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WALNUT GROVE DEVELOPMENT\CORRESPONDENCE\02042025 MTN RESPONSE TO COA
Project No. 5356.23.01

February 5, 2025

Ms. Cheryl Sinclair, P.G.
Environmental Group Manager
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields
208 West Third Street
Williamsport, Pennsylvania 17701

**RE: Comments and Questions on Penn State University Benner Township PFAS
Draft Consent Order and Agreement**

Dear Ms. Sinclair:

On behalf of the Walnut Grove Alliance (WGA), Mountain Research, LLC (Mountain Research) is providing the following technical comments and questions relating to the draft November 13, 2024, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) Consent Order and Agreement (COA) between PADEP and The Pennsylvania State University (University). This specific COA is regarding the Benner Township PFAS Investigation Site at and around the State College Regional Airport (formerly known as University Park Airport).

1. Question - Why is there no requirement for the University to perform medical surveillance monitoring (including but not limited to blood serum testing), health assessment, and / or no cost access to medical professionals with expertise in PFAS and related health issues? This lack of action leaves residents and individuals who have experienced long-term exposure to PFAS through the ingestion pathway from contaminated water supply wells without the necessary medical support and evaluation?
2. HSCA Section 103 and 35 P.S. Section 6020.103 defines a "Site" as *"Any building; structure; installation; equipment; pipe or pipeline, including any pipe into a sewer or publicly owned treatment works; well; pit; pond; lagoon; impoundment; ditch; landfill; storage container; tank; vehicle; rolling stock; aircraft; vessel; or area where a contaminant or hazardous substance has been deposited, stored, treated, released, disposed of, placed or otherwise come to be located. The term does not include a location where the hazardous substance or contaminant is a consumer product in normal consumer use or where pesticides and fertilizers are in normal agricultural use."*

2. (Continued)

Page 12; Paragraph 3f – Clarification and agreement that WGE is part of the Airport Site. Per Mountain Research's understanding of this paragraph, PFAS constituents have been deposited in the soils at the Airport property, these constituents then discharged /leached into the groundwater beneath the Airport Property which the groundwater then flowed beneath WGE as a result of PFAS discharges at or from the Airport Property.

3. Page 14; Paragraph 4b – Will the proposed Remedial Investigation Work Plan schedule be made available for public comment or at the minimum can Benner Township be provided a copy of the proposed schedule? WGA has already submitted a formal document to Benner Township for the township to request Public Involvement once the University submits the Notice of Intent to Remediate.
4. Page 14; Paragraph 4c – Is the Remedial Investigation Work Plan going to be available for public comment or at the minimum can Benner Township be provided a copy of the Work Plan? WGA has already submitted a formal document to Benner Township for the township to request Public Involvement.
5. Page 14; Paragraph 4c – Does the investigation / characterization of the PFAS groundwater plume for the Remedial Investigation extend onto WGE and beyond? PADEP Chapter 250 regulations require horizontal and vertical delineation of the groundwater contaminant plumes so a thorough site conceptual model can be developed along with groundwater fate and transport modeling to evaluate and identify current and potential future exposure pathways (particularly groundwater ingestion) and receptors?
6. Page 14, Paragraph 4c. The residents of Walnut Grove Estates (WGE) are going to want PADEP relief of liability for their properties. But the PADEP relief of liability only applies to areas where environmental investigations have occurred, and current and future exposure pathways evaluated. Per PA Code 25 Chapter 250.408(a)(b2) and (e)-Characterize the vertical and horizontal extent of contamination above the selected standard within each medium (soil and groundwater) of concern. Will the University include WGE properties in the environmental investigation for the Remedial Investigation Report and other associated reports so relief of liability can be provided to WGE property owners?

7. Page 14; Paragraphs 4a-d – Mountain Research recommends adding EDB to the constituent list for future groundwater sampling of any monitoring wells installed at the Airport Property since EDB has routinely been detected in one of the residential supply wells in WGE and an EDB detection has occurred at a time in the past at an on-lot supply well located on Airport Property and at the fish hatchery. The Airport Property is the likely source for the EDB. Underground storage tanks (USTs) from the 1970s were removed in 1995, but EDB wasn't analyzed. In addition, PADEP requested a site characterization and Site Characterization Report to be completed as a result of UST closure activities. Based on PADEP file review records, site characterization wasn't performed.
8. Page 15; Paragraph 4f – The affected properties of WGE should be included in the "Site" / Airport Site, and as a result be included in the overall PADEP relief of liability once the Final Report has been reviewed and approved by PADEP.
9. Page 17-18; Clarification on "*The University's agreement pursuant to subparagraphs 4.h., l., and j. shall not be construed as an admission that any PFAS impacts at the residential properties within the Department Investigation Area or otherwise identified on Exhibits B or C are or were caused by the release of PFOS, PFOA, PFBS, PFNA, or PFHxS at or from the Airport Property or that such residences are within the boundaries of the Airport Site.*" Then who are we saying is the responsible party then?

