

Regional Water Quality Control Board
North Coast Region
Executive Officer's Summary Report
February 4, 2021

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: Update on California Water Board's Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Investigation (Charles Reed, Wendy Linck, Julie Duong, Terri Cia, Justin McSmith)

BOARD ACTION: This item is an informational item only; no action will be taken by the Regional Water Board.

BACKGROUND: PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are a large group of persistent synthetic compounds fluorinated organic chemicals, which include the commonly referred to PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) (and PFOS (perfluorooctanesulfonic acid), that are used in a variety of industrial and consumer product applications including non-stick cookware and firefighting foams. The presence of PFAS compounds in source water and drinking water is of increasing public concern due to their widespread use and environmental persistence.

According to the US EPA, PFAS can be found in:

- **Food** packaged in PFAS-containing materials, processed with equipment that used PFAS, or grown in PFAS-contaminated soil or water.
- **Commercial household products**, including stain- and water-repellent fabrics, nonstick products (e.g., Teflon), polishes, waxes, paints, cleaning products, and fire-fighting foams (a major source of groundwater contamination at airports and military bases where firefighting training occurs).
- **Workplace**, including production facilities or industries that use PFAS (e.g., chrome plating, electronics manufacturing, or oil recovery).
- **Drinking water**, typically localized, and associated with a specific facility (e.g., manufacturer, landfill, wastewater treatment plant, firefighter training facility).
- **Living organisms**, including fish, animals, and humans, where PFAS can build up and persist over time

Nationally, PFAS has been found in a number of drinking water systems due to localized contamination. In 2016, US EPA established health advisories for PFOA and PFOS, based on the agency's assessment of the latest peer-reviewed science to provide drinking water system operators, and state, tribal and local officials who have the primary responsibility for overseeing these systems, with information on the health risks of these chemicals, so they can take the appropriate actions to protect their residents.

Item 6

Beginning in 2019, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) initiated a statewide effort to evaluate PFAS impacts to groundwater and surface water and obtain a preliminary understanding of PFAS concentrations at designated facility sectors. To obtain the needed information, the State Board began issuing investigative orders, pursuant to California Water Code section 13267 and 13383, directing dischargers from waste discharge sectors in the state identified as potential PFAS sources to perform PFAS testing. For the initial phases of the investigation, the targeted sectors include airports with fire response sites, municipal solid waste landfills, drinking water wells proximate to airports and landfills, wastewater treatment facilities, and chrome-plating businesses. Subsequent phases of the investigation will include refineries, bulk terminals, non-airport fire training areas, 2017-2018 urban wildfire areas, secondary manufacturing sites, other wastewater treatment and pre-treatment plants, and domestic wells near Phase II sites. The State Water Board and the Regional Water Boards will evaluate the data collected to make informed decisions in implementing appropriate regulatory action, in anticipation of emerging regulatory standards for PFAS.

In the North Coast Region, investigative orders have been issued to three regional airports, the Sonoma County Central Solid Waste Disposal Site (SWDS), thirteen wastewater treatment facilities, and three chrome-plating businesses. Facility work plans and required monitoring results have been received for the regional airports and the Sonoma County Central SWDS. The investigative work for wastewater treatment facilities in the North Coast Region will commence in 2021. Of the three chrome platers in our region, one had already completed the investigation prior to the order going out, one has complied with the order and one filled out the questionnaire and received a No Further Action letter from our office.

DISCUSSION: The purpose of this informational item is to update the Regional Water Board on the PFAS investigation and present preliminary results.

Following the presentations by Regional and State Water Board staff at the February Board meeting, staff welcome comments from the public and Board members and will be available to answer questions.

RECOMMENDATION: Not Applicable

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. US EPA Fact Sheet: PFOA & PFOS Drinking Water Health Advisories:
https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/drinkingwaterhealthadvisories_pfoa_pfos_updated_5.31.16.pdf
2. State Water Board PFAS website: <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/pfas/>

210204_CER_er_Update on California Water Boards PFAS Investigation_EOSR