

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 9 Session Summary

Region 9's community engagement session was held on April 13, 2023, and 110 people attended the session. During the session, Regional Administrator Martha Guzman spoke about Region 9's actions to address PFAS, including proactive testing and monitoring, as well as the visits she has had with communities throughout the Region.

During the session, EPA heard from nonprofit organizations, community organizers, local government officials, students, and others about how PFAS have impacted their communities and their lives. Their statements touched on topics including holding polluters accountable, exposure to PFAS in children, equity concerns, increasing testing for PFAS, accelerating the pace of federal actions, the need for additional grant and funding opportunities, designating PFAS as hazardous waste, military use of PFAS, personal health effects, PFAS in pesticides and fertilizers, regulating PFAS as a class, and source reduction.

Multiple individuals spoke about holding polluters accountable for cleanup costs associated with PFAS. A speaker from San Jose, California, also noted that source reduction is necessary to stop further pollution. "We need the polluters to pay, and those are the people that sold us PFAS... We need to ban these chemicals, period, across the board," she said.

EPA also heard requests for additional testing, and grants and funding opportunities to support this testing. One individual voiced her concerns for underserved communities being left without support if this funding isn't available.

Two community members emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of health effects related to PFAS. They noted that testing for PFAS in human blood should become more widely available, and funding should be created to make it more accessible for lower income communities. They explained that by increasing this testing, particularly for children, parents could be better informed and take steps to limit further exposure.

Feedback was also provided to EPA on regulatory actions. One speaker gave feedback on regulating PFAS as a class, rather than chemical-by-chemical. She explained that this approach would cause less confusion and be more effective. Another individual requested EPA designate PFAS as hazardous waste.

EPA Region 9 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 9 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 9 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.

Increase PFAS Testing: EPA is currently conducting nationwide drinking water sampling for 29 PFAS in our nation's drinking water systems under the fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 5). Under UCMR 5, EPA is testing for more PFAS at lower levels in more water systems than ever before. In August 2023, EPA released the initial monitoring data on 29 PFAS and lithium under UCMR 5 and a subsequent quarter of data in November 2023. Data collected under UCMR 5 will ensure science-based decision-making and help EPA better understand national-level exposure to these 29 PFAS and lithium, and whether these PFAS disproportionately impact communities with environmental justice concerns. EPA will continue to publicly update UCMR results quarterly over the next three years.

Ensuring Equity and Environmental Justice: A critical, ongoing focus for EPA's efforts is on ensuring the protection of disadvantaged communities to ensure that all communities have equitable access to solutions. In the past year, EPA received PFAS recommendations from EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, which encouraged EPA in December 2022 to institutionalize EPA's commitment to PFAS and to pursue its efforts not only within the three focus areas of the PFAS Roadmap (research, restrict, and remediate) but to also focus on both responding to PFAS and to the resources required to do so.

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