Based on a forensic PFAS total oxidizable precursor (TOP) assay laboratory analysis completed on a groundwater sample from a residential supply well in WGE, the results were compared to the PFAS constituents identified in soil samples collected by PADEP at the Airport Property and also compared to the PFAS constituents found in AFFF. The TOP assay analytical results closely matched PFAS constituents found at the soils at the Airport Property and close patched PFAS constituents originating from AFFF discharges.

10. Page 22-23; Paragraph 16; "*The University shall not, by act or omission, cause any further contamination and/or otherwise exacerbate any PFAS contamination of the Airport Site or the release of PFAS at the Airport Site. Migration or runoff of PFAS discharged at or from the Airport Site prior to the Effective Date of this Consent Order and Agreement shall not be considered a breach of this Paragraph 16.*"

10. (Continued)

Mountain Research's interpretation of this paragraph is upon signature of the COA on November 13th, 2024, any stormwater containing concentrations of PFAS above the drinking water MCL that is being discharged from the Airport Property is a direct violation of the PA Clean Stream Laws and as result the University will be in breach of the COA. How is the University going to immediately address the discharge of stormwater containing PFAS above the PADEP drinking water MCL to avoid being in breach of the COA and in violation of PA Clean Stream Laws?

It would be in the University's best interest to ensure Spring Benner Walker Joint Authority (SBWJA) adheres to PADEP's Clean Fill / Management of Fill Policy during construction of the proposed sanitary sewer extension line at the Airport Property and Airport Site. Considering the fact that SBWJA's PADEP Permit Application for Discharges of Stormwater Associated With Construction Activities omitted details that a portion of the construction activities would intersect areas of PFAS contamination. Excavation, drilling, and disturbance of PFAS impacted soils during construction activities could cause further contamination and/or otherwise exacerbate existing PFAS contamination at the Airport Property and Site both in the soil and groundwater media.

11. Page 15-16; Paragraph 4h: *"POET System. Within 30 days after the Effective Date or after receipt of a signed access agreement from the property owner of the residences identified on Exhibit B, whichever comes last, the University shall begin the semi-annual sampling and maintenance of the POET systems at the residential properties identified on Exhibit B and continue until one of the following first occurs:*

- i. Such properties are provided with public water;*
- ii. POET systems are approved by the Department as the final remedy to provide safe drinking water to such properties in accordance with HSCA or the Land Recycling Act;*
- iii. The Department approves another party becoming legally obligated to perform such sampling and maintenance;*
- iv. The private drinking water well is determined to be outside the boundaries of the Airport Site, as defined pursuant to Paragraph 3(f); or*
- v. Eight consecutive quarterly samples of raw water, or a lesser number of events approved by the Department, confirm that the concentrations of PFOS, PFOA, PFBS, PFNA, and PFHxS are below the applicable MCLs."*

11. **(Continued)**

Mountain Research requests "item ii" to be omitted as an option or revise the language in item ii to indicate POET system maintenance, performance sampling, and disposal of spent POET system treatment media be the responsibility of the University or other responsible parties, unless long term monetary compensation is provided to the affected property owners to maintain the POET system. The property owner did not cause or create the PFAS impacts to the groundwater, so the property owner should not be responsible and / or monetarily responsible for POET system maintenance.

In addition, language should be included in the COA to require qualified representative(s) of the University to attend and participate in meetings with the State College Borough Water Authority and Benner Township Water Authority to discuss options for providing PFAS affected properties with public water, including monetary compensation by the University, and any other identified responsible parties, to assist with the design and construction of a public water supply system if that option is selected for restoration of water supply.

If "item v" is selected as an option, then Mountain Research requests piezometers / stilling tubes be installed in the affected WGE water supply wells. When groundwater samples are collected from the supply wells, the University's consultant should gauge the groundwater level of the supply well via the piezometer / stilling tube with the purpose of determining if any decrease in PFAS concentrations is related to the PFAS plume shrinking and not related to any changes in groundwater levels due to drought or recharge from significant precipitation events. During sampling of the supply wells, the University's consultant should analyze groundwater samples for field parameters including pH, temperature, conductivity, oxygen / reduction potential (ORP), and dissolved oxygen to determine any relation (if present) between PFAS concentrations and field parameters.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the undersigned at (814) 949-2034, Extension 206 or via e-mail at jfloyd@mountainresearch.com.

Sincerely,
MOUNTAIN RESEARCH, LLC

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jason D. Floyd".

Jason D. Floyd, P.G.
President and CEO / Chief Hydrogeologist

JDF:ll