

Pender officials expect first water test results this week

By Andy Pettigrew
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Pender County Health and Human Services Director Carolyn Moser told County Commissioners Monday she expects the first round of water testing for GenX contamination to begin to arrive as early as July 12. Moser said there are a number of tests from different labs and results should be available for release to the public early next week. Moser expressed concern to Commissioners about possible confusion resulting from different tests and information. "We need to have a clearing house for this. My concern is whoever decides to do testing is going to come out with their report and whose are we going to follow," Moser said. "The state needs to say we are going to follow DEQ's test (Division of Environmental Quality) or not. "

Moser said the health directors from Bladen, New Hanover, Brunswick, and Pender counties have been in close contact with the state and federal environmental officials.

"Its been frustrating, since GenX is not a regulated contaminant so the EPA does not have any quality standards for that. They are looking at it, but I don't anticipate it getting on the pollutant list with the EPA for quite a while," Moser said.

Reports indicate GenX or similar earlier versions of the chemical have been released into the Cape Fear River since 1980. Concerns have been raised about long-term exposure to the chemicals possibly in drinking water taken from the river. Pender County has only used the Cape Fear River as a water source since the county's water treatment plant opened in XXXX. Prior to that, Pender County water came from Wallace, which uses wells as a water source. Moser told the board there has been no evidence in county health studies to support a conclusion that an increase in cancer or other diseases is related to water contamination.

"For Pender County, there is nothing in our data to indicate any cancer rates have been impacted by GenX," said Moser.

Moser said there was no increase noted, but even if there were, there are other things that people are exposed to that could be the source of an increase and not necessarily GenX.

"You can't tie it to GenX for certain when there are other carcinogens that you come across on a daily basis," Moser said.

Moser reiterated there is nothing to show at this time the water poses a health risk.

"If anyone is uncomfortable with using the water, that is a personal decision to get bottled water. But according to all the scientific data out there, there is no health risk posed by this," said Moser.

Commission Chairman George Brown said accurate information was important.

"We thought it was important the public hear something from us today. Even though we may not have a lot of news, we are trying to stay on top of things," Brown said.

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