



**City of Gustavus**  
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May 21, 2024

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

RE: Letter of Support for the Proposed Project: Assessing PFAS Exposures in Alaska Communities and Actions to Protect Public Health

To Whom it May Concern:

I am pleased to provide this letter of wholehearted support on behalf of the City of Gustavus for the community-based research project proposal titled: Assessing PFAS Exposures in Alaska Communities and Actions to Protect Public Health. Gustavus is a remote off-road community in Southeast Alaska (pop. 655) which is the gateway community for Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. We do not have a municipal water system and rely on air and marine services for our food and supplies, as well as subsistence food resources

In 2018, Gustavus residents were informed that our groundwater was contaminated with PFAS-based aqueous film forming foams (AFFF) used at the Gustavus Airport since at least the mid-1980s. Gustavus was one of the first communities in Alaska where PFAS contamination was investigated. Most of the people in Gustavus have relied for years on private wells ranging from 15 to 25 feet deep, of which many have been found to be contaminated with PFAS above state action levels. In addition, the wells supplying our school, library, local businesses, and other public places were also found to have elevated levels of PFAS. Some residents and businesses were provided with alternative drinking water sources, such as bottled water and rainwater cisterns, or with granular activated carbon (GAC) filtration systems. Sampling of wells however is incomplete, and in many cases, wells have not been re-tested, especially those that did not initially show contamination. Given the fluctuating nature of the contaminated plumes, and area-wide flooding in December 2020, we are concerned about contamination extending beyond the initial delineation and possible contamination of additional drinking water sources. A previous study by two of the research partners (Emory University and Alaska Community Action on Toxics) showed that PFAS concentrations in water and blood serum of our residents were significantly correlated. The researchers concluded that contaminated drinking water from private wells contributes to the overall PFAS body burden in Gustavus residents.

We have confidence and trust in the research team based on our past experience and are very interested in further collaboration to advance our knowledge of the extent of PFAS contamination and possible adverse health outcomes that might be associated with past and current exposures. This research is vital for us to make informed decisions and to develop a public health action plan to protect the health of our residents. We appreciate your consideration of this letter and hope that you will support this important project. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Shelley K. Owens, (JD retired)  
Mayor, City of Gustavus