



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 16, 2019

UPDATE 2: IDEM and DNR responding to reported fish kill

INDIANAPOLIS –The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are working closely to coordinate the response to a reported fish kill in the East Branch of the Little Calumet River in Portage, Ind.

On Monday, August 12, 2019, DNR received a citizen complaint of a distressed fish in the East Arm of the Little Calumet River. Both IDEM and DNR investigated and observed one distressed fish. Tuesday evening, August 13, 2019, additional complaints were received identifying the presence of numerous dead fish. IDEM and DNR conducted reconnaissance on Wednesday, August 14, 2019, and observed that a significant fish die off had occurred. The cause, at that time, was unknown. In the course of investigating potential sources, IDEM learned that ArcelorMittal violated its daily maximum limits of ammonia-nitrogen.

On Thursday, August 15, 2019, IDEM was notified by ArcelorMittal that they had violated the daily maximum limit for total cyanide. When IDEM received this information, agency staff alerted local media, environmental organizations, and local officials including Indiana American Water and the mayor of Portage. In addition, IDEM notified ArcelorMittal that they were responsible for initiating a spill response to include in-stream monitoring and increased monitoring of its outfalls to the Little Calumet River.

In response to a directive from IDEM to identify the cause of the exceedances, ArcelorMittal stated that their blast furnace closed water loop station failed. IDEM continues to investigate the cause.

IDEM and DNR ask residents to continue to avoid this area while cleanup efforts are ongoing. ArcelorMittal's contractor is on scene to conduct a cleanup of the dead fish and has notified IDEM that cleanup efforts should be complete by Saturday, August 17, 2019.

Indiana American Water has stated they have seen no impact on the raw water parameters they are monitoring for at their Ogden Dunes treatment facility. As a precaution, they have reduced flow through that facility and are continuing to closely monitor the situation.

We will continue to provide updates as we receive additional information.

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