



US EPA COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado PFAS Community Engagement
August 7-8, 2018
Hotel Elegante
2886 S Circle Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80906

Day 1 Listening Session Summary

Welcome and Overview

Doug Benevento, Administrator, EPA Region 8, welcomed and thanked state officials, local officials, and community members for their attendance and participation. Mr. Benevento articulated that the purpose of the meeting is to engage with communities, demonstrate the EPA's commitment to the four actions announced at the National Leadership Summit, and receive input to develop EPA's National PFAS Management Plan.

Dr. Jennifer McLain, Deputy Director, EPA, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, acknowledged the importance of protecting drinking water and reaffirmed that PFAS represents a top priority for the agency. Dr. McLain briefly described EPA's commitment:

1. EPA will initiate steps to evaluate the need for a maximum contaminant level (MCL) for PFOA and PFOS. We will convene our federal partners and examine everything we know about PFOA and PFOS in drinking water.
2. EPA is beginning the necessary steps to propose designating PFOA and PFOS as "hazardous substances" through one of the available statutory mechanisms, including potentially CERCLA Section 102.
3. EPA is currently developing groundwater cleanup recommendations for PFOA and PFOS at contaminated sites and will complete this task by fall of this year.
4. EPA is taking action in close collaboration with our federal and state partners to develop toxicity values for GenX and PFBS.

Dr. William (Bill) Cibulas, Director, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Division of Toxicology and Human Health Sciences, emphasized the importance of listening and acting on community needs. Dr. Cibulas indicated that there is still much more health data to gather on PFAS and many new health studies are being conducted and completed. Dr. Cibulas indicated that ATSDR is planning a multi-site epidemiologic study and is currently in the process of writing study protocols.

Maureen Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Department of Defense (DoD), Environment, Safety & Occupational Health Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, acknowledged the importance of reducing current human exposure to PFAS and the need to initiate the CERCLA process. Ms. Sullivan shared information on 401 known or suspected releases across the nation. To date, Ms. Sullivan shared that the DoD has directed \$40M for PFAS research and committed \$10M to

ATSDR to examine exposure assessments and conduct a PFAS health study. Ms. Sullivan reported that in 2019 the DoD will begin conducting a study on service members who have been exposed to PFAS.

Presentations from State, County, Water Utility and Community Organizations

In this session, representatives from state, county, water utility and community organizations shared their stories and experiences with PFAS. The speakers described the cases of PFAS contamination that have been detected in communities south of Colorado Springs that were impacted by firefighting activities connected to Peterson Air Force Base and the actions that have been taken to address the contamination and communicate with the public. They discussed how the various public water systems shut down contaminated wells and obtained surface water sources or added treatment technologies for the groundwater sources. Speakers described the complexity of drinking water services in the area given the multiple jurisdictions, unincorporated areas, water utilities, and private wells and their efforts to collaborate. Community organizations expressed frustration with an inconsistent state and federal response and lack of clarity on safety. They expressed a desire to be included in future discussions as an important stakeholder. They expressed the need for comprehensive measures to address PFAS in the environment, beyond drinking water.

The presentations are available at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-08/documents/co_pfas.pdf (4.6 MB). This summary reflects a high-level synthesis of the perspectives participants shared during the community engagement event and do not imply consensus, endorsement, or agreement on any of the topics.

The following individuals shared their communities' experience:

- Patrick Pfaltzgraff, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division
- Aaron Doussett, El Paso County Public Health
- Liz Rosenbaum, Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition
- Fran Silva-Blayney, Fountain Creek Water Sentinels Sierra Club
- Roy Heald, Security Water and Sanitation District
- Brandon Bernard, Widefield Water and Sanitation District
- Kirk Medina, Stratmoor Hills Water District
- Curtis Mitchell, Fountain Water Utility

Community Listening Session

Elected officials were given the opportunity to open the community listening session.

- Dale Anderson, Military and Veterans Liaison for U.S. Congressman Doug Lamborn spoke about the trip that Lamborn's office and local water utility representatives took to the Pentagon to bring awareness to the PFAS contamination.
- Tom Farrell, Constituent Advocate for Veteran & Military Affairs, U.S. Senator Michael F. Bennet, spoke to the importance of partnerships with local community organizations.

