KEEPING PFAS OUT OF OUR WATER:
Your guide to participating in Wisconsin's public rulemaking process

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has started to develop important environmental safeguards to protect Wisconsin residents from PFAS contamination. You can exercise your rights and help protect your community by participating in this important process.

What are PFAS?
PFAS (pronounced “PEA-FASS”) are toxic contaminants that have increasingly been found in groundwater and surface water, which rural and urban communities rely on for drinking water. 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. Exposure can occur by drinking contaminated water, eating contaminated fish or ingesting contaminated water while engaging in activities like swimming. Young children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to PFAS exposure.

How do PFAS end up in our water?
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 the Department of Natural Resources doing about PFAS?
Governor Tony Evers has directed the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish water quality standards for two PFAS substances—PFOA and PFOS—in drinking water, surface water and groundwater. Each of these new standards will be developed through the administrative rulemaking process.

How does the rulemaking process work?
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, it must hold a public hearing.
The Department of Natural Resources is developing water quality standards for PFAS substances in drinking water, surface water and groundwater. Developing these standards is critical to protecting the health of Wisconsin residents.

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, your community and the resources you care about.

Why is public participation important?
The rulemaking process faces strong opposition from industry and lobbying groups, so it's important that the DNR hear from people like you who support the proposed rules and want the process to move forward.

How do I get involved?
In December, the DNR held virtual public hearings on water quality standards for two PFAS substances—PFOA and PFOS—in drinking water and surface water. A virtual public hearing on standards for groundwater will be held on January 6. You can participate by speaking at the virtual public hearing or by submitting written comments to the DNR by January 11th. You can find details here.

LINKS TO HELPFUL RESOURCES:
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - PFAS Page
Wisconsin Department of Health Services - PFAS Page
Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan
MEA Webinar: Protecting our Water from PFAS Pollution (Video Recording)
#PFASFree Wisconsin
PFAS exposure is a threat to human health. Even at extremely low levels, PFAS exposure 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, reproductive and developmental problems, negative impacts to the immune system, and more. Small children and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to PFAS exposure.

Wisconsin must act now to prevent exposure to PFAS. When it comes to preventing PFAS exposure, Wisconsin cannot afford to wait for the federal government to act. While the Environmental Protection Agency has announced its intention to establish a federal drinking water standard for PFOA and PFOS, the federal process will take several years to complete. Moreover, it would take several additional years for a federal standard to take effect in Wisconsin. In the meantime, Wisconsinites would continue to be exposed to PFAS.

The DNR's proposed groundwater standards will protect the health of Wisconsinites. The DNR has proposed groundwater standards that would set an individual and combined limit of 20 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA. This limit is based on Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommendations, which were developed using the best scientific information available.

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.

The DNR's proposed drinking water standards will protect the health of Wisconsinites. The DNR has proposed drinking water standards that would set an individual and combined limit of 20 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA. This limit is based on Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommendations, which were developed using the best scientific information currently available.

Once statewide drinking water standards have been established, public water utilities across Wisconsin will be required to test for PFAS. If testing shows that PFAS levels exceed established limits, utilities would be required to address the contamination. That could mean installing a treatment system, drilling a new well or switching to an alternate drinking water source.

The DNR's proposed surface water standards will protect the health of Wisconsinites. The DNR has proposed a maximum concentration of 8 parts per trillion for discharges of PFOS into surface waters. For PFOA, the proposed maximum concentration is 20 parts per trillion for surface water used for drinking water and 95 parts per trillion for all other surface waters.

These limits would give the DNR the tools the agency needs to limit discharges of PFAS into our lakes, rivers and streams. Limiting PFAS in our surface waters would also protect public trust uses such as fishing and swimming and reduce risks to human health that are associated with ingesting contaminated water or eating contaminated fish.

POINTS TO CONSIDER IN PREPARING YOUR COMMENTS
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 will the DNR’s proposed standards affect you and your community? How will it affect the resources that you care about?

Stay on topic.
Your testimony will be more credible if you avoid political statements and stay focused on the issue at hand.

State your position clearly and concisely.
Make sure decision makers understand that you support these important environmental safeguards and you want the PFAS rulemaking process to move forward.

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

Si necesitas una copia de este documento en Español o prefieres dar tu comentario público a través de un traductor, por favor contactar al Departamento de Recursos Naturales (DNR) a

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