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Madison, WI—Today, Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) staff attorney Rob Lee urged the Department of Natural Resources Board (NRB) to move forward with the process of setting public health standards related to PFAS contamination. The board’s approval today begins rulemaking processes that will likely take two years.

PFAS (per- and polyflouroalkyl substances) are a class of thousands of man-made toxic chemicals that were originally produced by corporations such as DuPont and 3M as early as the 1940s. Often called “forever chemicals,” PFAS build up in the human body and have been linked to an increased risk of cancer, reproductive, and developmental problems, thyroid hormone disruption, high cholesterol, and other serious health conditions.

Despite their toxicity, there are currently no enforceable federal or state standards regulating PFAS contamination in drinking water or within the environment. Therefore, these DNR rulemakings are critical to public health.

The two most studied types of PFAS are PFOA and PFOS. MEA’s testimony to the NRB supported giving the DNR flexibility to regulate additional PFAS chemicals, many of which have also been linked to adverse health impacts.

“More PFAS compounds than PFOA and PFOS have been detected in groundwater, surface water, and drinking water across the state,” said Rob Lee, staff attorney at MEA. “There is a growing body of peer-reviewed scientific research linking many of these additional compounds to some of the same adverse health impacts linked to PFOA and PFOS.”

While supportive of the NRB’s action, MEA also urges the state legislature to act.

“Today’s vote is a positive step forward, but it only begins a years-long process,” said Lee. “The serious nature of the public health risks posed by PFAS requires more urgent action for Wisconsin families. The legislature has the power to address PFAS in a more comprehensive and timely way through legislation like the CLEAR Act.”

Visit Midwest Environmental Advocates’ website for more information about PFAS.

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest organization that uses the power of the law to support communities fighting for environmental accountability. Learn more about MEA on the web at midwestadvocates.org, like MEA on Facebook or follow @MidwestAdvocate on Twitter.

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