

CACC



NEWS

*The Future of the Earth is in our Hands*[www.cacmi.org](http://www.cacmi.org)

## Learning from the Past to Protect the Future: Lessons from PBB and PFAS

*By Jane-Ann Crowley*

The PFAS story, one of the latest in a series of major contamination experiences threatening human health and the environment, is an issue of great concern on both a local and a global scale. The state of Michigan needs to develop, or perhaps more accurately pioneer, an approach to assess and regulate hazardous substances in a way that will fully protect human health and our environment. Such an approach will free the state from massive post-exposure contamination control costs that arise from subsequent human crisis that are generally characterized as “accidents.” A large factor in this advocacy was the 1970’s PBB disaster, which continues to haunt federal and state environmental health policy remediation and the unaccountable ‘costs’ of human suffering. The state’s repeated delays in responding to problems of large-scale contamination threatens our citizens, future generations, and natural resources. This suggests the need to implement a regulatory model that differs from the current ad hoc assessment, which examines the impact of contaminants following the discovery of harm, rather than proactively preventing it.

The current PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) contamination in Michigan echoes the 1970’s PBB (polybrominated biphenyl) contamination of Michigan farms and food supply, as well as soil and dump sites in St. Louis, Michigan. Both PBB and PFAS are used in industrial applications, and are forever chemicals that persist in the environment as well as the human body. In fact, over 60% of Michiganders tested in the last several years still have PBB levels above 95% of the US population. The health effects of PBB and PFAS chemicals were largely unknown during the time of contamination and human exposure. Research within the Michigan PBB Registry, established by the state of Michigan in 1976 and now maintained by Emory University, continues to try and understand the long-term health effects of PBB exposure, while research regarding the many PFAS chemicals is just beginning.

Briefly, the Michigan PBB contamination occurred in

early 1973 when the Michigan Chemical Company (owned by Velsicol Chemical) accidentally shipped PBB, a fire retardant, to Farm Bureau Services instead of magnesium oxide, a nutritional supplement for livestock. The PBB was mixed into livestock feed and consumed by cattle, pigs, and chickens. Contaminated milk, meat, and other farm products were distributed throughout the state and eaten by nearly 9 million residents.

PFAS only recently started gaining attention in Michigan when residents in Oscoda were alerted to contamination of their drinking water. PFAS are a group of synthetic compounds that repel water and oil and are used in a variety of products including, but not limited to, cookware, upholstery, and carpeting. Production of these chemicals was phased out in the 2000s but these chemicals are still being detected in the environment. Since the initial detection of PFAS in Oscoda, state regulators have found high levels of PFAS in 74 sites statewide. While there are many similarities between the PBB and PFAS contaminations there are also some stark differences. There was only one source of the PBB contamination, and it was predominantly one chemical, while there are many sources of PFAS across the state and many different chemicals classified as PFAS. In addition, the PBB contamination was of the food supply and contained mostly to Michigan while PFAS is contaminating the drinking water and emerging as a national problem. Although these compounds are profoundly different in their chemical makeup, the health outcomes and the way that the state of Michigan handled the management of the environmental crisis their presence has caused is disturbingly familiar. Until the manufacturing of harmful chemicals is regulated in the same manners as food and drugs are today, this will be a never-ending problem here, and across the country.

*Jane-Ann Crowley is a data analyst by profession and a toxics activist by choice. Her family’s experience with the PBB crisis led to her involvement with both the Michigan PBB Citizens Group and the Michigan PBB Citizens Advisory Board.*

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CACC is a proud member of Earth Share  
of Michigan, Michigan Environmental  
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## THE PEOPLE OF FLINT HAVE BEEN ABANDONED

*By Monica King, CACC Member*

I was asked to write an article about the Flint Water Crisis and its new developments, never realizing what rabbit hole I was going into. The atrocities that the people of our great state have committed only to be completely left unaccountable..... I'm left disgusted, heartbroken, depressed, and truly disappointed in my fellow man/woman. Anyone that knowingly had anything to do with any part of the Flint water crisis cover-up committed crimes against humanity.

On 4/25/14 Flint's water was switched over to the Flint River in an effort to save the broke city and the state of Michigan money. Before this even happened there were back door deals taking place for water rights, political campaigns, pay offs, contract deals, and the cover up of environmental studies. The people that were fighting against the switch were silenced because the ones in power had all the money, investment, and backing over the working class people of Flint.

Former Gov. Snyder lied about his knowledge of the crisis. He was warned about the implications of what would happen in reports a year before the switch took place. In October 2014 he, his officials and the Michigan Department of Health knew of the Legionella outbreak in Flint. And they all did NOTHING. They also knew of the heavy metal poisoning, carcinogens, and numerous other pathogens in the water causing health problems.

Fast forward to today. MI Attorney General Dana Nessel fired the former special prosecutor, Todd Flood. He had discovered local and state cover-ups from 2016 to 2019 and charged 15 Flint and Michigan officials, 7 were given plea deals. In 2019 the remaining 8 cases were dismissed and a new probe was launched. The problem: as of today (4/17/20) no new charges have been filed and the statute of limitations runs out 4/25/20. The list of people, businesses and corporations, investors, political contributors, and public officials that had the knowledge and/or collective ability to stop this is extensive.

