

November 13, 2023

To: Chairman Wetzel and members of the Public Works Commission

From: Peter Hartz – Water Systems Manager

Re: Water Systems agenda items for November 28, 2023

Water Systems:

1. Review and take possible action – Dupont class action lawsuit settlement participation to establish eligibility for compensation from settlement funds.

Currently drinking water tests show that the city of Watertown’s treated drinking water is safe and has zero detects for 29 different PFAS / PFOS chemical parameters, which were required to be tested for under the Federal Environmental Protection Agency’s Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule #5 in 2023. However, the future of the water quality related to PFAS / PFOS is unknown.

Joining in this settlement impacts Watertown’s future rights regarding the unknown and possible contamination from PFAS / PFOS. This settlement provides public water systems with access to funding that can transform their infrastructure by establishing and maintaining state-of-the-art water treatment facilities equipped with advanced technology for effectively removing PFAS / PFOS. This settlement coincides with a shifting regulatory landscape and the likely adoption of new, enforceable standards for PFAS content in drinking water, including the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed maximum contaminant levels for PFOA / PFOS; if the public water system opts out it will receive no funds to pay for compliance efforts and obligations, but would preserve legal rights for future claims.

2. Review and take possible action – 3M class action lawsuit settlement participation to establish eligibility for compensation from settlement funds.

Currently drinking water tests show that the city of Watertown’s treated drinking water is safe and has zero detects for 29 different PFAS / PFOS chemical parameters, which were required to be tested for under the Federal Environmental Protection Agency’s Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule #5 in 2023. However, the future of the water quality related to PFAS / PFOS is unknown.

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Acronyms & Definitions:

Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS). The per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water. Fluoropolymer coatings can be in a variety of products.

Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) has been a manufactured perfluorochemical and a byproduct in producing fluoropolymers. Perfluorochemicals (PFCs) are a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water.

Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) is one of a group of related chemicals known as perfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS). These are also called perfluorochemicals (PFCs). This group of chemicals is commonly used in a wide range of industrial processes and is found in many consumer products.

Understanding PFAS -

PFAS are widely used, long lasting chemicals, components of which break down very slowly over time. Because of their widespread use and their persistence in the environment, many PFAS are found in the blood of people and animals all over the world and are present at low levels in a variety of food products and in the environment. PFAS are found in water, air, fish, and soil at locations across the nation and the globe. Scientific studies have shown that exposure to some PFAS in the environment may be linked to harmful health effects in humans and animals. There are thousands of PFAS chemicals, and they are found in many different consumer, commercial, and industrial products. This makes it challenging to study and assess the potential human health and environmental risks.

Some products that may contain PFAS include:

Some grease-resistant paper, fast food containers/wrappers, microwave popcorn bags, pizza boxes, and candy wrappers, stain resistant coatings used on carpets, upholstery, and other fabrics, water resistant clothing, cleaning products, personal care products (shampoo, dental floss, toilet paper) and cosmetics (nail polish, eye makeup), paints, varnishes, and sealants. PFAS has also been found in some brands of bottled water.

Sincerely,

Peter Hartz

Water Systems Manger