

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.

In December, the Department of Natural Resources will hold public hearings on water quality standards for two PFAS substances—PFOA and PFOS—in drinking water and surface water. 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 will hold public hearings on water quality standards for two PFAS substances—PFOA and PFOS—in *drinking water* and *surface water*. A public hearing on standards for *groundwater* has not yet been scheduled. You can participate by speaking at a public hearing or by submitting written comments to the DNR.

ATTEND AN UPCOMING VIRTUAL HEARING

VIRTUAL HEARING ON DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

- Wednesday, December 1st at 10 a.m.
- Register [here](#) to attend the virtual hearing.
- If you prefer, you can email written comments to DNRNR809Comments@wisconsin.gov or mail them to:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Attn: Adam DeWeese - DG/5
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

- Written comments must be emailed or postmarked by December 8th.

VIRTUAL HEARING ON SURFACE WATER STANDARDS

- Friday, December 10th at 1 p.m.
- Register [here](#) to attend the virtual hearing.
- If you prefer, you can email written comments to DNR105PFASRule@wisconsin.gov or mail them to:

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Attn: Meghan Williams - WY/3
PO Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

- Written comments must be emailed or postmarked by December 15th.

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 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, an untold number of Wisconsinites would continue to be exposed to PFAS.

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 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, a water utility would be required to implement a plan to address the contamination. That plan could include 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.

Resources:

[DNR Notice of Hearing for Drinking Water Standards](#)

[DNR Notice of Hearing for Surface Water Standards](#)

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

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

[Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan](#)

[#PFASFree Wisconsin](#)

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR VOICE HEARD

Be prepared.

Register in advance for the hearing in case space is limited. 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 this project 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 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

DNRNR809Comments@wisconsin.gov o DNR105PFASRule@wisconsin.gov

Si necesitas asistencia, contactarnos a jromanromero@midwestadvocates.org