

No regulated contaminants detected in Skowhegan water supply *Maine Water conducting additional testing, schools to open*

Skowhegan, ME — Sunday, November 15, 2020 — The “Do Not Drink” order issued by the State of Maine on Thursday night, applying to the water system that serves the town of Skowhegan, remains in effect but is on track to be lifted as early as Monday evening.

Maine Water has received initial lab results indicating the water now in the system meets all federal and state drinking water standards, after a “soapy odor” was reported by the company to state officials on Thursday. Lab results also indicated no regulated drinking water contaminants were found in water samples from two spring-fed ponds, Upper Pond and Lower Pond, that were the primary source for the Skowhegan system on Thursday.

On Friday, Maine Water’s first solution was to switch its water source from the ponds to the Kennebec River. This weekend the company has been thoroughly flushing the water system to remove any trace of the odor. Maine Water also collected additional water samples to be analyzed Monday at a lab certified by Maine’s Drinking Water Program, to confirm the water meets all state and federal standards for safe drinking water.

“With the switch in the supply source and the flushing completed, we expect another good lab report by the close of business on Monday,” said Rick Knowlton, president of Maine Water. “That would allow for the removal of the ‘do not drink’ order.”

The company has been in close communication with municipal and state officials, and will provide bottled water to the town’s schools so they can re-open on Monday. Maine Water has also taken care to canvass the community and provide water to nursing homes, the county jail and other large users.

For all the company’s customers, bottled water is available at the Skowhegan Community Center, 39 Poulin Drive, Skowhegan. Maine Water customers may pick up water from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm both today, Sunday, and tomorrow, Monday. The company has also supplied a drinking water filling station to the site, which will be available until the “Do Not Drink” order is lifted. Customers need to bring their own clean containers to use the filling station.

While the Do Not Drink order remains in place, Maine Water advises customers not to use the water for any purpose involving consumption. The water can be used for all other non-consumption purposes such as bathing, laundry, and dish washing.

Knowlton said the company’s first priority is verifying the safety of the water supply and getting the Do Not Drink order lifted. He said the company continues to investigate the cause of the soapy smell that was first noticed on Thursday. Maine Water will not use water from Upper and Lower Ponds again until those sources are confirmed to be safe.

“We recently installed a new flow control structure between the two ponds,” Knowlton said. “Last Monday, the 9th of November, we were working to reduce leakage around the new structure. Our very strong suspicion today is that project work is connected to the odor, but we need to definitively confirm. The good news is that on a project like that, we only use materials with NSF 61 certification, which means they are safe for use in drinking water applications. The initial lab report indicating no contamination strongly supports this possible explanation. Regardless, Maine Water will get the answer soon, and we will immediately report our findings to our customers, the Skowhegan community and the state.”

Web link --- NSF International is a global, independent organization, whose standards team facilitates development of public health standards. Their service teams test, audit and certify products and services. An NSF certification assures consumers, retailers and regulators that certified products have been rigorously tested to comply with all standard requirements. For more information: <https://www.nsf.org/about-nsf>

Maine Water continues to communicate proactively with customers, directly and via the company’s web site (www.MaineWater.com) and social media channels. If customers have any questions, they should call the Maine Water customer service team at 800-287-1643.

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