

COVID-19 Wastewater Surveillance
North Dakota 2020

The CDC and the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in collaboration with [agencies throughout the federal government](#), have initiated the National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data generated by NWSS will help public health officials to better understand the extent of COVID-19 infections in communities.

In an effort to eradicate polio in third world countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Gates Foundation (PATH, GAVI) first led communities to monitor wastewater. These initial efforts in 2003 were well-meaning as they tracked and monitored a mass vaccination campaign in third world countries. However, the same practice and surveillance to monitor COVID-19 in 2020—in a free nation—has unintended consequences. And it had dire consequences in Pakistan as well.

COVID-19 wastewater surveillance was established in Fargo, ND at a North Dakota State University (NDSU) dormitory without consent of students in the fall of 2020. Collection of wastewater was tested and results were disclosed to the student residents of the dormitory. In this case, wastewater tests came back positive for SARS-CoV2. Asymptomatic (defined as having no symptoms of COVID-19) students were then sent out an email and told to “COVID-19 test tomorrow.”

In North Dakota, efforts to surveil wastewater for SARS-CoV2 without consent led to government overreach and unintended consequences, including students being forced to clinically test before resuming classes at NDSU, isolation, disruption of campus restart, and an ongoing disjointed methods of instruction for students. This form of surveillance—as well as any proof of its practice slowing the spread of the virus—has no evidence-based guidelines to prove it is warranted.

As the CDC continues to promote wastewater surveillance, targeting cities, workplaces, institutions, and facilities across the nation, the results at NDSU illuminate exceptionally poor outcomes of a human research experiment. Uninformed individuals used as a “research population,” or in the case of NDSU, uninformed students used as a “research population,” has yet to be addressed either legally or ethically.

Overreach and overreaction secondary to COVID-19 is at the forefront of law and bioscience; here is how the Journal of Law and Bioscience has weighed in thus far:

- "If wastewater-based surveillance can be applied at a community level, then 'effective intervention can be taken as early as possible to restrict the movements of that local population.'"

- "Thus, developers see wastewater surveillance methods as potentially leading to testing (Compelled? Everyone in the sewage district? Answers to this are unstated.) and to restricting movement..."(of population)

The argument has been made that:

- "Efforts by state or local health officials to surveillance wastewater for SARS-CoV-2 would almost certainly come within the state's broadly recognized police powers, which generally permit state and local governments to have broad authority to act and regulate to protect the health and welfare of the population..." However, this police power is only so far and was never intended to be used to promote using humans as their research subject dismissing autonomy and beneficence to the test populations chosen to be researched on. And what ended up happening was inadvertently using human test populations as guinea pigs in a mass experimental science research program.*
- The Nuremberg Code, Belmont Report, and Research Act of 1974 have long been held as ethical parameters in guiding new scientific research; however, with wastewater surveillance, the primary goal appears to have been finding gaps in the law that preclude this form of researching on humans from adhering to such principles.
- The WHO has lower standards of human rights and autonomy because of the vast number of countries and varying governments involved in it. That afforded it to successfully establish wastewater surveillance in third world countries like Pakistan and other countries with the cooperation of governments that have vastly different standards of human rights than those of the United States of America. Wastewater surveillance in Pakistan produced mass paranoia and had deadly outcomes in one vaccination campaign initiated based on waste surveillance.

Headlines

Nearly 70 United States university systems monitored wastewater in the fall of 2020; here are some examples in the news.

- **Denver Post**
 - "CSU quarantines 900 students after wastewater monitoring detects COVID-19 in two dorms"
- **CNN**
 - "287 Utah State University students quarantined after Covid-19 found in wastewater from four dorms"
- **Washington Post**
 - "When a wastewater sample from one dorm came back positive this week, the school quickly tested all 311 people who live and work there and found two asymptomatic students..."

Which North Dakota cities allow wastewater surveillance?

