass mode. This means we are relying on the water delivery for water for cooking, brushing teeth and drinking, etc. We still NEED water delivery. We also NEED an answer as to when the POET issue will be remedied. Also wondering on when TOWN WATER will be the long term solution.

Response: For a short period after installation, carbon dust may discolor the water. Passing water through the system abates this.

The system will be sampled for the first time two to three weeks after installation, then monthly for three months and quarterly thereafter. Sampling will be scheduled with you.

A limited number of installations have had persistent odors or staining. Testing has pointed to dissolved Iron in the groundwater. As these instances occur, we direct the project plumbing contractor to add additional filtration/treatment. As detailed in previous reports, six treatment systems were modified to test the efficacy of a solution. Unfortunately, most residents at those locations did not provide meaningful feedback after installation. Six additional systems are being modified and we hope for useful feedback from those residents.

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It is too early to answer specific questions concerning connecting to public water supplies, in that this is one preliminary option being examined with respect to a long-term solution. Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer, Lessard Environmental, and Lawson & Weitzen have prepared conceptual plans and are meeting with town engineers to scope potential future town water expansion.

You will be provided with more information as soon as it becomes available.

http://WestminsterPFAS.com/FAQs#Public_Water_Supply

[**PLEASE NOTE: DUE TO FORMATTING ISSUES WITH THE SUBMITTED COMMENTS, QUESTIONS NUMBER 10 AND NUMBER 11 BECAME COMINGLED. MNF HAS SEPARATED QUESTIONS 10 AND 11 APPROPRIATELY AND TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE. MNF HAS NOT CHANGED OR ALTERED THE WORDING OF QUESTIONS NUMBER 10 OR 11 IN ANY WAY. NO QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN OMITTED.**]

10. Will this proposed treatment increase the water hardness? As stated in the comments above, people are noticing symptoms indicative of hard water. I have observed the PH from my water going from 7.0 prior to POET installation to over 8.2 post installation. It is a well known fact that hard water can damage copper plumbing due to a process known as electrolysis. From reading both the initial IRA and now the amended IRA, there is no mention of addressing what actions will be taken. The LSP has time and time again when asked similar questions replied with, I don't deal in hypotheticals, or words to that effect. This isn't a hypothetical, this is a question about preparedness, something that the LSP, PRPs, and their legal counsel have demonstrated to constantly overlook and/or ignore with regard to the current IRA.

Response: None of the various treatment options presented to MassDEP for further discussion have components that introduce minerals into the subsurface. Impacts on water hardness are not

associated with the measures being considered. Poor water quality is a known problem in many locations in Westminster. Further the LSP has responded to hundreds of questions with as much information as was available at the time.

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11. Where has this method of remediation been used before and what are the reported results? How long should this process last? It is difficult to appreciate any efficacy from this process as the information provided in the amended IRA indicates that primary motivation here is cost savings to the PRPs. It is not clear what benefit this process will have for the properties negatively impacted by the contamination caused by the PRPs. Mass Natural Fertilizer's former website proudly stated that Mass Natural Fertilizer was a "guinea pig" for the MassDEP. This sounds like another science experiment on the property with the abutting residents acting as involuntary test subjects yet again.

Response: The comment does not identify what remediation method they are referring to. As such, it is not possible to provide a focused response. If the Writer is referring to the various remedial options discussed in the December 6, 2022 report, most of the options are proven technologies. Where the technologies are not proven, the report clearly states that pilot investigations are recommended. The pilot testing discussed is bench-scale meaning it initially occurs in a controlled environment not in the ground.

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12. The IRA states that a water main exists on the eastern end of South Ashburnham Rd. Water expansion can start there. Why isn't there an emergency plan in effect to get this public water expansion plan project started immediately? Why do we need to wait any longer for clean drinking water? The water deliveries are a nuisance, the constant

appointments for the plumbers and water testing is also a nuisance, not to mention that we never know when the PFAS will bypass the POET filter and contaminate us further.