Over 20 community members shared input during the community listening session. The following is a synthesized list of themes and points shared during the listening session:

Health Impacts

Community members provided their individual experiences and stressed the personal nature of this issue, including the health impacts experienced by their families and their communities. Commenters pointed to the need for protective rather than reactive mechanisms to prevent PFAS exposure in the community. Parents discussed the health and economic impacts to their families, including their children and grandchildren. Commenters also expressed their desire to understand how current and past exposure may impact their families and the potential for future medical problems. They identified specific populations, such as firefighters, as potentially at a higher risk. Community members recommended EPA take action to identify and treat community health impacts of PFAS, including their desire for biomonitoring and access to medical care and information.

Risk Characterization

Community members identified risk characterization as a critical first step to addressing PFAS in their communities and recommended that the EPA conduct a more rigorous review of chemicals and their environmental and health impacts before approval for use. Commenters stressed their desire for the EPA to place a greater emphasis on source water protection when evaluating the full lifecycle impacts of chemicals in the future and expressed that risk characterization is important for private well owners. Commenters felt the word “safe” was not defined, leaving community members unsure if they should drink the water in their homes.

Risk Communication

Community members identified comprehensive risk communication as a critical component of protecting their communities. Commenters expressed frustration in determining the best way to protect their children given disparate health communications and guidance. They recommended more public meetings and that the EPA move quickly on distributing research results, processing information, and setting deadlines for ongoing work.

Standards/Guidance

Many community members provided feedback for the standards and guidance process. Of these recommendations, many focused their comments on classifying PFAS as a family of chemicals. Commenters urged the EPA to develop standards and guidance for individuals employed in sectors that may have increased exposure to PFAS through their livelihood. For example, plumbers who have handled and removed depleted resins and plumbing in homes that may have had contaminated water for years, possibly resulting in elevated probability of exposure. Commenters urged EPA to move away from Health Advisories, which they stressed did not protect human health or provide authority to monitor, treat, and enforce, and instead urged the EPA to develop MCL(s). Additionally, they recommended that EPA classify PFAS as a hazardous substance, add the family of chemicals to the toxic pollutant list under the Clean Water Act, and address waste water releases. Commenters also recommended that EPA become a signatory of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Others expressed a desire to prevent future contamination of waters through biosolids regulation and preventing leaching from landfills.

Cost Impacts

Community members spoke about the high cost to communities, utilities, and individuals in identifying PFAS contamination, monitoring health impacts, installing water treatment or obtaining new public

water supplies, and communicating with impacted communities. Commenters indicated that they are bearing the cost of monitoring and treating medical complications due to PFAS exposure. They stressed that polluters should be responsible for costs and expressed frustration that individuals ingesting the water bore the cost burden of monitoring and treatment. Commenters expressed their frustration that contamination has impacted their sources of income and livelihoods. For example, one commenter said that she lost her family farm due to contamination of their only source for irrigation. Others noted significant loss in value of property and water rights holdings. Commenters noted that both former and current military members had lived in the area, and while they may experience health impacts due to PFAS contamination, they may be unaware of their risk. Community members asked that EPA identify, contact, and provide support for those military families potentially impacted by PFAS exposure. Commenters expressed the need for additional funding for states to support health biomonitoring and treatment solutions and stated that they were fearful of their exposure and for the potential for future costly medical problems.

Remediation

Community members urged the EPA to focus not only on treating drinking water, but to work on remediating contaminated sites to prevent exposure and protect the environment in the future. Comments focused on the need to treat contamination in the Widefield Aquifer for all uses of the ground water, including for agriculture. Beyond the Widefield Aquifer, commenters spoke to contamination concerns for downstream communities and stressed the need for a better understanding and careful monitoring of the plume. They stressed that while current human impacts are their most pressing concern, continued use of the aquifer in the future is a critical need given the scarcity of water in the area. Commenters also spoke to the need for analysis and guidance for disposing of wastes and materials that may be contaminated with PFAS, such as ion exchange resins and filter media from water treatment at homes and utilities.

Representation

Several community members spoke of their desire to be considered integral stakeholders throughout the process of identifying, characterizing, and treating PFAS in the community. Several commenters spoke of their frustration at elected officials and water systems operators when their community groups were not provided access to decision meetings or invited to join conversations with the DoD at the Pentagon in 2017. Commenters felt that while the Community Listening Session was a promising first step, there were important next steps, including the attendance of state and federal representatives at community meetings and the ability to tour local water systems.

Treatment Technologies

Community members expressed the desire to have more information about the treatment technologies employed to treat PFAS in their drinking water. Impacted water systems in the community had chosen different treatment methods, and community members spoke to their desire to know more about the rationale for choosing specific treatment methods at Security Water and Sanitation District, Widefield Water and Sanitation District, Stratmoor Hills Water District, and Fountain Water Utility and the effectiveness of the various technologies. Commenters spoke to the difficulty of treating private wells.

