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 6 Session Summary

Region 6's community engagement session was held on April 25, 2023, and 75 people attended the session. During the session, EPA PFAS Council member Kathryn Caballero spoke about the origin of EPA's PFAS Council, the effects of PFAS on people and the environment, and her role as Director of EPA's Federal Facilities Enforcement Office.

During the session, EPA heard from community members, city water directors, environmental engineers, private water managers, public policy advocates, and others about how PFAS have impacted their communities and their lives. Their statements touched on topics including the costs of PFAS cleanup, grants and loan forgiveness, interest in broadening access to cleanup methods, regulating PFAS as a class, source reduction, imported products containing PFAS, disposal methods, biosolids, the effect of PFAS cleanup efforts on reducing mortality rates, and PFAS in food.

A common theme throughout the session was the high costs of PFAS cleanup. Two individuals expressed concern about obtaining grants and loan forgiveness for cleanup efforts. A city water director in Texas mentioned that grants and loan forgiveness will be very helpful for wastewater treatment facilities responsible for removing PFAS that are generated by others. Meanwhile, a public policy advocate from New Mexico stated that he found it difficult to access information about grants and loan forgiveness funds for small and disadvantaged communities. He also voiced concern about the community's water system being unable to meet EPA's proposed PFAS MCLs.

Another concern among individuals was making PFAS monitoring methods available faster. A private water manager in Oklahoma expressed a desire to monitor waters by testing fish tissue samples, but this method is not yet available.

Several community members also emphasized the importance of addressing PFAS at the source. "While monitoring is important, getting on top of the actual methodology of remediation is also super important," said one speaker, an Oklahoma resident. Another speaker asked what EPA is doing to address the source of PFAS and mentioned that products containing PFAS may still be imported to the U.S.

EPA also received questions about PFAS disposal. One speaker asked how cartridges and ion exchange water will be disposed of. Another speaker from Weatherford, Texas, asked about the impact on the use of biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities.

Concerns about PFAS health effects were also expressed. One speaker asked if mortality rates will decline once PFAS cleanup efforts are complete. Another individual asked about PFAS in food and if certain diets can reduce people's exposure to PFAS.

EPA Region 6 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 6 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 6 participants, including:

Understanding and Addressing PFAS Health Effects: In 2023, EPA made significant progress in developing human health toxicity assessments for several PFAS under the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) program. This includes releasing the final IRIS assessment for PFHxA and draft IRIS assessments for PFDA and PFHxS for public comment and peer review. EPA is also developing and applying new human health assessment approaches to PFAS in order to provide actionable science to decision-makers sooner.

Addressing PFAS Destruction and Disposal: EPA is poised to soon update its 2020 interim guidance on destroying or disposing of PFAS-containing materials. In September, EPA sent the updated interim guidance to the Office of Management and Budget for interagency review, after which EPA plans to release the updated interim guidance this winter. Critically, this updated guidance reflects significant scientific work across EPA and the scientific community to fill gaps in our understanding of PFAS destruction and disposal technologies and to highlight remaining uncertainties requiring further research.

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.**