

STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE SITE

Washington Lake Overflow Drawdown System

Site No. 336089

April 2023

1 Maguire Way, Newburgh, NY 12550

WHO TO CONTACT



Comments and questions are always welcome and should be directed as follows:

QUESTIONS ON WASHINGTON LAKE DRAWDOWN EFFORT:

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TOP LINE FACTS:

- Contamination found at the Stewart Air National Guard Base – State and local officials working to ensure a federal cleanup occurs.
- Clean drinking water for the city of Newburgh is supplied through the Catskill Aqueduct.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Health (DOH) are continuing efforts to provide clean water to city of Newburgh residents and address contamination found at the Stewart Air National Guard Base (ANG Base). As part of the state's commitment to keeping the community informed on the ongoing response actions, the following update provides current information on key activities, including the decommissioning of the temporary Washington Lake overflow drawdown system, surface water sampling, and next steps in the cleanup process.

DEC and DOH experts are always available to answer any questions from the community on the state's ongoing response actions and please see the 'who to contact' box on the left of this page for current project leads.

Temporary Overflow Drawdown System Decommissioning

DEC will be removing the temporary Washington Lake overflow drawdown system, located along Union Avenue (Route 300) in the town of New Windsor, Orange County, beginning in April 2023. Equipment removal and site restoration work is expected to continue during the summer. This system is not associated with the city of Newburgh's drinking water filtration system installed by the state, and clean water continues to be provided to residents through connections to the Catskill Aqueduct.

Early in the response, DEC installed and operated this temporary system to protect flood control infrastructure on the reservoir. While operating, the temporary system protected dam integrity by maintaining the lake's water levels below the spillway elevation. This temporary overflow drawdown system was not designed for long-term use or to be part of the necessary cleanup work to address the source of contamination. As a result of the city of Newburgh's recent improvements to the Washington Lake dam spillway and the continued closure of the Silver Stream diversion gate to Washington Lake, DEC determined the temporary overflow drawdown system is no longer necessary to control lake water levels and protect city infrastructure.

Further questions on the decommissioning process of this temporary system can be directed to the DEC and DOH project leads.

Surface Water Sampling Program

In June 2022, as DEC began evaluating the need for continued operation of the temporary Washington Lake overflow drawdown system, DEC also undertook a comprehensive surface water sampling program that included Recreation Pond, Silver Stream, Washington Lake, and other downstream water bodies to identify trends in water quality. DEC has conducted multiple rounds of sampling over the course of this response to guide investigation and response actions. The data collected during the most recent sampling round continues to confirm that the Stewart Air National Guard ANG Base is the source of the highest average per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) concentrations and continues to impact downstream water bodies.

This data proves that, as the party responsible for the ANG Base, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) should evaluate a permanent treatment system to prevent the discharge of contaminated water from Recreation Pond. Additionally, sampling data demonstrates that Washington Lake PFAS concentrations have been reduced after the closure of the Silver Stream diversion gate in 2016, by limiting surface water flow from Recreation Pond to Washington Lake.

Next Steps in the Cleanup Process

Moving forward, DEC and DOH, along with the city of Newburgh and towns of New Windsor and Newburgh, are partnering to formally request that DoD enter into an agreement with DEC without further delay to address the source of PFAS contamination at and originating from the ANG Base. An agreement is needed to demonstrate DoD's commitment to advance a comprehensive investigation and source cleanup of the ANG Base to address off-site impacts. These actions are also necessary to protect drinking water supplies for the residents of these Newburgh-area communities, and to reduce continuing threats to the environment. Since 2016, New York State has fully-funded the cost of providing clean, potable water from the New York City Catskill Aqueduct and Brown's Pond, and to install filtration systems on any impacted private wells in the area.

DEC is committed to continue working with our partners at DOH, community residents, and city of Newburgh leadership on these vital issues as we advance the cause of environmental justice in the city of Newburgh and statewide.



Site Background

The city of Newburgh and towns of New Windsor and Newburgh have been adversely impacted by PFAS contamination emanating from the ANG Base. DoD has been identified as a responsible party for PFAS contamination in public and private drinking water supplies, including Washington Lake and the groundwater aquifers these communities rely on for clean drinking water.

Since the discovery of this contamination in the area more than seven years ago, DEC and DOH have continued working with municipal leaders to provide Newburgh-area communities with alternate sources of clean and reliable drinking water. Washington Lake, the primary potable water supply for the city of Newburgh, has been impacted by past discharges from the ANG Base, including Recreation Pond. Contaminated water from Recreation Pond discharges into Silver Stream, the historic source of water for Washington Lake, as well as other downstream waterbodies that influence nearby community water supplies. Although DoD installed a temporary treatment system at Recreation Pond, this system has failed to prevent the discharge of contaminated water from the site.

In 2016, DEC took immediate action to reduce the level of water in Washington Lake to protect the dam spillway from anticipated storms. DEC's initial drawdown effort began in September 2016 and was completed that fall. At the request of the city of Newburgh, DEC re-assembled the drawdown system and began pumping the lake in July 2018. Since that time, DEC has continued to operate and maintain this system.



Fig. 2-Washington Lake Overflow Drawdown System

As part of the ongoing actions of New York State's Water Quality Rapid Response Team, DEC and DOH have been working with the city of Newburgh and Orange County to ensure access to clean drinking water for the community. In 2016, DEC and DOH assisted the city of Newburgh in transitioning to the New York City Catskill Aqueduct and Brown's Pond for sources of potable water. A fill-pipe from the Catskill Aqueduct to Brown's Pond was also installed by DEC in 2017, which allows the city of Newburgh to fill Brown's Pond when necessary.

In 2018, DEC completed improvements to the city of Newburgh's Washington Lake Filtration Plant. The improvements included a new granular activated carbon (GAC) treatment system that has been designed to effectively remove the emerging contaminant PFAS, specifically PFOA and PFOS (See Figure 3 below). The GAC treatment system has operated continuously since January 2018, effectively processing potable water from the Catskill Aqueduct and Brown's Pond.



Fig. 3-Completed GAC Treatment System at Washington Lake Filtration Plant

For more information about the history of DEC's efforts in this community, additional site details, and environmental and health assessment summaries, visit DEC's website at:

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/external/derexternal/haz/details.cfm?pageid=3>

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DECinfo LOCATOR

Use DEC's interactive map to access DEC documents and public data about the environmental quality of specific sites:
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/109457.html>

For more information about State Superfund sites, visit:
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8439.html>

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

Project documents are available on DEC's Info Locator at:
<https://www.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/336089/>

Project documents also are available on DEC's project website at:
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/108825.html>