



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

May 7, 2010

Ms. Donna Dettling
Village of Dexter WWTP
8360 Huron Street
Dexter, Michigan 48130

Mr. John Hanifan
City of Chelsea WWTP
680 McKinley Street
Chelsea, Michigan 48118

Mr. Spaulding Clark
Loch Alpine Sanitary Authority WWTP
4530 West Huron River Drive
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103

Mr. Earl J. Kenzie
City of Ann Arbor WWTP
49 South Dixboro Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

Mr. Kipp Owen
Chrysler Group LLC
Chelsea Proving Grounds
3700 South M-52
Chelsea, Michigan 48118

Dear Ms. Dettling, Mr. Hanifan, Mr. Clark, Mr. Kenzie, and Mr. Owen:

SUBJECT: Middle Huron River Watershed – Ford and Belleville Lakes

This letter is to provide an update on the Middle Huron River watershed regarding the evaluation of nutrient levels in Ford and Belleville Lakes and the need for revisions to the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Ford and Belleville Lakes.

The federal Clean Water Act [Section 303(d)] and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA) Water Quality Planning and Management Regulations (Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 130) require TMDLs for water bodies that are not meeting applicable Water Quality Standards (WQS). The TMDL process identifies target values for various pollutants that are used to evaluate attainment of WQS in impaired water bodies.

Many impairments of designated uses in freshwater lakes in Michigan are a result of excess algal growth caused by human-induced additions of phosphorus to the system. It has been determined that nuisance blue-green algal blooms impair the designated uses of Ford and Belleville Lakes due to phosphorus.

In September 1987, the Michigan Water Resources Commission established a target value of 30 micrograms per liter (ug/l) total phosphorus for Belleville Lake in an effort to restore designated uses of the lake and reduce nuisance algal blooms. On December 5, 2000, the USEPA approved a TMDL that was developed using the 30 ug/l total phosphorous target value for Belleville Lake. On November 4, 2004, the USEPA approved revisions to the TMDL to add options on how waste load allocations for point source discharges would be met to satisfy the TMDL.

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In 2004, a Cooperative Agreement was entered into by the then Department of Environmental Quality, Water Division, and point and nonpoint source TMDL stakeholders in the Middle Huron River watershed with the goal of cooperatively reducing phosphorus sources to the lakes. Since that time, stakeholders have pursued significant point and nonpoint source reductions of phosphorus in the watershed as required by the TMDL.

Various agencies, including the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), Water Bureau, have collected water chemistry data from Ford and Belleville Lakes, the Huron River, and several other tributaries in the watershed subsequent to TMDL development. These data have been used to evaluate the progress made toward meeting the 30 ug/l total phosphorus target in Belleville Lake, and attaining water quality standards (i.e., elimination of nuisance blue-green algal blooms).

In 2009 the Water Bureau conducted an evaluation of the water chemistry data and the TMDL to review the continued appropriateness of the TMDL goals. Based on this review, the Water Bureau has determined that phosphorus concentrations in the Huron River, its tributaries, and Ford and Belleville Lakes are beginning to decline and will continue to do so if current efforts to reduce phosphorus are continued. However, the data confirm that the target value of 30 ug/l phosphorus for Belleville Lake has not yet been attained.

As part of the evaluation process, the target value for Belleville Lake was reexamined. This analysis indicated the phosphorus target value of 30 ug/l for Belleville Lake used to develop the TMDL remains appropriate as supported by extensive published literature for eutrophic lakes such as Belleville Lake. Accordingly, it has been determined that the DNRE will not propose revisions to the current TMDL for Ford and Belleville Lakes. The DNRE acknowledges that it may be some time before phosphorus in the sediments of Ford and Belleville Lakes is sufficiently depleted such that the target value can be achieved. During this period, external sources of phosphorus must continue to be reduced to meet the TMDL-specified loading goals.

Although attainment of WQS may take many years, reductions in phosphorus from within the watershed have already produced measurable water quality improvements in tributaries and the lakes. These changes are a direct result of the tremendous work and collaboration of you and the Middle Huron River Watershed Partners. We commend all of your actions to date and encourage all continued efforts to reduce phosphorus sources in the watershed.

We would like to meet with you and the Middle Huron River Watershed Partners and other stakeholders to present the findings of our evaluation. I will soon send a notice suggesting several dates for the meeting. We look forward to continuing our relationship with you to improve water quality in the Middle Huron River watershed.

Sincerely,



William Creal, Chief
Water Bureau
517-335-4176

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cc: Mr. Matthew Zimmerman, Varnum LLP
Ms. Laura Ruben, Huron River Watershed Council
Mr. Peter Swenson, USEPA
Mr. John Leone, Department of Attorney General
Ms. Dina Klemans, DNRE
Mr. Dan Dell, DNRE
Ms. Brenda Sayles, DNRE
Mr. Jon Russell, DNRE
Ms. Nicole Zacharda, DNRE
Ms. Sylvia Heaton/TMDL File, DNRE