



News Release

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Health Department lifts final Bay Harbor health advisories

BAY HARBOR – Dangerous pH levels – similar to those of a strong bleach solution – first prompted the Health Department of Northwest Michigan to issue a public health advisory when the problem was detected in waters along the Bay Harbor shoreline in 2004. In subsequent years, five more health advisories were issued for areas at East Park and the Bay Harbor development. But this fall, following eight years of intensive clean-up and monitoring, the Health Department has lifted Bay Harbor's last remaining health advisory.

“Our removal of the final advisory is a major milestone in a long, difficult journey,” said Scott Kendzierski, the Health Department's Director of Environmental Health.

The high alkaline levels were the result of leachate from Cement Kiln Dust (CKD), left behind when the former Penn Dixie cement plant ceased operations at the site in the late 1980s. CMS Land Company, a subsidiary of CMS Energy and a partner in the redevelopment of the old plant site in the 1990s, accepted responsibility for the environmental clean-up. The company has been working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) ever since a pre-treatment plant failure caused leachate to enter Little Traverse Bay in 2004.

Though the final advisory has been lifted, Kendzierski added that the CKD leachate continues to be collected, and that other engineering controls have been installed to prevent leachate venting into Little Traverse Bay. “Ongoing monitoring is critical to assuring the effectiveness of capture, and the safety of public waters,” he explained.

“I'm very pleased that monitored pH values in Bay Harbor continue to remain safe for human exposure,” said Dr. Linda Dykema, toxicologist for the Michigan Department of Community Health. “The Michigan Department of Community Health supports the decision of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan to lift the remaining public health advisory for Bay Harbor.”

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information on Bay Harbor advisories and related documents, visit the Programs and Services page of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan's Web site, www.nwhealth.org.



Aerial view of Bay Harbor shoreline when the effects of CKD leachate were visible.

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