

# 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 3 Session Summary

Region 3's community engagement session was held on March 2, 2023, and 361 people attended the session. During the session, Region 3's Superfund and Emergency Management Division Director Paul Leonard spoke about the Region's actions to address PFAS, including work in the Superfund program and funding provided through the Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities grant program.

During the session, EPA heard from community members, local organizers, nonprofit organizations, water utilities, scientists, students, veterans, and others about how PFAS have impacted their communities and their lives. Their statements touched on topics including contamination surrounding military installations, increasing education and communication to the public, accelerating the pace of federal actions, PFAS in biosolids, guidance for testing, costs that may be imposed on water utilities and communities, identifying techniques for disposal, the need for grant and funding opportunities, holding polluters accountable, personal health effects, private wells, bioaccumulation in animals, increasing research and testing, pesticide contamination, testing landfill leachate, and increased transparency around EPA actions.

EPA heard from multiple community members living near current or former military installations who have been affected by PFAS. These individuals described the health effects they have experienced, and the high levels of PFAS detected in their water, and for some, in their blood. One speaker, a riverkeeper in Maryland, voiced his concern about PFAS contamination in watersheds around the Aberdeen Proving Ground Superfund site in Maryland that may bioaccumulate in local fish populations. EPA also heard from a veteran who spent 34 years at the now-closed Willow Grove Naval Air Station in Pennsylvania. He spoke about the high levels of PFAS found in his blood and personal health effects he has experienced.

Many individuals gave feedback about the need for transparency around EPA actions and increased education from EPA on topics including what consumer goods may contain PFAS, bioaccumulation in fish, testing and monitoring protocols, and what actions to take when PFAS have been detected in a water source. A speaker from Delaware who leads a nonprofit PFAS research organization emphasized the need for communication that answers consumers' questions and makes them feel heard. "There really needs to be a way to communicate to the people on an ongoing basis where things are, when actions will be taken, and what they will be," she said.

Community members also highlighted the need for an accelerated pace of federal actions. Some individuals gave feedback on the need for increased grant and funding opportunities, while others spoke about holding polluters accountable for cleanup costs. A scientist from Parkersburg, Virginia, noted that water utilities and ratepayers should not bear the costs of cleanup, and that increased grants and funding are necessary. She also said federal action is needed from EPA for states to take action. EPA also heard feedback from a community member in Albemarle County, Virginia, who said producers of PFAS should be held accountable for cleanup costs.

Some individuals who spoke expressed concern about PFAS in private wells and biosolids. One individual from a rural area of Pennsylvania requested EPA provide more guidance for private well owners on how and when to test for PFAS. Another speaker from a rural area of Virginia added her concern about PFAS found in biosolids and their use on farmland. “We need to have the biosolids testing and landfill leachate testing,” she said.

EPA also heard feedback from individuals on identifying techniques for disposal of PFAS. A speaker from Warminster Municipal Authority in Pennsylvania explained the need for disposal and cleanup guidance to stop future pollution.

EPA Region 3 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 3 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 3 participants, including:**

**Addressing PFAS Contamination at Military Installations:** EPA has been coordinating closely with the Department of Defense through the Interagency Policy Committee on PFAS to bring enhanced focus toward PFAS issues around military installations and their communities to accelerate solutions and increase transparency. Additionally, near military installations with known, significant PFAS contamination, EPA is sampling private drinking water wells to assess whether alternative drinking water is needed. EPA continues to ensure Federal Facilities Agreements requirements are met for federal facilities on the CERCLA National Priorities List.

**Transparency and Communications:** This fall, EPA is releasing its second one-year PFAS Roadmap progress report – fulfilling a commitment in EPA's October 2021 PFAS Strategic Roadmap to report to the public on the status of the actions outlined in the Roadmap, as well as future actions the Agency may take. EPA will also continue to engage with states, Tribes, federal partners, stakeholders, and the public on PFAS as the Agency continues its efforts under the PFAS Strategic Roadmap.

**Guidance for PFAS Testing and Methods:** Critical to EPA's efforts to restrict discharges of PFAS are the methods needed to detect PFAS and scientific information on the levels at which PFAS are harmful. EPA and the Department of the Defense are in the final stages of validating EPA Method 1633, a method to test for 40 PFAS in wastewater, surface water, groundwater, soil, biosolids, sediment, landfill leachate, and fish tissue. In July 2023, EPA and DOD released a fourth draft of Method 1633 and a multi-laboratory validation study report for the method's water matrices. In the coming months, EPA expects to complete its work for non-water matrices and to move ahead to formally codify Method 1633 through Clean Water Act rulemaking. In the interim, EPA recommends its use now in NPDES permits.

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