

**Questions:**

I've spoken to a fisherman who has had to stop fishing at the Heart Morass wetlands near Sale, Victoria because of the PFAS contamination.

He's raised concern that the Defence Department hasn't consulted him over the issue.

I'm seeking a response from the Defence Department on this, specifically why they haven't consulted him and when they're planning to.

Is defence investigating PFAS contamination of ducks in other areas, given that they are a migratory species?

If not, is defence concerned that it may be limiting the investigation too much to get an accurate picture of the extend of PFAS contamination?

**Response:**

On 28 September 2017, Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria recommended that fish, eels or ducks caught at the Heart Morass wetlands not be consumed until further notice.

This precautionary advice was issued following testing for per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) levels in plants and animals near RAAF Base East Sale as part of Defence's detailed environmental investigation. The testing detected elevated levels of PFAS in fish, eels and ducks within the Heart Morass wetlands.

Defence provided the testing results to EPA Victoria as the appropriate state authority. Fisherman who would like to know more about the implications of the precautionary recommendations are encouraged to contact EPA Victoria.

As part of the investigation into PFAS, Defence is currently conducting a Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessment which will evaluate potential risks to the human population and ecology, and inform actions to mitigate risks. This assessment is expected to be completed before the end of 2017 and will inform any further advice regarding precautionary measures. Defence provides sampling results to EPA Victoria on a regular basis.

Only a small fraction of PFAS imported to Australia was used in the legacy firefighting foams purchased by Defence. The majority of PFAS was used in other applications, including non-stick cookware, food packaging and some industrial processes. It is likely that these applications of PFAS have led to a wide range of PFAS contamination sources unrelated to Defence. Migratory animals are likely to have exposure to any number of these sources.

Response provided to journalist  
23 October 2017

The objective of the Defence PFAS environmental investigations is to understand the nature and extent of PFAS contamination from Defence sources. Sampling ducks outside of the Defence investigation area will not contribute to this objective.

The type and quantity of sampling is different for each environmental investigation and is determined by several factors, including the topography, hydrology and hydrogeology of the investigation area. There are currently no other investigations in the PFAS Investigation and Management Program that have identified a requirement to test ducks.

Defence is committed to regularly updating the community throughout the investigation, including through community information sessions. Updates are also provided through the [project website](#), direct mail and information sheets as new information becomes available. Defence held a community engagement session in East Sale on 8 June 2017 and will hold another community engagement session in late 2017. Details of this session will be advertised closer to the date. If members of the community have questions regarding the investigation they can contact the investigation hotline on 1800 793 201 or [eastsale.defence@senversa.com.au](mailto:eastsale.defence@senversa.com.au).

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