Snyder had a \$389.6 million fund for Flint of which only \$75 million went to Flint. \$314 million went to law firms, state agencies, Genesee County Hospitals, banks, and other destinations unrelated to Flint's water. Now there is no money and bottled water distribution has stopped.

This is a crime against humanity itself. All in the name of money. Who will pay for Flint's water to be restored, the medical costs of the families, the deals that have been broken or need to be, the investments made to change the water over, the legal fees to prosecute those responsible? The former

governor didn't want the expense and this governor doesn't appear to want it either. So ultimately no one wants that responsibility and NOTHING is being done..... The abandoned people of Flint deserve better and so do the rest of Michigan's residents.



**NOT SAFE TO DRINK**

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<https://bit.ly/2Ke5zZ4>

## ONE SEED – ONE STATE MICHIGAN SEED LIBRARIES (MSL) WHAT IS A SEED LIBRARY?

*by Connie Beauvais*

A seed library is a place where community members can get seeds for free or low cost. Many seed libraries are open in libraries and community centers. The reasons for having a seed library are to get folks to garden and grow some of their own food, to develop a network of seed savers, to create locally adapted varieties, respond to climate change or loss of gene integrity due to GMOs and to save genetic diversity. Seed savers have been around for at least 10,000 years!

Local foods are only as local as the seeds we plant. MSL builds a network of growers, seed stewards and community sharing across the beautiful state of Michigan. MSL is a resource for connecting gardeners with their neighborhood seed library. If one is not local in your area you are encouraged to visit one in another community. You can also start up a seed library in your neighborhood or community. Most of this can be organized and started at home.

There are events all over the state Michigan aimed at swapping seeds, sharing information and ideas and educating folks how to care for and grow seeds.

Right now several events are canceled, postponed or being held through Zoom, Facebook or college websites.

### **More information:**

Michigan Seed Library on Facebook

phone: 989-708-0549

messenger: [m.me/Miseedlibrary](https://m.me/Miseedlibrary)

email: [miseedlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:miseedlibrary@gmail.com)

website: <https://miseedlibrary.org>

Michigan Seed Libraries  
**One Seed,  
One State**



## FOUR DECADES OF WORK FOR CLEANER AIR

*by John Witucki*

For over 40 years, a handful of concerned Alpena citizens known as HEAL (Huron Environmental Activists League) have foregone a leisurely second cup of coffee for literally thousands of mornings, regardless of weather. Instead they have stood outside the gates of a local huge cement factory taking photos and notes about hundreds of mostly unmarked tanker trucks coming into their small town on Lake Huron's northern shores. The semis were hauling hazardous liquid wastes from all over the US to have their witch's brew burned in a huge local cement kiln. The stacks on that kiln were, until recently, largely unfiltered and are owned by the LaFarge Corporation. That plant poured unknown poisons into Alpena's air 24 hours a day for almost 40 years. The firm was also releasing toxins into the waters of Thunder Bay through its dumping of wastes into a huge open pit just outside of town.

The small band of activists, led by Bill and Rose Mary Freese and a handful of others have used imaginative approaches to counter LaFarge, a hugely profitable business. HEAL has, over the years, used billboards, late night photos, numerous lawsuits, homemade air sampling and decades of constant political pressure along with sporadic DEQ support.

LaFarge sold enormous amounts of cement and made huge profits because, unlike their legitimate competitors who purchased natural gas or coal to fire their kilns, LaFarge was actually PAID to dispose of hazardous liquid wastes by burning them as their fuel source. Countless corporations from all over the US sent their wastes thru Alpena to LaFarge, including paint sludge from Detroit auto makers and chemical mixes so toxic that they wouldn't burn such wastes in chemical companies' own hazardous waste incinerators.

Due to the decades of vigilance and pressure from HEAL's members and the support of the Alpena community, LaFarge has finally installed adequate kiln scrubbers, burns much less toxins in their kilns, and is finally cooperating with the state in limiting their emissions. The Board of CACC and all of the citizens of Michigan owe a huge debt of gratitude and appreciation to the members of HEAL for literally a lifetime of care and hard work for cleaner air and water for all of us. Thank you, Bill Freese & all the members of HEAL.

## Letter from the Chair

To be honest, I'm going to sound like a broken record. These are unprecedented times that we find ourselves in, with good and bad results, all over the world. The less transportation and factories producing less or shut down is causing less pollution and consumption. Some families are enjoying time together and knowing they have job security. And there is the other side of the coin – People out of work with unemployment skyrocketing, entire industries shut down, government using Covid-19 to distract us while environmental regulations are either ignored or cut back while the media is focused elsewhere.

Me ... I feel blessed that my family is safe and that we have toilet paper. Wishing you the same, and hoping that our lives are different when the next newsletter is published!

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