



Natural Resources Board Moves Forward with Groundwater Standards to Protect Wisconsin Communities from PFAS Contamination

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Madison, WI—Today, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) has allowed an important regulatory effort to protect Wisconsin communities from toxic PFAS pollution to move forward.

According to a [scope statement](#) approved by the Natural Resources Board, the DNR proposes adding PFOS, PFOA, PFBS and GenX chemicals to a list of substances designated as contaminants under Wisconsin's Groundwater Law.

Recent toxicological and epidemiological data confirms that PFAS present a serious health risk. The four PFAS substances addressed by the scope statement are among the most widely studied PFAS and were the subject of [updated PFAS health advisory levels](#) announced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in June.

A scope statement is the first step in developing enforceable groundwater standards through the administrative rulemaking process. That process had been nearing completion in February when it was abruptly ended by four members of the Natural Resources Board (NRB) who rejected proposed PFAS standards for groundwater, despite having voted to approve standards for drinking water and surface water.

In July, MEA submitted a [petition](#) to the DNR to restart the process on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin and S.O.H2O, a grassroots group dedicated to securing safe drinking water for Peshtigo and Marinette residents.

In the Marinette and Peshtigo area, dangerous concentrations of PFOS and PFOA have been found in private drinking water wells sampled as part of the DNR's ongoing investigations in the area. There have also been high-level detections in the Town of Campbell near La Crosse.

Although manufacturers have agreed to phase out the production of PFOA and PFOS, they persist in groundwater resources throughout the state and continue to pose a public health risk through drinking water.

PFOA, PFOS and related substances are linked to severe health conditions such as kidney and testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, thyroid disease, pregnancy-induced hypertension, decreased antibody response to vaccines, and decreased fertility.

“Our children and grandchildren don’t deserve the cancers and other maladies caused by PFAS contaminated groundwater. Enforceable groundwater standards will reduce costs, reduce harm and reduce deaths,” said **Doug Oitzinger, a resident of Marinette and a member of S.O.H2O.**

“Two-thirds of Wisconsinites get their drinking water from groundwater. They deserve the same level of protection from toxic chemicals as those whose water comes from public water systems,” said **Debra Cronmiller, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.**

“Wisconsinites in Wausau, Marinette and La Crosse and elsewhere have a right to safe water. Today, the NRB chose to put their interests over the interests of industry and PFAS polluters,” said **MEA Staff Attorney Rob Lee.**

“We urge DNR to continue the rulemaking process without delay. Much of the groundwork has already been laid, so DNR should be able to move forward much more quickly than last time,” said **MEA Executive Director Tony Wilkin Gibart.**

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a nonprofit law center that combines the power of law with the resolve of communities facing environmental injustice to secure and protect the rights of all people to healthy water, land, and air. Learn more at www.midwestadvocates.org.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is a non-partisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League advocates for water quality improvements, with an emphasis on water pollution prevention. Learn more at www.my.lwv.org/wisconsin.

S.O.H2O is committed to advocating for state and federal PFAS standards and to securing safe drinking water for Peshtigo and Marinette residents in the wake of widespread PFAS contamination stemming from Tyco/Johnson Controls’ operations. Learn more [here](#).

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