

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 7 Session Summary

Region 7's community engagement session was held on February 28, 2023, and 123 people attended the session. During the session, Regional Administrator Meg McCollister spoke about steps the Region has taken to learn more about PFAS contamination and its negative health effects, including providing \$81.1 million to states in Region 7 to support water system projects and small or disadvantaged communities.

During the session, EPA heard from community members, environmental justice organizers, public policy advocates, biotech startups, mechanical engineers, wastewater management companies, and others about how PFAS have affected their communities and their lives. Their statements touched on topics including the importance of EPA taking regulatory action, firefighting foam from ships and airports as sources of PFAS, holding manufacturers of PFAS accountable, new methods for breaking down PFAS, assessing previously exposed populations, providing up-to-date progress reports, and the need for EPA-approved testing methods.

A common theme throughout the session was the need to accelerate the PFAS regulatory process. An environmental justice organizer noted that no laws prevent a Veolia plant in East St. Louis from polluting the air with PFAS. Another speaker explained that "without clear rules and timelines, Kansas is not likely to take action to halt discharges like chromium plating, those who operate landfills, or historically polluted sites." An individual from the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District encouraged the EPA to approve lab methods for wastewater and stormwater.

Many individuals discussed the effects of PFAS on people, animals, and the environment. A member of the Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club raised concerns about PFAS levels in soils, rivers, fish, and wild game meat and the health problems these will cause for people. She also noted that firefighting foam used on ships and by airports pollutes the environment with PFAS. One speaker noted links between PFAS and cancer.

Individuals also encouraged EPA to ensure that PFAS manufacturers do not limit PFAS regulations. A policy manager from Missouri Confluence Waterkeeper said, "I understand that crafting regulations takes time, and I understand that this process is iterative and resource intensive, but that's no excuse for states or the EPA to let polluters dictate our society's responses to their actions."

EPA received questions regarding innovative technologies for addressing PFAS contamination. A speaker from a biotech startup organization inquired about a potential method for breaking down PFAS by engineering enzymes. He also asked about the feasibility of assessing previously exposed populations.

Community members also gave feedback about providing updated PFAS information on the EPA website. A mechanical engineer who works with PFAS-containing materials requested the 2022 progress report be made available online.

EPA Region 7 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 7 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 7 participants, including:

Increase PFAS Regulation: In two years of implementing the PFAS Strategic Roadmap, EPA has taken a whole-of-agency approach, translated the latest science into EPA's efforts, and restored federal leadership on PFAS. EPA will soon be taking critical final actions on two cornerstone commitments in the PFAS Roadmap: setting national drinking water standards for certain PFAS and taking final action on hazardous substance designations for two PFAS. Finalizing these actions in the near future will demonstrate EPA's ongoing commitment to protecting communities from PFAS pollution, in coordination with EPA's partners in the Biden-Harris Administration.

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.

Sharing Progress and Promoting Transparency: 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.

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