Dept. of Natural Resources: Deer liver PFAS surveillance results now available

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced the results from a statewide monitoring effort evaluating per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) levels in the liver of white-tailed deer are now available. After studying the results of this sampling effort, the DNR and the Department of Health Services (DHS) are not recommending a statewide consumption advisory for PFAS in white-tailed deer liver.

In September 2020, the DNR and DHS issued a Do Not Eat advisory for the liver from deer harvested within five miles of the JCI/Tyco Fire Technology Center in Marinette County, a site contaminated with PFAS. Due to the specific focus of the JCI/Tyco study, it was unclear whether the PFAS in liver tissue were the result of local exposure or whether they were representative of PFAS levels in the liver in deer statewide. To investigate background levels of PFAS in white-tailed deer throughout Wisconsin, the DNR analyzed additional liver samples from deer harvested during the 2020 November nine-day gun deer hunt.

A total of 32 liver samples collected from 32 different counties were submitted for analysis. Only one liver sample had detectable levels of PFAS. Perfluoro-n-octanesulfonic acid (PFOS), the PFAS compound for which consumption advisories are based, was not detected in any samples.

The purpose of the liver is to filter contaminants from the bloodstream. As such, it was not unexpected to detect trace levels of PFAS in some samples. Based on the results, the DNR and DHS have determined statewide restrictions on the consumption of white-tailed deer liver, outside of the existing advisory area within a

5-mile radius of the JCI/Tyco Fire Technology Center in Marinette, Wisconsin, are not warranted.

PFAS are a group of human-made chemicals used for decades in numerous products, including non-stick cookware, fast food wrappers, stain-resistant sprays and certain types of firefighting foam.

These contaminants have made their way into the environment through spills of PFAS-containing chemicals, discharges of PFAS-containing wastewater to treatment plants and certain types of firefighting foams.

For more information on safely consuming wild game, visit the DNR's Safely Eating Wild Game webpage.