Response: It is too early to answer specific questions concerning connecting to public water supplies, in that this is one preliminary option being examined with respect to a long-term solution. Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer and Lawson & Weitzen have prepared conceptual plans and are meeting with town engineers to scope potential future town water expansion.

You will be provided with more information as soon as it becomes available.

http://WestminsterPFAS.com/FAQs#Public_Water_Supply

13) Anthony Dalli - Regarding the status report from the most recent meeting with Lessard and the MassDEP: I am very discouraged that there is only a brief mention of evaluating the feasibility of providing public water to locations on the eastern end of South Ashburnham Road. I live at 91 S Ashburnham rd, and the town water line ends mere yards from my house and takes a right up Woodland and onto Rebanna. My house is in a cluster of homes that have extremely high levels of PFAs coming in from the wells. Town water expansion is the only reasonable way to fix this problem. The POET system has been a solid band aid for now. But it cannot be a permanent solution. There are teams of Plumbers, Water Testers, Plumbing Inspectors, Water Delivery Persons, Lawyers, LSPs, etc contacting us continuously. We are asked to be home for blocks of time repeatedly for work, testing, maintenance, etc. I appreciate what has been done so far to make our water situation one that is somewhat workable. However, no one can live like this forever. Every home has a different situation, and honestly, this process is chaos. It will never be completely fixed without town water expansion. We need to see this solution be brought to the top line item of each and every discussion going forward.

Response: It is too early to answer specific questions concerning connecting to public water supplies, in that this is one preliminary option being examined with respect to a long-term solution. Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer and Lawson & Weitzen have prepared conceptual plans and are meeting with town engineers to scope potential future town water expansion.

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14) No mention is given to extending a public water supply to communities impacted by PFAS compounds in groundwater. This is curious as it is an obvious, and effective, alternative to addressing the PFAS impact to drinking water in private wells. It should have been at least mentioned in the discussion on Substantial Release Migration Mitigation (SRM), Section 6. This section focuses on limiting further migration of PFAS

in groundwater from the MNF site, and a new public water supply to the impacted communities may alter their analysis of the options to address SRM. I would expect that supplying public water to the impacted communities may not be fully within the Potentially Responsible Parties' (PRPs') control, but I feel it should be identified in the report as a future condition.

Response: It is too early to answer specific questions concerning connecting to public water supplies, in that this is one preliminary option being examined with respect to a long-term solution. Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer and Lawson & Weitzen have prepared conceptual plans and are meeting with town engineers to scope potential future town water expansion.

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15) In Section 2, 4th paragraph, Lessard blames some of the delay in assessment activities to “protracted interactions with the Westminster Board of Health (BOH).” It may be helpful to understand what the BOH concerns were/are with activities being proposed by the PRP’s.

Response: Please note that in the IRA Status Report dated 01/13/23, the only references to correspondence with the Westminster Board of Health are as follows:

- i. Section 11, paragraph 1: “Prior to initiating work on the first POET system, Gap Mountain corresponded with the Board of Health and received a written response that no permits were required for filtration system installation in Westminster. Installation of POET systems are not subject to permitting by their office. Lawson and Weitzen contacted the Building Commission and verified that installations can proceed on an emergency basis with inspections completed at all locations as a group after installations are completed. This arrangement has been confirmed by LEI during a meeting with the Plumbing Inspector.”
- ii. Section 11, paragraph 3: “The Westminster Board of Health includes groundwater monitoring wells in their well permitting process. Permit applications have been filed for installation of monitoring wells associated with the initial assessment activities described herein. Additional permit applications will be submitted as additional assessment activities are undertaken.”

As for any additional information regarding the Westminster Board of Health’s concerns or thoughts on the POET installation process, we would advise contacting the Westminster Board of Health’s Chairperson, Edward Simoncini, for further information.

