

# 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 5 Session Summary

Region 5's community engagement session was held on April 19, 2023, and 118 people attended the session. During the session, Regional Administrator Debra Shore spoke about Region 5's actions to address PFAS, including research, proactive testing and monitoring, funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and issuing enforcement orders against two major PFAS manufacturers.

During the session, EPA heard from community members, water utilities, community organizers, family doctors, and others about how PFAS have impacted their communities and their lives. Their statements touched on topics including increasing communication and education to the public, the need for additional grant and funding opportunities, the need for more immediate or retroactive funding, equity concerns, PFAS in fish, use of PFAS in the military, accelerating the pace of federal actions, PFAS in air emissions and biosolids, costs that may be imposed on water utilities and communities, guidance for utilities, PFAS in artificial turf, private wells, regulating PFAS as a class, restricting PFAS in products, engaging the stormwater sector on PFAS-related work, building community relationships to foster collaboration, and transparency around actions.

EPA heard comments from community members about the need for additional grants and funding opportunities for water utilities and communities as they work to address PFAS. A water plant manager from Illinois noted that the federal funding available is not enough to cover the costs of new filtering systems and technology. He expressed his worry about how these new systems will be paid for if additional funding does not become available.

Many individuals also emphasized the need for this funding to be distributed equitably, with efforts made to reach disadvantaged areas. EPA heard from a member of the Mole Lake Sokaogon Ojibwe Tribe in Wisconsin who expressed concern about the military's practice of open air burning of PFAS, which may contain hazardous waste near communities like her own who are already overburdened by environmental contamination. She also advocated for a national ban on open air burn pits.

Several individuals who provided feedback requested more education and communication from EPA to the public. EPA heard from water utilities seeking guidance on monitoring and disposal and information on the exposure risk of consumer products relative to drinking water. One individual spoke about the need for more approachable information. "I'm just starting to learn about all of this, and so I really wanted to echo

the importance of user-friendly information, because I have no idea what to do next as a family physician,” she said.

Feedback also highlighted concern about PFAS consumption, particularly from fish. One individual from the Friends of the Detroit River noted the economic and social importance of fish to the region, saying that if levels of PFAS in fish become too high, the effects could be devastating.

EPA Region 5 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 5 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 5 participants, including:**

**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. Communicating about PFAS risk to communities has been a particular priority of EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee, which held a PFAS tabletop exercise in May 2023 and made recommendations to EPA in September 2023 on developing a toolkit for local governments.

**Funding for PFAS Solutions:** President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$10 billion in funding to address PFAS and other emerging contaminants in water. As EPA highlighted in its November 2022 one-year PFAS Roadmap progress report, these efforts are making transformational investments in cleaning up PFAS and other emerging contaminants in water, especially in small or disadvantaged communities. In February 2023, EPA announced the availability of \$2 billion in grant funding to address emerging contaminants in drinking water in small or disadvantaged communities. These funds are being allocated to states and territories and will promote access to safe and clean water in small, rural, and disadvantaged communities while supporting local economies.

**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.

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