

EPA Announces Availability of \$4.8 Million in Funding for New Research on Managing PFAS in Agriculture

ALBUQUERQUE (Nov. 23, 2019) – Today, at the 2019 Annual Meeting of the New Mexico Farm & Livestock Bureau, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Regional Administrator Ken McQueen will announce the availability of \$4.8 million in funding to expand research on managing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in rural America and the agricultural sector. This funding is a part of EPA’s extensive efforts to help communities address the larger issue of PFAS nationwide. In a memorandum issued in February 2019, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler called for the agency to prioritize new federal research that will help farmers, ranchers, and rural communities by generating new scientifically-driven information on PFAS, potential PFAS impacts in agricultural settings, and actions people can take to address PFAS in their communities.

“EPA is following through on our commitment under the PFAS Action Plan and the memo to close the gaps in the science around PFAS as quickly as possible by supporting cutting-edge research that will help manage PFAS issues in agricultural and rural economies,” **said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler**. “We want to make sure that decision makers at the federal, state, and local levels have the best science available to make informed decisions. These new research grants will help identify potential impacts of PFAS to farms, ranches and rural communities.”

“While our scientific understanding of PFAS continues to develop, the people of New Mexico, especially farmers and ranchers, already know how it can affect the water resources that are so critical to the state’s environmental and economic wellbeing,” **said Regional Administrator Ken McQueen**. “With this funding, EPA is committing to finding solutions to the challenges PFAS presents and bringing relief to rural communities.”

“EPA is uniquely suited to lead and promote research on this important topic and USDA applauds EPA’s focus on farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. EPA’s funding of this research complements the work USDA does supporting U.S. production agriculture and ensuring a safe food supply,” **said USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics Dr. Scott Hutchins**.

“NASDA appreciates the EPA’s efforts to prioritize PFAS research that will help the agricultural community. As the primary stewards for the agricultural industries in their states, NASDA members will continue to work closely with the EPA as the agency implements its PFAS Action Plan. Together, we can ensure healthy communities and farms across America,” **said National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) CEO Dr. Barbara P. Glenn**.

EPA is seeking grant applications that help improve the agency’s understanding of the potential impacts of PFAS on water quality and availability in rural communities and agricultural operations across the United States. Specifically, the agency is seeking research on PFAS occurrence, fate,

and transport in water sources used by rural communities and agricultural operations and new or improved PFAS treatment methods appropriate for small drinking water and wastewater systems including influents, effluents, and biosolids/residuals. Some of the questions EPA hopes to answer include:

- How do serial biosolids applications impact PFAS concentrations and accumulation over time?
- What are the impacts of factors such as soil type, crop type, and landscape traits, such as topography, that may influence PFAS concentration and accumulation?
- How do we treat and clean up PFAS from water, soil and biosolids used in agricultural settings?

EPA is accepting applications through February 11, 2020.

Additional information on the Request for Applications: <https://www.epa.gov/research-grants/national-priorities-research-pfas-impacts-rural-communities-and-agricultural>

Additional information on the PFAS Action Plan: <https://www.epa.gov/pfas>

February 27, 2019 Memorandum on prioritizing research on impacts to agriculture and rural economies: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-03/documents/pfas_ag_research_memo.pdf

Background

PFAS are a large group of man-made chemicals used in consumer products and industrial processes. In use since the 1940s, PFAS are resistant to heat, oils, stains, grease, and water—properties which contribute to their persistence in the environment.

The agency's PFAS Action Plan is the first multi-media, multi-program, national research, management and risk communication plan to address a challenge like PFAS. The plan responds to the extensive public input the agency has received over the past year during the PFAS National Leadership Summit, multiple community engagements, and through the public docket. The PFAS Action Plan outlines the tools EPA is developing to assist states, tribes, and communities in addressing PFAS.

EPA continues to make progress under its PFAS Action Plan to protect the environment and human health. To date, EPA has:

Highlighted Action: Drinking Water

- The Agency is moving forward with the drinking water standard setting process outlined in the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) for PFOA and PFOS.

- As a next step, EPA will propose a regulatory determination for PFOA and PFOS by the end of this year.
- The Agency is also gathering and evaluating information to determine if regulation is appropriate for other chemicals in the PFAS family.

Highlighted Action: Cleanup

- On June 10, 2019, EPA concluded public comment on the [draft *Interim Recommendations for Addressing Groundwater Contaminated with PFOA and PFOS*](#), when finalized it will provide cleanup guidance for federal cleanup programs (e.g., CERCLA and RCRA) that will be helpful to states and tribes.
- EPA is initiating the regulatory development process for listing certain PFAS as hazardous substances under CERCLA.

Highlighted Action: Monitoring

- EPA will propose nationwide drinking water monitoring for PFAS under the next UCMR monitoring cycle.

Highlighted Action: Toxics

- The agency recently sent two actions that address per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) to the Office of Management and Budget for interagency review.
- Advanced notice of proposed rulemaking that would allow the public to provide input on adding PFAS to the Toxics Release Inventory toxic chemical list.
- A supplemental proposal to ensure that certain persistent long-chain PFAS chemicals cannot be manufactured in or imported into the United States without notification and review under the TSCA.

Highlighted Action: Surface Water Protection

- EPA plans to develop national Clean Water Act human health and aquatic life criteria for PFAS, as data allows.
- EPA is examining available information about PFAS released into surface waters by industrial sources to determine if additional study is needed for potential regulation.

Highlighted Action: Biosolids

- EPA will be developing risk assessments for PFOA and PFOS to understand any potential health impacts.

Highlighted Action: Research

- EPA continues to compile and assess human and ecological toxicity information on PFAS to support risk management decisions.
- EPA continues to develop new analytical methods to test for additional PFAS in drinking water.

- The Agency is also validating analytical methods for surface water, ground water, wastewater, soils, sediments and biosolids; developing new methods to test for PFAS in air and emissions; and improving laboratory methods to discover unknown PFAS.
- EPA is developing exposure models to understand how PFAS moves through the environment to impact people and ecosystems.
- EPA continues to assess and review treatment methods for removing PFAS in drinking water.
- EPA is working to develop tools to assist officials with the cleanup of contaminated sites. EPA is evaluating the effectiveness technologies and evaluating data on methods for managing the end-of life disposal of PFAS-contaminated materials.

Highlighted Action: Enforcement

- EPA uses enforcement tools, when appropriate, to address PFAS exposure in the environment and assists states in enforcement activities.

Highlighted Action: Risk Communications

- EPA will work collaboratively to develop a risk communication toolbox that includes multi-media materials and messaging for federal, state, tribal, and local partners to use with the public.