

Study confirms PFAS in the bay

ERIN NOHA
EagleHerald Staff Writer

MARINETTE — A new study has confirmed that a large plume of PFAS from Johnson Controls Inc. (JCI)/Tyco is present in the bay of Green Bay through groundwater movement. It also found that PFAS associated with the facility is linked to streams near some agricultural fields.

The area sampled in the bay has a concentration of 250 parts

Research links large plume to JCI/Tyco

per trillion (ppt), said Christy Remucal, associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who conducted the independent study, funded by a grant from the Wisconsin Sea Grant College Program. The plume's width is 2.49 miles, but researchers don't know how far it goes into the bay.

She said the word "large" when referring to the plume, is related to concentration. While the concentration is not as high as the 3,000 ppt found in Ditch B near JCI/Tyco, it is still 10 times higher than the regional background concentration of 22 ppt, Remucal said. Currently, municipal law requires public water systems to be below 70 ppt.

"I don't think anyone is

surprised by the findings," Remucal said, explaining that maps of the contaminated groundwater plume excluded any area beyond the shoreline. "It's not good news."

In addition to the findings on the bay, the study's results may impact how cities test and distribute their treated wastewater biosolids, also known as treated sewage, which may contain PFAS.

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Marinette man arrested for online crimes.

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Thank you for
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Treasures and trash

Marinette scuba diver finds bit of everything

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MARINETTE — Ed Bieber's home is a picker's paradise. He holds a logging peavey, used to hook and steer white pine down the river during the lumber boom of the early 1900s. In his hallway, a family of Apple Watches nests in a display next to a shelf full of old landline phones. Downstairs, hundreds of glass bottles, still intact, read off household names like Coca-Cola and Clorox.

He gets his finds where nobody else can see — below the surface.

"I throw piles away of garbage and trash," he said.

Bieber's been a certified scuba diver since 2020. Since then, he's been cleaning out the Menominee River, collecting at least a ton of garbage yearly.



EAGLEHERALD/ERIN NOHA

Ed Bieber stands in front of his fishing lures on display at his home in Marinette. Bieber, a scuba diver, recently quit his job to recover lures underwater, repaint and repurpose them and sell them online — a process he documents on his growing TikTok channel.

More DIVER | A3

Woman found dead in Marinette house fire

Fire on Terrace Avenue under investigation

MARINETTE — A 54-year-old woman died Friday in a house fire, according to Marinette Police Chief Jon LaCombe.

The chief, in a press release, said dispatch received multiple 911 calls at about 1:30 p.m. Friday of a possible structure fire. The fire was confirmed to be coming from 223 Terrace Ave. and the Marinette Fire

Department was notified.

A 54-year-old female was located inside the residence and was pronounced deceased on scene, LaCombe stated. Her name is being withheld pending family notification.

Multiple agencies responded to the scene including the Marinette Fire Department, Menominee Fire Department,

Town of Peshtigo Fire Department, Marinette County Sheriff's Office, Marinette Police Department, Marinette County Medical Examiner's Office, AMC-BA Paramedics, Emergency Rescue Squad, Marinette Water Department, Marinette DPW, and Wisconsin Public Service. Support was also provided by Marinette County Dispatch and American Red Cross.

This is an ongoing

investigation and the Marinette Police Department is working with the Marinette Fire Department, Marinette County Sheriff's Office, and the Wisconsin Department of Criminal Investigation Fire Marshall, to determine the cause and origin of the fire, LaCombe said.

He said if anyone has any information regarding this incident they are asked to contact the Marinette Police Department.

PFAS/from A1

When the sewage is used as fertilizer by farmers, it can become mobile and make its way into streams. The highest concentration of PFAS in the streams adjacent to biosolids-impacted fields was about 80 ppt. The study suggests that more research is needed in the biosolids area.

