Environmental and Public Health Groups Urge DNR to Require PFAS Testing
Groups Say DNR Has Authority to Order Public Drinking Water Systems to Test for Toxic Chemicals

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Madison, WI—Today, a coalition of 34 environmental and public health organizations submitted a letter to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) urging the agency to order public water systems in the state to test for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The organizations say widespread, comprehensive testing is the only way to know if drinking water in the state is contaminated with toxic chemicals.

"Testing for PFAS in drinking water is a crucial first step to protect public health," said Laura Olah of Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger. "These chemicals persist in the environment and build up in the human body over time. PFAS have been linked to an increased risk for a wide range of health concerns, including certain types of cancer, reproductive and developmental problems, impaired immune response and more."

“We are grateful that so many partner organizations have joined together to ask DNR to require immediate action to address this important public health issue,” said Rob Lee, a staff attorney at Midwest Environmental Advocates. “As we explained in our letter, we believe that DNR has the authority to issue orders requiring testing of unregulated contaminants like PFAS to protect the public health. The people of Wisconsin have a right to know if their drinking water is contaminated with toxic chemicals so they can protect themselves and their families from exposure.”

PFAS are synthetic chemicals that have been used for decades in a wide variety of consumer products such as nonstick cookware, food packaging, stain-resistant carpets, water-resistant clothing, and more. They can enter drinking water through wastewater discharges from manufacturing facilities, leaking landfills, and the use of PFAS-containing firefighting foams. The practice of spreading biosolids from wastewater treatment plants on farm fields has also been shown to contribute to the problem.

The 34 groups sent the letter to DNR ahead of a PFAS stakeholder meeting scheduled to take place on Friday, October 9th. It will be the fourth stakeholder group meeting for rulemaking efforts related to PFAS.
surface water quality criteria, groundwater standards and drinking water standards. While they support DNR’s ongoing rulemaking efforts to regulate PFAS, the groups note in their letter that the rulemaking process will not be finalized for years. The people of Wisconsin, they say, cannot afford to wait any longer for testing that will show if their drinking water is contaminated with PFAS or not.

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