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## MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor William Samaras and Members of the City Council  
From: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*  
Date: November 7, 2019  
Subject: Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility Landfill Runoff Treatment

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It was recently reported that the renewal of a permit by federal and state environmental agencies will allow for a significant volume of polluted runoff to be treated at Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility's Duck Island facility. This runoff originates from the Turnkey Landfill in Rochester, NH, and contains a high level of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a group of chemical compounds that has been widely used in industrial and residential applications since the 1940s.

Duck Island has been accepting and treating landfill runoff, also referred to as leachate, from the Turnkey Landfill since 2013. These operations have been conducted according to all federal and state regulations that are in place related to PFAS, and have been within the guidelines of the City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit which authorizes the Duck Island facility to discharge treated water into the Merrimack River.

It is believed that the discharge of treated leachate runoff from Duck Island does not pose a threat to public health, including to downriver communities that draw drinking water from the Merrimack. Nevertheless, out of an abundance of caution, a decision was made as of November 7, 2019 that the acceptance of leachate from the Turnkey Landfill at the Duck Island will be suspended. This decision was made in consultation with Wastewater Utility Director Mark Young.

Wastewater Utility has begun working in close collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to assess PFAS levels at the Duck Island facility and in the Merrimack River. Waste Management staff from the Turnkey Landfill has also been engaged to develop a better understanding of PFAS levels in its leachate.

The safety of Lowell's drinking water is of the utmost importance. Thorough testing conducted by the Water Utility Department at Lowell's drinking water intake point in the Merrimack River has indicated an exceptionally low level of PFAS, with results showing levels between 2 and 3 parts per trillion. Additionally, Lowell's drinking water treatment facility is equipped with carbon filters that remove PFAS, providing further confidence that Lowell's drinking water does not contain these chemicals.

My office will continue to keep you apprised of any developments related to this situation.