16) Section 3.3 summarizes the results of groundwater sampling in the Study Area and identifies homes with higher PFAS groundwater concentrations further away from the source area than other homes closer to the source area along a similar trajectory. Typically, one would expect the concentration of PFAS gradually decreases, or dilutes, by naturally mixing with cleaner groundwater the further the plume of PFAS is from the source area (MNF site). The implication Lessard makes is that these elevated PFAS groundwater concentrations may be from another source area not associated with MNF. This is a valid possibility, but other scenarios exist that make the PRP's the source of the PFAS impact in these apparent disconnected areas. Examples include non-linear groundwater flow through bedrock, differing screened intervals for the private wells, and inconsistent PFAS concentrations over time at the source area (i.e., pulses of higher concentrations of PFAS released over time).

Response: In the IRA Status Report dated 01/13/23, there is no Section 3.3. However, Groundwater is discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3, and then again in flow maps in Figures 4, 5, and 7 and data in Tables 3, 4, 6, 7. The scientific analysis takes considerations raised in your comments into account, and will be further discussed in future filings.

17) No mention is made of investigating or remediating material purchased from MNF that contained PFAS. I have not followed this project from the start so maybe this is being addressed separately through a different mechanism. Regardless, it occurs to me that this material if placed on a property becomes a "another" source of groundwater contamination and may be another reason for inconsistent areas of elevated PFAS groundwater contamination (see Comment 3 above).

Response: As of today, there is no mechanism developed for notification of prior owners and/or customers, nor is there a requirement to do so. If such mechanism or requirement is developed in the future, the prior owners and/or customers will be notified accordingly. Please be advised that we are investigating various potential sources of PFAS.

Please check <http://westminsterpfas.com/FAQs> for updates.

18) In their discussion of source control measures (Section 5), I believe they should address potential emissions of PFAS when evaluating the different options. Engineering controls, such as dust monitoring and wetting as needed, will likely be required for some of the proposed options.

Appropriate engineered controls and monitoring will be implemented as appropriate, and as directed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

19) The implementation schedule for short-term source control alternatives (Section 5.4) appears to be excessively long. It appears that implementation of source control measures is not proposed to begin until spring 2024 and completed fall 2025. I feel it may be appropriate to implement some interim source control measures before all the investigation activities are completed.

Response: MNF is working closely with the Department of Environmental Protection concerning timing and sequencing of source control measures.

20) Based on the limited information on the rollout of the POET systems, it appears that many of the homeowners were not adequately informed regarding the operation and troubleshooting of the systems. I would continue to push for more information on these systems so confidence in them can increase.

Response: Residents are not responsible for any of the system maintenance. Over time, the filters will eventually need to be replaced. The sediment filter will likely be replaced much more frequently than the carbon vessels. Our sampling and field observations will determine when filters should be changed. The ultraviolet unit also requires occasional cleaning and bulb replacement.

You should notify Lessard Environmental (by email or by phone) of any of the following:

- Subcontractor not arriving during the scheduled arrival window,
- any drips or leaks,
- a substantial drop in water pressure (this may indicate need to change the sediment filter or one of the other filters),
- discoloration of the water other than the black/grey carbon dust that may be present immediately after installation,
- any concerns you have regarding the POET system.

Due to the volume of inquiries, responses can take 2-3 business days or more depending on the nature of the inquiry. Weekends and holidays are not business days.

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21) Problems with brown water, smells, and sediment may be associated with changes in oxygen levels in the well water that change water chemistry causing naturally occurring compounds, such as iron and manganese, to change to a less desirable form. Hard to say what is causing it, but solutions exist and should be pursued.

Response: For a short period after installation, carbon dust may discolor the water. Passing water through the system abates this. The system will be sampled for the first time two to three weeks after installation, then monthly for three months and quarterly thereafter. Sampling will be scheduled with you.

A limited number of installations have had persistent odors or staining. Testing has pointed to dissolved Iron in the groundwater. As these instances occur, we direct the project plumbing contractor to add additional filtration/treatment. As detailed in previous reports, six treatment systems were modified to test the efficacy of a solution. Unfortunately, most residents at those locations did not provide meaningful feedback after installation. Six additional systems are being modified and we hope for useful feedback from those residents.

