

Freshwater for Life Action Coalition (FLAC): Response to Alderman Nik Kovac's comment

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In a recent Urban Milwaukee article, "[City Will Raise Its Water Rates](#)", Alderman Kovac is quoted as saying "That's a major investment and, based on the Madison experience, would achieve almost nothing," during the confirmation hearing of Karen Dettmer as the new Superintendent of Milwaukee Water Works in January 2019.

Clearly Kovac is not informed enough to know that the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the State regulate paint with lead concentrations greater than 0.5% by weight as being "hazardous" and contributing to lead poisoning. Lead contaminated sediment and particulate found in lead service lines (LSLs) generally contain 70-90% lead by weight, yet is ignored due to lack of awareness and regulatory lobbying by the water utility industry.

The article points out that "a 2008 study of Madison's effort to replace all of its lead laterals found that only 49 percent of the lead in water as coming from the lateral, with 38 percent coming from interior faucet or other sources on the premises."

So, by Alderman Kovac's logic lead lateral replacement is insignificant except for the fact that it is the biggest contributor of lead in water.

What Alderman Kovac fails to understand, or is unwilling to understand because of his undying devotion to Mayor Tom Barrett, is that in a July 2018 [study](#) by the EPA, in which Madison, WI was the case study, "overall, this research showed that controlling lead exposure from water is more complicated than simply adding corrosion control chemicals to reduce the solubility of lead minerals."

Lead in water resulting from LSLs is highly dependent on age of pipes, water supply chemistry (differs based on source raw water) and disturbance of LSLs. Regardless, majority of lead in water comes from LSLs AND no level is acceptable.

It is also important to note that the mere presence of lead-based paint in a home

DOES NOT necessarily pose a health risk to occupants (only peeling, chipping and lead-based painted friction surfaces do).

The same cannot be said for lead service laterals (LSLs) in which their presence ALWAYS poses a health risk to residents consuming water in properties having them present.

It is imperative to remove LSLs, but instead Kovac is more interested in bickering as to how much lead they contribute and at what cost! Very short sighted on the part of a policy maker who is clearly putting money before public health prevention (ironically and unarguably the most cost-effective strategy).

Finally, we ask Ald. Kovac if he is OK with his young children, pregnant wife or young nieces/nephews drinking water from LSLs routinely if he is so sure there is little impact in replacing LSLs. Is Ald. Kovac willing to guarantee to citizens of Milwaukee that our water flowing through lead pipes and through our taps is safe? Ald. Kovac should refrain from being so spurious and careless in his remarks and research a little deeper.