

EGLE tests for PFAS Pollution in Higgins Lake

PFAS Presence in Higgins Lake: The Muskegon River Watershed Alliance (MRWA) supported a testing of the surface waters of the entire watershed for the presence of PFAS compounds. This effort included several samples collected from Higgins Lake and the Cut River. Dr. Brandon Armstrong of EGLE sent us this report, which I quote in full:

*“We recently completed our Muskegon River watershed PFAS study. Higgins Lake surface water was sampled at the North Towline Road Boat Launch as part of this study. All PFAS, excluding PFOA, were below the laboratory reporting limit (< 2 ppt). PFOA was detected in this sample at 2.1 ng/L (part per trillion, ppt) , which meets our water quality value for this particular PFAS. **Concentrations of PFOS and PFOA at 2 ppt are what we consider an anthropogenic background concentration, similar to what we are seeing in other water bodies without a significant PFAS source and most likely due to widespread use of PFAS in consumer products.** The Cut River/Backus Creek, between Higgins and Houghton, was sampled at Kingston Road. All PFAS analytes were below the laboratory reporting limits (~ 2 ppt) in this surface water sample.*

*In 2021, we collected rainbow smelt from Higgins Lake. Three composite samples (each sample containing approximately 20 headless and gutted smelt) were sent in for contaminant analyses. PFOS concentrations ranged from 26.9 to 43.4 parts per billion (ppb) in these samples. **These concentrations are similar to or less than the PFOS concentrations we are observing in smelt collected across the state including Lake Superior, Michigan, Huron, and Gull Lake (Kalamazoo County).** We recently sent in fillets of northern pike, lake trout, and lake herring (cisco) from Higgins Lake for analysis. Those results are expected back in early 2023.*

(Emphasis mine FMS)