

PFAS in LA County Water Systems

The quality of drinking water is a rising concern nationally and locally. Every resident of Los Angeles County has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes. The State of California codified this right by adopting AB685 in 2012, which recognized the human right to water. Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), “forever chemicals,” are a class consisting of thousands of man-made chemicals that have been around since the 1940s, but are now raising increased concerns due to environmental prevalence and persistence, toxicity, and human exposures through water and food. The State Water Resources Control Board is the regulatory agency responsible for enforcing statewide water quality standards including PFAS Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) once established by US Environmental Protection Agency.

Legacy long-chain perfluoroalkyl acids (PFAAs) include perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), which are historically two of the most widely used and studied chemicals in the PFAS group. Due to their persistence, toxicity

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and bioaccumulation potential, actions have been taken voluntarily by industries and regulators worldwide to reduce the release of PFAAs including PFOA, PFOS and perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS). PFAS are also widely-documented in human plasma and can be maternally transferred pre- and post-natal. Some PFAS have also been linked with human developmental, metabolic, and immune disorders as well as certain types of cancers.

Potential pathways to drinking-water resources are diverse, including biosolids application, outdoor products (e.g., ski waxes), industrial releases, firefighting foams, and discharges from wastewater treatment, septic, stormwater, and landfill systems. A recent study that will be featured in the August 2023 edition of [Environmental International](#) indicates that drinking-water exposures may be more common in the Southern California regions.

In 2019, the Los Angeles County Chief Sustainability Office completed the “OurCounty” Countywide Sustainability Plan to serve as the roadmap for regional sustainability. The Plan, which was adopted by the Board, includes several actions related to addressing drinking water issues in the region, including Strategy 1E, to ensure access to safe clean affordable water, advocating for drinking water affordability (Action 17), assessing systems for resiliency and water quality issues (Action 18), and providing support for small water systems to access financial resources (Action 22). The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (DPW) has been implementing part of the “OurCounty” plan through various actions including coordinating the development of an integrated and resilient local water plan referred to as the Los Angeles County Water Plan (CWP), led by the DPW. In collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders, the CWP

is developing specific actions and strategies for the region to address areas of need such as enhanced water infrastructure, livable communities, healthy watersheds, and water resources optimization.

A County-led study in collaboration with the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) to assess PFAS levels in our community water systems is warranted. The goal of this study would be to educate the county and determine which PFAS we are currently testing for and to understand what PFAS are traceable in our community water systems. Small public water supplies and private-wells may be disproportionately affected by PFAS.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Department of Public Health, in consultation with the Department of Public Works and the Chief Sustainability Office, and Chief Executive Office__-__Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations to engage with the State Water Resources Control Board, to:

- 1) complete the following tasks and report back in writing in 90 days:
 - a. Index and catalogue which water systems are/are not currently testing for PFAS in the 206 community water systems in the County, including small water systems in the county;
 - b. Catalogue which PFAS the water systems currently are testing for; and
 - c. Explore options to assist and encourage large, medium, and small water systems to increase PFAS testing;
 - d. ~~Identify potential state and federal funding to support these efforts.~~

2) Complete the following tasks and report back in writing in 120 days:

- a. Determine the status of the statewide PFAS Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) standards and make recommendations to strengthen regulations upon establishment of MCL standards, including any potential gaps in proposed regulations; and
- b. Determine if testing standards and notification processes can be enhanced through regular monitoring by all water systems;
- ~~c. Determine where or not concerns specific to County communities are reflected in rule-making, and provide the Board with updates on the process on an annual basis until standards are adopted;~~
- ~~d. Advocate for State and Federal funding to support implementation of treatment system retrofits to address PFAS in drinking water.~~

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Chief Executive Office - Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations complete the following in 90 days and provide a written report on the progress:

- a. Identify potential state and federal funding to support these efforts; and,
- b. Advocate for State and Federal funding to support implementation of treatment system retrofits to address PFAS in drinking water.

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