

Clean Wisconsin: Gov. Evers continues to lead on clean drinking water

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MADISON, WI — Clean Wisconsin applauds Gov. Tony Evers for signing an executive order yesterday to address the growing threat to drinking water and public health from the class of hazardous chemicals called PFAS.

“PFAS is a public health and environmental challenge that we’re only beginning to fully understand,” said Carly Michiels, Director of Government Relations at Clean Wisconsin. “This action by Gov. Evers puts the state in a strong position to address this growing pollution issue in a collaborative and comprehensive way. This is another example of the governor’s leadership on PFAS during the Year of Clean Drinking Water.”

PFAS, or Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, is a group of persistent man-made chemicals that may increase the risk of health issues such as cancer, developmental issues in children and fertility issues for women. PFAS is not currently regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Among many things, the governor’s executive order directs the state to create a public information website on PFAS, work with local governments to develop wastewater screening programs to identify sources of PFAS, expand monitoring of PFAS to protect human health, and create a PFAS Coordinating Council.

“Gov. Evers recognizes tackling PFAS pollution will take all of us, including state and local governments, municipal wastewater facilities, and the public,” said Michiels. “This executive order encourages everyone to get involved and to work together to address this growing issue and acknowledges all the hard work that has already begun.”

In June, the DHS recommended a state health-based standard for two PFAS compounds, and DNR has indicated they will begin the process for setting new rules to enforce those standards. In May, legislators introduced Senate Bill 302, the Chemical Level Enforcement and Remediation (CLEAR) Act, which is one of the most comprehensive set of protections from PFAS in the country.

Currently, there are over 18 investigations into PFAS pollution in Wisconsin. Marinette has one of the highest known rates of PFAS pollution in the state. Marinette has one of the highest known rates of PFAS pollution in the state, where drinking water has been found to have tested as high as 1,900 parts per trillion (ppt) of PFAS, 95 times higher than the health-based standard of 20 ppt proposed by DHS.

“I am glad to see PFAS pollution continue to be prioritized and acted on. There was funding in the state budget, legislation with the CLEAR Act, and recommended health-based statewide standards,” said Michiels. “The executive order today shows Gov. Evers is again leading on this issue by bringing everyone to the table to do what’s best for both public health and the environment. It’s imperative we continue to support comprehensive, science-based solutions to this problem.”