Day Two: Roundtable Discussion Summary

Welcome and Recap of Day 1

Doug Benevento United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 8 Administrator welcomed attendees and expressed gratitude for the members of the community that had made the time to attend and share their perspectives. Mr. Benevento re-articulated that the purpose of the roundtable was to engage with communities and to hear from those in the community to inform areas of priority for the EPA.

Roundtable Discussion

During the roundtable, the following representatives provided brief oral presentations and engaged in a roundtable discussion on the key challenges and opportunities for identifying, communicating, and finding solutions to PFAS contamination.

Identifying PFAS

- Tracie White, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Hazardous Materials and Waste Management
- Curtis Mitchell, Fountain Water Utility
- John Winchester, Sugar Loaf Fire District

During the presentation and discussion, roundtable participants spoke of the need for analytical methods to help state agencies and communities investigate potential contamination. Participants spoke of the need for a national set of methods and health reference levels to avoid confusion across state lines as well as funds to support testing and build laboratory capacity. Representatives pointed to the need for authority to compel investigations. Discussion also touched on the need for clear communication with communities and vulnerable populations using terms and language specific to their community/profession. One example given was firefighters that may recognize terms such as Class B foam but may not understand the relationship with PFAS/PFOS. Participants also spoke of the gap that exists between community expectations for non-detect levels and regulatory limits. Representatives from community groups expressed their desire to play an active role in identifying PFAS in their communities.

Communicating PFAS

- Tom Gonzales, El Paso County Public Health
- Mark Favors with Liz Rosenbaum, Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition
- Christine Lowenberg, The Greenway Fund
- Roy Heald, Security Water and Sanitation District
- Meghan Trubee, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division

During the presentation and discussion, roundtable participants spoke of the critical need to communicate clearly, accurately and rapidly, both between federal and state agencies as well as between agencies and the community. Participants discussed the difficulties of doing this in the context of emerging science. Water system participants spoke to the challenge that they faced in 2016 when they were unaware that the EPA was to publish a Health Advisory and acknowledged that they were not

sufficiently prepared to communicate with their constituents. Community leaders noted that it is important for the public to know what is happening in neighboring districts—for example, because your children go to school there. Roundtable participants recommended readily available communications materials and methods to keep their communities informed and spoke of strategies, such as press releases, mailers, and tours of water treatment facilities, as well as the importance of using multiple channels of communication. Representatives from community groups expressed their desire for meaningful community engagement and access to federal, state, and local representatives for information.

Solutions to PFAS

- Kristy Richardson, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Water Quality Control Division
- Kirk Medina, Stratmoor Hills Water District
- Fran Silva-Blayney, Fountain Creek Water Sentinels Sierra Club
- Brandon Bernard, Widefield Water District

During the presentation and discussion, roundtable participants acknowledged the complexity of PFAS treatment and spoke of promising technologies that have been implemented to protect the communities in the Fountain, Colorado area. The discussion also touched on the importance of the local context and how that may impact which technologies are implemented. One example given was the high nitrate levels that led the Widefield Water District to choose ion exchange as opposed to granular activated carbon (GAC). The discussion also addressed the need for adequate financial support from external parties to prevent relying on their communities to provide the full cost of treatment. Participants spoke of the importance of preventing exposure and contamination. Participants asked the group to consider the need to go beyond treatment of drinking water and adopt source water protection programs and address remediation in the aquifer to ensure that water resources are available for future generations.

Closing Remarks

Doug Benevento, EPA Region 8 Administrator, thanked the community members that took the time to share their experiences. Mr. Benevento acknowledged that health advisories in the past surprised communities and water systems and made a commitment to avoid this scenario in the future. Mr. Benevento spoke to the need for accurate and understandable communications and more meaningful engagement moving forward. Mr. Benevento ended his remarks by reiterating the EPA's commitment to continuing the conversation to better understand community needs.

Jennifer McLain, EPA Deputy Director Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water, thanked the community for coming to the second day and the individuals at the roundtable for presenting specific challenges and solutions to the complexities of addressing PFAS. Dr. McLain spoke of communication as the bedrock of the PFAS Management Plan. Dr. McLain acknowledged the need for a national, unified approach while allowing localities to make the right decisions for their communities. Dr. McLain closed by stating that these sessions would provide the basis for a better suite of tools for identifying, communicating, and addressing PFAS.