



Michigan Association of Local Environmental Health Administrators MALEHA

Representing Local Environmental Public Health Departments in Michigan

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Forum Report December 2018

2018 saw an increased focus in Environmental Health in Michigan. PFAS testing of municipal and non-community schools and day care centers, the continued spread of black legged ticks, ongoing harmful algal blooms, an increase in Legionella cases statewide, an ongoing Hepatitis A outbreak, continued vapor intrusion investigations, the passage of a recreational marijuana ballot initiative, beginning to update the food law and food code, and legislation that would have created a statewide sewage code.

As we move into 2019, I want to encourage our organization to take a look at all that transpired in 2018 and help shape 2019. Here are my top three areas of focus for 2019:

1. Statewide Sewage Code: While this topic is fresh in our minds, I'd like our organization to fully consider what items we could support from the previous legislation. Do we recommend having some minimums for education for staff? What about having periodic inspections of systems? What triggers would you recommend? What types of code-specific minimums would be acceptable? The concept of a statewide code has come up periodically over the past few decades, and will likely continue until it is achieved. I advocate for meeting with DEQ to discuss what those code items might be. The work we do now will serve us well for the future.

2. Develop working relationships: With all of the varied topics we face on a weekly or even daily basis, we need to continue to develop our professional relationships both within our organization, with our peers at other organizations, with our state counterparts and with those in all facets of environmental health – non-profit, advocacy, and elected officials to name a few. Strong partnerships and working relationships can help us answer the difficult questions and advocate for the best response.

3. Invest in our future: Environmental health is making headlines on a daily basis in our state. We need to help cultivate the leaders of tomorrow to help carry on all of the important work going on now. This leadership can be mentoring internal staff, encouraging students to shadow your staff and taking on interns. Even if these individuals don't end up in environmental health, they will take with them the experience you provided. They may go on to environmental health or other positions, but you will have gained an advocate in the process.

There are so many more big topics our profession is going to face in 2019 and beyond. I'm honored to work with such an outstanding group of individuals for a collective dedication to environmental health. Thank you for the work you do.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kristen Schweighoefer, 12-19-18