



TESTING *for* PEASE

The PFAS Contamination at Pease: A Community Perspective

PFAS Call hosted by Alaska Community Action on Toxics | November 8, 2017

Andrea Amico

Who is Testing for Pease?

Testing for Pease is a community action group, whose mission is to be a reliable resource for education and communication while advocating for a long-term health plan on behalf of those impacted by the PFAS water contamination at the former Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth, NH



From left to right: Alayna, Andrea & Michelle

Why Did We Form?

- In May 2014, a local newspaper article revealed that PFAS contamination was discovered in the three wells supplying drinking water to the Pease Tradeport (former Pease Air Force Base).
- One well tested over the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) PHAs (Provisional Health Advisories) that were in place at that time
- As community members, we were concerned as we work/worked for companies on Pease and have/had children attending daycare on Pease. All of our families were exposed to contaminated public drinking water at Pease.

History of the Pease Air Force Base

- 1956 to 1991 Strategic Air Command (SAC) Base
- 4,365 acres of land with 3 on site wells (Haven, Smith & Harrison)
- In 1989 there were ~4500 total employees on Pease (active-duty military, civil service workers and non-appropriated fund employees)
- In 1990 military personnel began leaving the base
- In 1991 Pease AFB closed and became the first base in the nation to be closed under the Base Realignment and Closure Act (BRAC)

History of the Pease Air Force Base

- In 1991 Pease became a Superfund site
- What is a Superfund site?

A Superfund site is any land in the US that has been contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by the EPA as a candidate for clean up because it poses a risk to human health and/or the environment.

- Pease has 41 hazardous waste sites identified
- Per NH DES, all previous remedial actions required by the Superfund were implemented by 1997



History of the Pease Tradeport

- Pease Tradeport developed in 1991
- Currently home to ~ 250 businesses and still growing
 - 2 large daycare centers
 - Restaurants
 - Healthcare establishments
 - Multiple colleges
 - Golf course
- 9,525 people employed and on Pease daily
- Portsmouth International Airport (PSM) currently in operation



History of the Pease Tradeport

- Pease Tradeport has three wells that supply water to the area:
 - Haven well
 - Smith well
 - Harrison well
- Haven well was estimated to have supplied 46% of water to the Pease businesses before it was shut down in 2014

