



For Immediate Release

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Paw Paw Village Receives Water Quality Test Results from DEQ, Awards for Watershed Improvements

Paw Paw, Michigan, Nov. 17, 2017 – The Village of Paw Paw has received test results from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Results from testing done on Oct. 25 – 10 days after the failure of the Briggs Mill Dam – showed modest dissolved arsenic levels, ranging from 1.6 parts-per-billion, or ppb, to 2.8 ppb in Maple Lake, Briggs Pond and the South Branch of the Paw Paw River. To put the results in context, the Environmental Protection Agency sets 340 ppb for dissolved inorganic arsenic as the aquatic maximum value, which is the highest concentration of a material that an aquatic community can be exposed to briefly without resulting in unacceptable effects.

The DEQ further noted: “If you have direct skin contact with high concentrations of inorganic arsenic compounds, your skin may become irritated, with some redness and swelling. However, it does not appear that skin contact is likely to lead to any serious internal effects.

“The DEQ undertook testing to relieve concerns of area residents, who expressed worries that they or their pets could become sick if they swam or waded in the lake,” said Village Manager Sarah Moyer-Cale. “These test results confirmed what we have said repeatedly: People and pets do **not** face any health threats by coming into casual contact with water or soil in Maple Lake and Briggs Pond.”

Earlier this month, the Village recently received the Sustainable Business Forum Leadership Award from Michigan’s Great Southwest Sustainable Business Forum for its South Branch Watershed Improvement Project. The award noted that “the Village is a leader in water quality education,” using “innovative efforts” that have been “unique and are a successful example around Michigan and the nation.”

It also cited the Village’s efforts to collaborate to improve surface water quality, pointing to its education work to incentivize farmers to try best agricultural practices. This project led to an annual reduction of 570 tons of sediment, 668 pounds of phosphorus and 1,383 pounds of nitrogen flowing into Maple Lake.

In October, the Village was recognized with the Graham Woodhouse Intergovernmental Effort Award from the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission for its work reducing sediment entering Maple Lake. Its efforts led to annual reduction of 570 tons of sediment, 668 pounds of phosphorus and 1,383 pounds of nitrogen flowing into Maple Lake.

The Village is working closely with the DEQ to secure a permit so that reconstruction of the dam can begin.

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