North Dakota leadership initiated community surveillance in conjunction with NDSU this fall. Federal and state dollars have been allotted to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in an effort to advance this form of surveillance in our state.

Listed below is an initial list of municipalities that volunteered to participate in wastewater sampling. *Note: this number has increased to 21 municipalities

1. Fargo
2. Bismarck
3. Grand Forks
4. Minot
5. West Fargo
6. Williston
7. Dickinson
8. Mandan
9. Jamestown
10. Watford City
11. Devils Lake
12. Wahpeton
13. Valley City
14. Rugby
15. Edgeley
16. Gwinner
17. Ellendale
18. Casselton
19. Glenn Ullin

If your city is listed, it is classified as having "volunteered," according to the DEQ.

How do North Dakota Cities volunteer?

The DEQ reached out to city water and sewage treatment plants and requested collection of samples on an ongoing basis. According to a DEQ engineer, a wastewater collector presented this research experiment for approval to every city council in which it collects. Many city councils petitioned did not approve. Some were not approached as suggested by the DEQ.

What happens when wastewater is tested?

Wastewater samples are collected and sent off to be tested and researched. A municipality's results are provided to the state's executive branch and the ND Department of Health. This data is used to justify executive orders, government overreach, and extensive mandates—essentially providing the fuel for heavy-handed governance.

What can I do about it?

If wastewater surveillance was never taken to your city council, you were never given an opportunity to say no. Now is your opportunity to speak out.

Be on the lookout for false arguments you may hear when you voice your concern:

- ***"This is nothing new."***
 - This is a lie. This is very different from wastewater testing that has gone on before. This is far more scientifically advanced and far more invasive, given what has already happened.
- ***"This is NOT the same research as what the CDC is doing."***
 - This is a lie. Officials are testing municipalities for COVID-19 in the RNA of your fecal material. The results of community biomaterial are then tabulated and reported back to state officials.
- ***"The law supports it."***
 - This is a lie. Wastewater testing involves research that is experimental in nature. It also involves human analysis that opens the door to discrimination against those being researched on.
- ***"This provides an early warning to the medical community and government so both know how to respond."***
 - This is a lie. As we've seen in 2020, this leads to lockdowns, arbitrary restrictions on schools, churches, and businesses, and extensive executive overreach.

The monitoring of wastewater may well implicate the Fourth Amendment. COVID-19 testing is different from testing for lead or E.coli in water in an effort to make the water safe for the residents. Testing water to keep it safe for residents is a good thing. Testing wastewater to find out if residents of a municipality are "safe" to freely move about society is something else entirely.

Conclusion

Imagine what America will look like for our children if we allow this type of surveillance to take hold of our municipalities—and to be expanded. It starts with the state collecting from main sewage water, but as the data gathering advances, it will become more and more desirable to be more aggressive toward human population. Wastewater collectors will be encouraged to begin collecting in a more targeted manner, exactly like what was done to students living in on-campus university housing. When the next novel disease comes around and this form of surveillance is in play, what will become of freedoms that have always involved the enjoyment of taking risks?

Wastewater surveillance will also logically increase the demand for vaccination laws and mandates. What happened at our nation's universities will become commonplace. Every time the CDC, Health Department, Governor, or President or World Organization deems a virus "novel" or a "public health threat," wastewater surveillance the state has quietly enacted will be called upon to monitor our communities.

Action Steps

- Contact your city to inquire about its involvement in wastewater management. Reach out to your city council leaders, mayor, city water plant manager, public works director, etc.
- Contact your district's senator and representatives (find your legislators here: www.legis.nd.gov)

Together we can dismantle the overreach and overreaction to COVID-19 wastewater surveillance and ensure our privacy and freedom.

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/wastewater-surveillance/wastewater-workplaces.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/08/28/arizona-coronavirus-wastewater-testing>

<https://www.denverpost.com/2020/09/25/csu-quarantine-covid-wastewater-testing>

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/01/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html>

<https://academic.oup.com/jlb/article/7/1/Isaa039/5861905>