

REGIONAL PFAS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

Regional PFAS Community Engagement Sessions

Background

In October 2021, EPA released its PFAS Strategic Roadmap, which highlights concrete actions the Agency will take across a range of environmental media and EPA program offices to protect people and the environment from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination. In early 2023, EPA held a series of virtual community engagement sessions for each of its 10 Regions, and an additional session for Tribes, to share actions taken under the PFAS Strategic Roadmap and to provide an opportunity for community members to share feedback with EPA.

EPA Region 2 Session Summary

Region 2's community engagement session was held on March 30, 2023, and 125 people attended the session. During the session, Regional Administrator Lisa Garcia spoke about EPA's actions and strategies to address PFAS, including proposed drinking water standards, collaboration with partners, and support for disproportionately impacted communities.

During the session, EPA heard from community members, water utilities, community organizers, volunteers, professors, and others about how PFAS have impacted their communities and their lives. Their statements touched on topics including regulating PFAS as a class, industry regulation focused on source reduction, the need for additional grant and funding opportunities, holding polluters accountable, accelerating the pace of federal actions, cleanup around military installations, costs that may be imposed on water utilities and communities, identifying techniques for disposal, increasing communication and education to the public, equity concerns, research and testing efforts, and personal health effects.

Many community members who provided feedback advocated for increased regulation of industry that prioritizes source reduction of PFAS in addition to other federal actions. "While regulating a few in drinking water is surely a vital step forward, you can't turn off the tap of PFAS water contamination without addressing where it's coming from, and without regulations side by side with the MCLs," said one speaker from Hoosick Falls, New York. Multiple individuals from water utilities also emphasized the need to hold polluters accountable in these regulations so cleanup costs do not fall to utilities or consumers.

EPA heard multiple requests to start regulating PFAS as a class of chemicals. Individuals noted that because there are thousands of PFAS chemicals, a chemical-by-chemical approach is time consuming and inefficient. Additionally, individuals expressed the need for EPA to accelerate the pace of federal actions. The executive director of an environmental and public health protection organization in New York spoke about how without federal action, states and other agencies won't be motivated to take cleanup actions.

Feedback from community members also included the need for increased grant and funding opportunities, particularly for low income and disadvantaged areas. A speaker from the U.S. Virgin Islands had questions about what funding will be made available in U.S. territories. Another individual noted that additional funding is needed to increase testing capabilities across all communities.

EPA Region 2 is thankful for the feedback provided during this session. Individuals shared valuable stories, questions, recommendations, concerns, and affirmations about the work that is being done. EPA is committed to continuing to use this feedback to inform future work under the PFAS Strategic Roadmap.

Region 2 Community Feedback and Ongoing EPA Actions

Under the PFAS Strategic Roadmap, EPA is making progress to address priority areas highlighted in the feedback shared by Region 2 participants, including:

Holding Polluters Accountable: Holding polluters accountable is a critical principle behind EPA's PFAS Strategic Roadmap. EPA is continuing to focus on preventing PFAS contamination at facilities at which PFAS are manufactured and used, prioritizing remediation and enforcement efforts to hold polluters accountable and to protect impacted communities, and advancing both research and regulatory tools toward destroying and disposing of these "forever chemicals" in ways that won't lead to further contamination.

Addressing PFAS As a Class: EPA has continued its work to deepen our understanding of PFAS categories through the National PFAS Testing Strategy, which EPA released alongside the PFAS Roadmap in October 2021. The Testing Strategy is a major step toward breaking PFAS into distinct categories to direct research, amplify regulatory action, and accelerate technology and policy solutions to restrict and remediate PFAS. In the past year, EPA released its second and third test orders under the Testing Strategy to require manufacturers to test chemicals used to make plastics and to make GenX chemicals, respectively, and anticipates more orders in the year ahead. As EPA continues to implement the Testing Strategy and as EPA learns more, the Agency also expects to evolve and refine its approach, and to enhance stakeholder engagement.

Accelerating the Pace of EPA Actions: EPA's PFAS actions in 2023 help set the stage for finalizing regulatory actions in the near future that will cement federal leadership on restricting and remediating PFAS and on providing critical tools to hold polluters accountable. For far too long, communities across the United States have been exposed to harmful PFAS contamination. These final actions will help us turn the tide on PFAS to empower meaningful action now.

To learn more about EPA's efforts to address PFAS and to watch a full recording of the community engagement session, click [here](#).