Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Fact Sheet

Key Takeaways

- Federal funding to address PFAS contamination is available to states through the DWSRF ($4 billion) and for the first time the CWSRF ($1 billion) – providing a unique opportunity to advocate for investment in communities affected by PFAS and other emerging contaminants.
- 100 percent of DWSRF and CWSRF funding for PFAS and other emerging contaminants will be provided as grants or principal forgiveness instead of loans.
- The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes separate and exclusive funding ($5 billion) for the Small and Disadvantaged Community Grant Program. This funding will be awarded to states, territories, and tribes.

Forever Chemicals in Water

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large class of human-made chemicals that include perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). Manufacturing of PFAS began in the 1940s, and exists in non-stick cookware, firefighting foam, and many other common products. Often referred to as "forever chemicals," these chemicals do not break down easily and can accumulate in both people and the environment over time. PFAS enter humans through food, water, and air. An estimated one-third of Americans drink water contaminated with PFAS, though recent studies suggest that exposure to PFAS may be much higher. PFAS contamination is pervasive in our environment – sprayed on agricultural fields through biosolids, coating food packaging, woven into textiles, and leaching into groundwater at military bases, airports, and manufacturing sites.

PFAS are known to have harmful health impacts on humans and wildlife, including increased risk of certain cancers and fertility issues. For water systems already struggling to maintain compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act requirements, and with additional regulatory requirements for PFAS forthcoming, the added cost of monitoring and removing these chemicals poses a significant financial barrier without additional funding sources. ***Supplemental funding directed at PFAS and other emerging contaminants through the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF), the Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF) and the Small and Disadvantaged Community Grant Program provide substantial resources for water systems working to address and prevent future PFAS contamination in their source water and drinking water supplies.***

For more information, go to www.srfadvocatesforum.org

SRF Basics: Addressing PFAS & Emerging Contaminants

While PFAS are known to have harmful impacts to human health, there are currently no enforceable federal regulations for PFAS under the Safe Drinking Water Act. The US EPA issued new Lifetime Drinking Water Health Advisory Levels for four PFAS in June 2022. This includes monitoring recommendations for several types of PFAS that will eventually have mandatory maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) as part of EPA's proposed National Drinking Water Regulation, currently under development.

Emerging Contaminants:

"Substances and microorganisms, including manufactured or naturally occurring physical, chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear materials, which are known or anticipated in the environment, that may pose newly identified or re-emerging risks to human health, aquatic life, or the environment."
-US EPA

There is increasing state and federal action on PFAS contamination. EPA developed a Strategic Roadmap outlining the agency's commitments for 2021-2024. EPA's three central directives from the Roadmap to address PFAS are to:

- Research the impacts of PFAS on human health and environmental effects,
- Restrict contaminants from entering air, land, and water, and
- Remediate PFAS contamination.

To help meet these directives, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), allocated $4 billion of Drinking Water SRF funds and $1 billion in Clean Water SRF funds for emerging contaminants, including PFAS. BIL also allocated $5 billion to the EPA for the Small and Disadvantaged Communities (SDC) Grant Program, which prioritizes financing projects and activities that benefit low-income, rural, minority and indigenous communities. Under BIL, SDC funding will not be subject to the state matching requirement.

BIL Funding for Emerging Contaminants, including PFAS

Program	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	Total
CWSRF Emerging Contaminants	$100 million	$225 million	$225 million	$225 million	$225 million	$1 billion
DWSRF Emerging Contaminants	$800 million	$800 million	$800 million	$800 million	$800 million	$4 billion
SDWA Section 1459A Small & Disadvantaged Community Grant Program	$1 billion	$1 billion	$1 billion	$1 billion	$1 billion	$5 billion
Total	$1.9 billion	$2.025 billion	$2.025 billion	$2.025 billion	$2.025 billion	$10 billion

Source: Congressional Research Service. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure. January 2022.

DWSRF PROJECTS

- Construct new treatment facilities or upgrading an existing treatment facility
- Develop a new source of drinking water
- Consolidate with a water system that doesn't have contamination problems
- Pilot testing treatment alternatives
- Move private well owners onto community water system

DWSRF SET-ASIDES

- Determine if there's a PFAS problem
- Fund state staff working on PFAS/emerging contaminants oversight
- Train operators to use test kits/lab equipment
- Protect source water
- Conduct initial monitoring

CWSRF PROJECTS

- Install technology at wastewater treatment plants to treat PFAS
- Reuse/reclaim water for advanced treatment (such as reverse osmosis, granulated activated carbon, etc.)
- Develop stormwater plans to identify needed projects
- Install sampling equipment and containment systems
- Cap, treat, or remove contaminated material at landfills and other sites through non-point source management programs

PFAS present both a source water and drinking water quality issue. BIL marks the first time Congress directed funding to address emerging contaminants, including PFAS, as an eligible CWSRF activity. **All SRF funding for emerging contaminants must be distributed as principal forgiveness or grants. For DWSRF emerging contaminant funding, 25 percent must go to disadvantaged communities or public water systems serving fewer than 25,000 people. DWSRF and CWSRF funding for emerging contaminants does not require a state match under BIL.**

Addressing Emerging Contaminants in Disadvantaged Communities

25 percent of funds provided through DWSRF Emerging Contaminants ($1 billion) must be provided as grants or forgivable loans to disadvantaged communities or public water systems serving less than 25,000 people.

2 percent of CWSRF Emerging Contaminants funding may be used by states to provide technical assistance to small, rural, and tribal publicly-owned treatment works.

SRF Advocacy on PFAS

1. Know where there are emerging contaminants in your state! Find out if your water utility has determined that it has a problem with emerging contaminants.

- See Michigan's PFAS Sites or New Jersey's Water Systems PFAS Violations database as examples.
- Contact your water utility to determine if they have tested the water for emerging contaminants. Some utilities may not post results publicly.

2. Submit public comments on your state's Intended Use Plan. Emphasize the need to prioritize and fund PFAS testing and remediation projects in your state, particularly in communities that have not adequately tested. Drinking water systems serving tribes have been less likely to be tested by EPA regulators.

3. Communicate with your water system about taking steps to monitor and address PFAS in their water. Examples include:

- Secure SRF technical assistance support to strengthen your community's PFAS strategy and successfully apply for and secure funding.
- Understand the different treatment technologies available for PFAS remediation.

Additional Resources

BIL Frequently Asked Questions | US EPA
Meaningful and Achievable Steps You Can Take to Reduce Your Risk | US EPA
Addressing PFAS through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund | US EPA