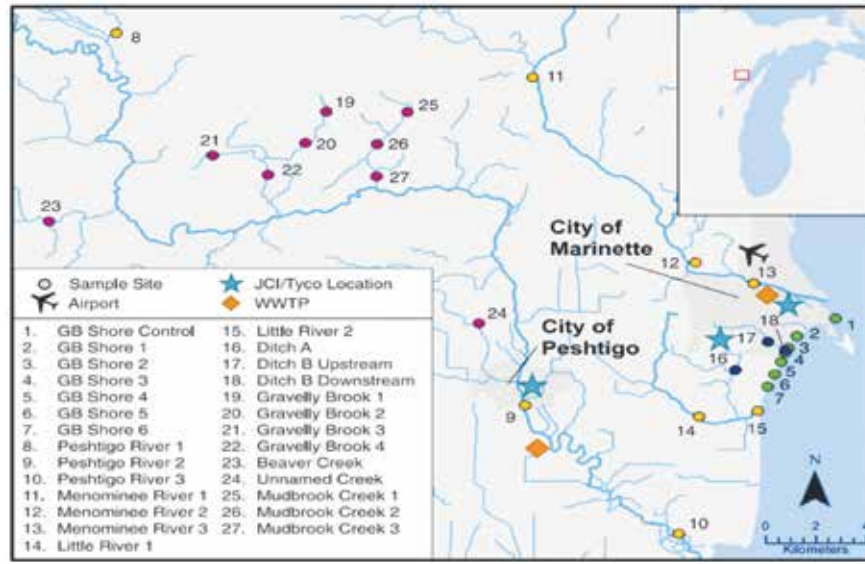
The 11-page study documents how researchers sampled soil and water in 27 locations surrounding Peshtigo, Marinette and Menominee using a PFAS fingerprinting technique that's gaining much attention in the research field but is "kind of a new idea," Remucal said.

Kathleen Cantillon, director of environmental communications and issue management at JCI, said the study appears to be incomplete.

"The authors only sampled surface water and sediment and did not sample any groundwater, but still made the unsupported conclusion that their surface water data was impacted by groundwater," Cantillon said. "Obviously, groundwater and surface water are two different things."

Cantillon said the study is based on 27 samples and one line of evidence, the fingerprinting.

"Defining a plume and movement of chemicals requires multiple lines of evidence and an expansive data pool," Cantillon said. "Fingerprinting is a



A map shows the 27 locations in the tri-cities where soil and water were sampled for a new PFAS study, which confirms that a large plume of PFAS from JCI/Tyco is present in the bay of Green Bay.

secondary tool typically used to support your primary lines of evidence, not to be your primary/only line of evidence."

Tracking is difficult, as PFAS compositions transform over time. The fingerprinting method relinks a chemical back to its original source, even after its been changed, in this case, by groundwater transport, surface water flow and land application of contaminated biosolids. The PFAS fingerprint in the bay of Green Bay is "nearly identical to PFAS associated with Tyco," according to the study.

This study went beyond the methodologies previously deployed by JCI/Tyco and the DNR to test some extra or more "novel" things, said Alyssa Sellwood, DNR Complex Site Project Manager, including the study of fluorotelomer Aqueous Film Forming foam (AFFF), whose contamination sites are "less common and poorly studied," according to the document. Remucal added that the DNR and JCI/Tyco are not measuring the active ingredients they studied. "We've been pushing for more direct

samples along that shoreline," Sellwood said. "This is how the connection of water and groundwater and surface water works."

Sellwood said the study confirms many of the findings from the ongoing investigation that JCI/Tyco is undertaking and strengthens the connection of AFFF as a primary source of PFAS contamination in the area. PFAS fingerprinting isn't always going to be easy, but it's a "reinforcement of some of the things that we've come to understand," she said. She said it is JCI/Tyco's responsibility to define the edge of the contamination they've caused.

"There's no other obvious source," Sellwood said. "They are the primary industrial source in this area, but we're open to what the data shows us."

In September, JCI unveiled its \$25 million Groundwater Extraction & Treatment System (GETS) to reduce the amount of PFAS in the contaminated groundwater before it reaches surface waters, including the bay of Green Bay, Cantillon said. PFAS is known as "forever chemicals" because they do not readily break down in the environment. JCI/Tyco tested Aqueous Film Forming foam (AFFF) outdoors and stopped in 2017.

"We're still going to be dealing with what's already out there for a long time," Remucal said.

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