

KEEPING PFAS OUT OF WISCONSIN'S GROUNDWATER:

Your guide to participating in the rulemaking process

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is seeking to establish new water quality standards to limit PFAS in groundwater. You can help ensure that health-based standards become a reality by voicing your support.



What are PFAS?

PFAS (pronounced “PEA-FASS”) are toxic contaminants that have increasingly been found in groundwater, which is the primary source of drinking water for many rural Wisconsin residents. These manufactured chemicals have been used in a wide variety of products, including firefighting foam, nonstick cookware, food packaging, water-repellant clothing, stain resistant carpets, cleaning products, cosmetics and more.

Are PFAS a threat to human health?

Yes. Even at extremely low levels, exposure to PFAS has been linked to an increased risk of cancer and other serious health problems, such as reproductive and developmental problems, thyroid hormone disruption, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis, negative impacts to the immune system and more. Young children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to PFAS exposure.

How do PFAS end up in groundwater?

Water contamination can come from a number of different sources, including discharges from manufacturing facilities that use PFAS, discharges from wastewater treatment plants, percolation of water through the soil around landfills and run-off of firefighting foam.

What is Wisconsin doing to prevent PFAS exposure?

New statewide enforcement standards for PFAS in municipal drinking water took effect on August 1. The new standards only protect those whose drinking water comes from municipal water utilities. In September, Governor Evers directed the DNR to restart the process of establishing enforcement standards for PFAS in groundwater. Enforceable groundwater standards would protect rural residents who rely on private wells for their drinking water.

How does the rulemaking process work?

The new standards will be developed through the administrative rulemaking process. Administrative rules are written and enforced by state agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources. Rules have the force of law. They are used to implement, interpret or clarify statutes passed by the legislature. Before the DNR can make a new rule, public input must be considered.

Do I need to be an expert in order to get involved?

No. Your feedback can be as simple or as detailed as you want. You don't need to be an expert to speak at a hearing or to provide written comments. In fact, personal statements are often the most compelling testimony. The DNR wants to hear how this issue affects you and your community.

Why is public participation important?

The rulemaking process faces opposition from industry and lobbying groups that benefit from inadequate regulation. That's why it's important that the DNR hear from people like you who support the establishment of PFAS groundwater standards and want the process to move forward.

How do I get involved?

- **Request to speak at the next meeting of the Natural Resources Board on December 14.**

Attend the meeting in person or via a virtual option, and urge the DNR to move forward with developing groundwater standards for PFAS. You must request to speak by 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 7. Contact Ashley Bystol, NRB Liaison, at 608-267-7420 or by email at [dnrrnrbliaison@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dnrnrbliaison@wisconsin.gov).

- **Send your written comments to the Natural Resources Board via email.**

Email your comments to dnrrnrbliaison@wisconsin.gov by 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 7. Consider cc'ing your elected officials. You can find contact information for your elected officials [here](#).

- Visit [the DNR's website](#) to find more information about public participation in NRB meetings.

POINTS TO CONSIDER IN PREPARING YOUR COMMENTS

PFAS exposure is a threat to human health.

Even at extremely low levels, PFAS exposure has been linked to an increased risk of cancer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently found evidence that PFOA is likely to be carcinogenic, and PFOS has carcinogenic potential. PFAS exposure has also been linked to other serious health problems, such as reproductive and developmental problems, thyroid hormone disruption, high cholesterol, ulcerative colitis, reproductive and developmental problems, negative impacts to the immune system, and more. Small children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to PFAS exposure.

The best scientific information available suggests that exposure to PFOS and PFOA is harmful, event at very low levels.

The WI Department of Health Services recommends individual and combined standards of 20 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA. The U.S. EPA suggests that PFOS and PFOA exposure via drinking water can be harmful [at even lower levels](#). While DHS is evaluating the information from the EPA, it is imperative to move forward with the rulemaking to protect public health in Wisconsin.

All Wisconsinites deserve the same water quality protections.

Two-thirds of Wisconsinites get their drinking water from groundwater, and one-quarter of Wisconsinites get their drinking water from private wells that are not subject to the same regulations as public water systems. Once statewide groundwater standards have been established, the DNR will be able to test for PFAS as part of its groundwater monitoring system. The DNR will also be able to work with dischargers to comply with preventive action limits, prohibit activities causing an exceedance, and require cleanups where necessary.

Groundwater standards are good for Wisconsin agriculture and other important sectors of Wisconsin's economy.

A clean and plentiful supply of groundwater is essential for Wisconsin's \$100 billion-dollar agricultural industry. Wisconsin farmers rely on clean water to irrigate their crops and water their animals. While the presence of PFAS in agriculture is just beginning to be understood, studies have already shown that PFAS can find their way into the food system when crops are irrigated with contaminated water or when animals consume contaminated forages, feeds, and water.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

Be prepared

If possible, register in advance for the virtual hearing. Typically, speakers are limited to three minutes. You should consider writing out your testimony in advance to practice.

Don't be intimidated

Public officials want to hear from you. They work on many different issues and may not know as much about a specific issue as you do.

Share your personal experience

Personal statements are often the most compelling testimony. How would PFAS groundwater standards affect you and your community?

Stay on topic

Your testimony will be more credible if you avoid political statements and stay focused on the issues. Make sure decision makers understand that you support these important environmental safeguards and you want the rulemaking process to move forward.

Be kind and courteous

Be calm and respectful even if you disagree with someone else's point of view.

LINKS TO HELPFUL RESOURCES:

[Scope Statement for PFAS Groundwater Standards Rulemaking](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - PFAS Page](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Health Services - PFAS Page](#)

[Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan](#)

[#PFASFree Wisconsin](#)

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