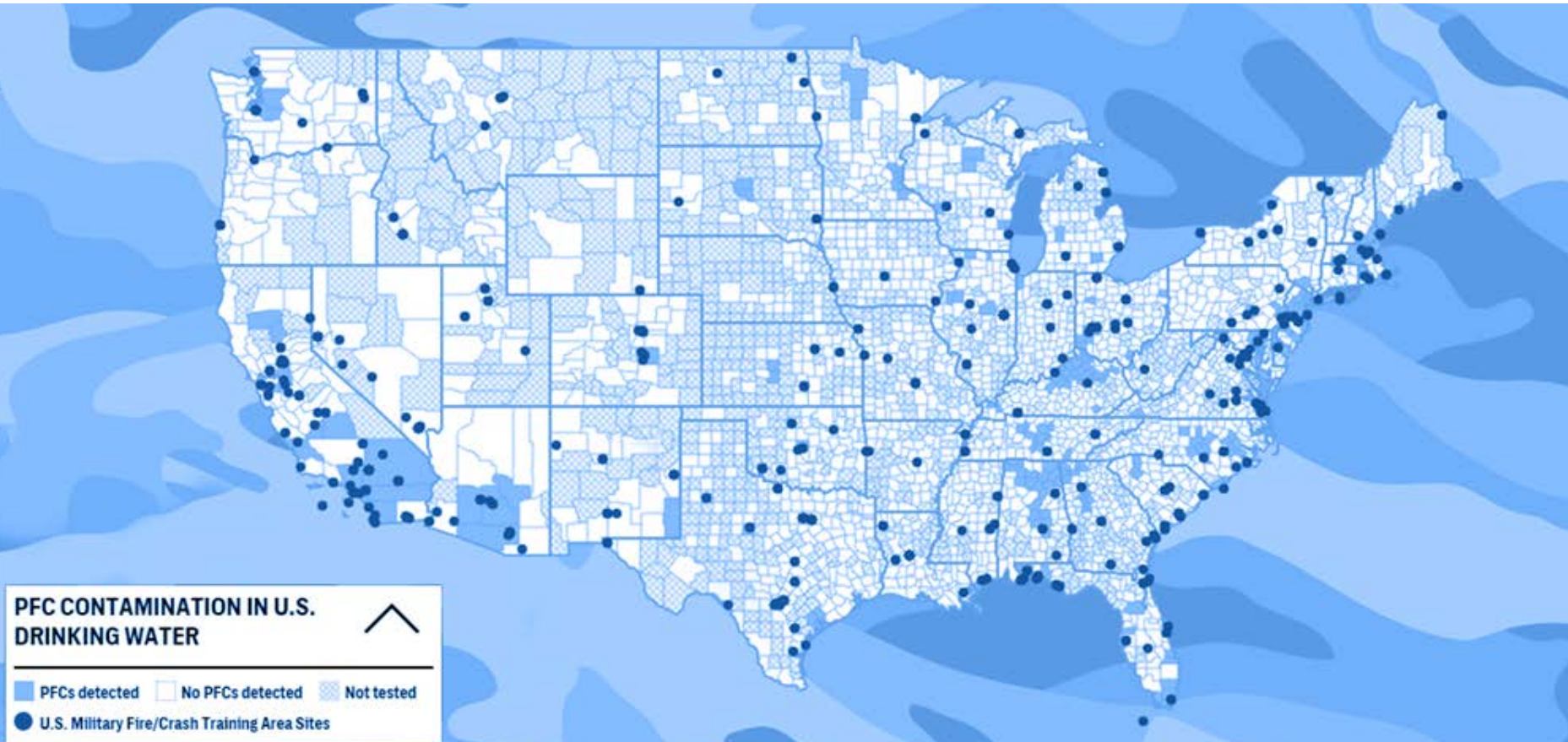


How was Pease Contaminated with PFASs?

- Pease water became contaminated with PFASs by a fire fighting foam known as AFFF (Aqueous Film Forming Foam)
- Used by the Air Force since the 1970's
- 21 areas identified where AFFF was used, stored, or released on Pease
- Effective in putting out petroleum based fires



As of 2014, 664 fire or crash training sites identified by the Dept of Defense where AFFF laced with PFCs was used in the US



TIMELINE OF EVENTS: 2015

- Blood testing program open to anyone exposed to contaminated drinking water prior to 2014 (almost 2000 people blood tested so far)
- Establishment of CAB (community advisory board) through city of Portsmouth with 14 community meetings held between May through December
- EPA places strict order on AF to clean up the PFAS contamination at Pease
- US AF agrees to treat all 3 wells at Pease
- Pease community meets directly with ATSDR for the first time and discusses forming a CAP

TIMELINE OF EVENTS: 2016

- Blood testing results reveal elevated levels of PFASs in Pease community's blood
- Blood testing program re-opened indefinitely to impacted community
- ATSDR recruits and forms official Pease CAP
- US AF recruits and forms Pease RAB with quarterly meetings open to the public
- 2 large GAC filters placed on the Smith & Harrison wells at Pease
- US EPA lowers PHA for PFOS & PFOA to 70 ppt from 600 ppt (200 ppt for PFOS & 400 ppt for PFOA)

TIMELINE OF EVENTS: 2017

- ATSDR releases feasibility assessment re: possible health studies at Pease
- US AF declines to fund health studies deemed feasible by ATSDR
- US Senator Jeanne Shaheen successful in proposing an amendment in the NDAA requiring DoD to fund national study
- PFAS conference at Northeastern University in Boston allowing community groups, scientists, policy makers, and others to come together and collaborate
- Formation of National PFAS Contamination Coalition as result of the networking done at the PFAS conference

Challenges We Have Faced

- Initial challenges - getting state to respond and address questions, establishing blood testing program for those exposed
- Difficulty getting the word out/informing employers on the Tradeport of contamination
- Evolving science - told health effects are inconclusive and getting blood tested is not recommended, yet other sources contradict
- Difficulty streamlining communication between multiple agencies and community
- Had to push for action throughout process:
 - Pushed state to involve the community in the planning and communication process
 - Pushed to expand the blood testing protocol to reach more than 50 kids, 50 adults
 - Advocated for the Air Force to commit to treating all three wells for PFASs, not just Haven well
 - Pushing for guidelines on all PFASs (not just PFOS & PFOA)
 - Pushing for medical monitoring & health studies of exposed population

Challenges We Have Faced

- Unregulated contaminants - agencies default to federal guidelines rather than state taking proactive lead
- Not a lot of labs have experience/equipment for testing - making testing limited, time consuming and expensive
- Emerging science - not many PFAS experts in the field/no established rules or guidelines = confusion and uncertainty
- Data not always presented in readable terms
- PFASs are everywhere - even in polar bears, don't degrade in environment
- No go-to treatment option - limited testing, especially replacement PFASs
- Funding = major roadblock in testing and making decisions for public safety at state/federal level
- National and global problem as more populations discover contaminations

Positive aspects

- Many Pease specific pages added to federal and state websites providing updates
- Connecting and getting the attention of many political figures
- Blood testing was reopened indefinitely for exposed community
- Collaboration and relationships with multiple government agencies
- GAC treatment on two of the Pease wells

Positive aspects

- Connecting with other contaminated sites and communities nationally and globally
- Forming the National PFAS Contamination Coalition and streamlining community efforts & advocacy at the national level
- Working directly with ATSDR on Pease health study plans and national health study
- Pending federal legislation mandating DoD to fund health studies for impacted communities
- Working with highly respected doctors, epidemiologists, scientists, & environmental health experts

Questions/Discussion....

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

~ Margaret Mead

For more information, please visit:



www.testingforpease.com

facebook.com/TestingforPease