Residents are not responsible for any of the system maintenance. Over time, the filters will eventually need to be replaced. The sediment filter will likely be replaced much more frequently than the carbon vessels. Our sampling and field observations will determine when filters should be changed. The ultraviolet unit also requires occasional cleaning and bulb replacement.

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22) Concerns on what the final remediation plan to address the source area will look like were identified in some of the comments. The December 2022 report lays out the different options they are considering and include some discussion on aesthetics. Lessard indicates that further site information needs to be collected before they make the final decision on a strategy to address the source area. For those interested, it will be important to stay informed on the progress of this aspect of the project. I expect more reports to come and that there will be an opportunity in the future to comment on the final strategy before it is implemented.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The remediation plans are being developed in coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The Commenter is correct that there will be more reports and more opportunities to comment. At this time, we are awaiting MassDEP response to the December 6, 2022 report. That response may dictate next steps and schedules. Updates to the IRA and the <http://westminsterpfas.com/FAQs> will provide to date plans for long term remediation.

23) What happened to the Water Expansion Plan via Tighe & Bond and how does the 'conflict of interest' with Lessard affect this expansion moving forward with the plans? Why has the Town Government of Westminster taken such a back seat approach to moving this forward? Given there is a theory that the blue light may be causing an increase in PFOS in the drinking water end result. How are we protected when the system put in place could be creating more problems (not regulated) but concerning health risks? As regulations change and other PFAS, PFOS are regulated how will these systems be a long term solution? We need town water expansion.

Response: Please note that there is no conflict of interest between Tighe & Bond and Lessard Environmental, Inc. Further, Tighe & Bond was not working on the water supply expansion.

It is too early to answer specific questions concerning connecting to public water supplies, in that this is one preliminary option being examined with respect to a long-term solution. Massachusetts Natural Fertilizer, Lessard Environmental, and Lawson & Weitzen have prepared conceptual plans and are meeting with town engineers to scope potential future town water expansion.

If applicable standards change, response actions will be re-evaluated accordingly.

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24) The continued Well drilling for Drinking Water should be stopped in the contaminated area. There is little way to protect children in homes where the families are responsible for maintaining and monitoring these systems and will most likely result in children and families drinking water that is not safe. This should not be an option for builders to put on unknowing families that do not have the ability to understand the complexities of maintaining these systems on their own. The Golf Course area has many homes well over a hundred to be built in a cluster development. This will spread the flume and make it more difficult to contain. The idea of building around a golf course with Glucosphate and other pesticides and then drill into the contaminated bedrock should be considered catastrophic and the undeveloped land should be listed as a Brownfield, IMO.

Response: Currently, Lessard Environmental and Lawson & Weitzen does not represent the builders, developers, golf course, or town of Westminster. Questions, comments, concerns and input regarding building development, zoning, and future building plans should be directed to Westminster town officials such as the Planning Department, Zoning Department, or Board of Health. Details about these departments and contact information can be found on the Westminster town webpage: <https://www.westminster-ma.gov/>

25) How much longer will bottled water be provide? Has the bottled water been approved by the state? If not, what assurances do we have that this water is not contaminated with PFA's, or some other harmful polutant? What is the status of the town water discussions?

Response: Regarding the water deliveries, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has directed that bottled water deliveries continue until sampling data shows the POET system is effective in removing PFAS from water. Many locations meet this requirement. Please continue to use bottled water for household daily needs until instructed otherwise. Bottled water is regulated by the Commonwealth and subject to testing. The water is provided by Crystal Rock, a subsidiary of Primo Water. Any questions regarding the quality, condition, sanitation, and/or contamination prevention procedures should be directed to Crystal Rock, and

Primo Water. They can be reached through various means listed on their webpage:

<https://www.crystalrock.com/support/contact-us>

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