



Form Letter C: "Take Stronger Action on PFAS"

Proposed Rulemaking: Safe Drinking Water PFAS MCL Rule (#7-569)

We are writing in support of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Bureau of Safe Drinking Water's proposed PFAS standards (Safe Drinking Water PFAS MCL Rule #7-569) and to ask that the DEP take stronger action to reduce and monitor PFAS pollution.

PFAS are long-lasting chemicals used in consumer and industrial products that break down very slowly. It is critical to limit "forever" chemicals because they contaminate our air, soil, water, and food system, and create numerous potential health harms, particularly for infants and children.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) estimates that two PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS, contaminate the drinking water of up to 110 million Americans.¹ This map shows the locations of 41,828 industrial and municipal sites² that are known to produce or use, are suspected of using, or are a suspected source of the toxic fluorinated chemicals known as PFAS. More than 120,000 facilities around the US may be exposing people to dangerous "forever chemicals" linked to cancer and other diseases, according to EPA data obtained by the Guardian.³

Scientists classify PFAS as emerging contaminants because the serious risks they pose to human health and the environment are not completely understood. Studies have linked PFAS to ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, pregnancy-induced hypertension, high cholesterol, testicular cancer, and kidney cancer.⁴ Occupational health studies also suggest that PFAS disrupt the endocrine system and alter thyroid, kidney, and metabolic functions. Of particular concern in today's pandemic, PFAS are linked to a reduction of vaccine efficacy due to the immunosuppressant effects of these chemicals.⁵

Tests commissioned by EWG and Rachel's Network in 2005 and 2009 found various PFAS chemicals in umbilical cord samples, demonstrating that these chemicals pass from mother to fetus. PFAS are also shown to decrease women's fertility and infant birth weight.⁶

Currently the economic, health, and life expenses from PFAS pollution are being paid for by Pennsylvanian taxpayers. If companies want to continue to use known hazardous chemicals that shorten lifespans and contaminate the environment then they need to incur the cost of cleaning them up.

The DEP needs to set stronger limits on PFAS to ensure companies are not contaminating our water and environment and putting the health and environmental burden on ordinary Pennsylvanians.

DEP's proposed maximum contaminant level (MCL) limits of 14 parts per trillion (ppt) for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and 18 ppt Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) are higher than Drexel University (PFOA: 8 ppt and PFOS: 14 ppt). The Environmental Working Group (EWG) and the Delaware River Keeper's Network's recommendations are 1-6 ppt for both.⁷

Independent researchers at Harvard and the University of Massachusetts have recommended 1 ppt as safe based on a review of human health studies.⁸

Other states have already successfully set lower MCLs. Pennsylvania needs to do the same.

While we applaud the DEP for taking important steps to regulate PFAS, the new rule does not go far enough to reduce human and environmental health and allows for significant gaps in regulating the class of PFAS that will continue to expose people to over 4700 other PFAS.

We urge the Department of Environmental Protection to take stronger steps to reduce PFAS pollution by doing the following:

1. Monitor and publicly report for the 18 PFAS chemicals listed in the test 537.1 during all four quarters.
2. Set the MCLs at 1-6 ppt for the 18 PFAS in the 537.1 test as advised by the Delaware Riverkeepers Network (DRN).⁷
3. Set stricter standards for the harmful chemicals PFOA (1ppt MCL or no greater than 6ppt) and PFOS (5ppt MCL) and no greater than 13 ppt for the two compounds combined to provide greater protection for the fetus and young children, based on the recommendations of an independent scientist report commissioned by Delaware River Keepers Network.⁹
4. If MCL's (Maximum Contamination Level) for the 18 PFAS are found to be above 6 ppt in two consecutive quarters, the DEP should begin implementing methods to decrease contamination (i.e. filtration systems, finding source & stopping it there)
5. Require inspections at all wells one-half mile from potential sources of PFAS contamination including military bases, fire training schools/sites, airports, landfills, manufacturing facilities, and state/federal cleanup sites. Over one million Pennsylvania residents get their drinking water from a private well. Drinking water from these wells is not regulated.
6. Hold chemical manufacturers of PFAS and the products that use them accountable for their environmental and health impacts and cleaning up contaminants by implementing producer responsibility regulations.

Thank you for protecting our health,

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