



## PFAS and Water Quality Facilities (Wastewater Treatment Plants) in Vermont

Per and Poly Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) have been on Vermonters minds and in the headlines since their discovery in groundwater in Bennington and the surrounding area. PFAS chemicals don't break down and have been linked to certain cancers. Studies have shown that PFAS compounds are omnipresent in the environment at low levels in soils, ground water and elsewhere. More disturbing is the high levels that are found in homes and in common everyday products that Vermonters use and wear during the course of our daily lives.

Vermont leads the nation in setting low PFAS concentration standards in the water and Vermont Environment. The Vermont Legislature continued its environmental leadership when it passed PFAS packaging restrictions (S.101).

Water quality facilities (i.e. wastewater treatment plants) accept and treat wastewater generated from homes and industry across the State. Wastewater is treated to remove pollutants and other contamination for both environmental and public health benefits. Through this treatment process, any PFAS compounds sent to the wastewater treatment plant are bound in the byproducts of those treatment processes (i.e. sludges and biosolids) as well as in low levels in the water recycled to the environment via facility discharges. Wastewater facilities do not produce PFAS yet studies and regulatory discussions focus on the discharges and residuals from the treatment processes. Missing from the discussion are the 50% of Vermont homes connected to septic systems and discharging to groundwater across the state. In addition, when septic tanks are cleaned the materials removed are brought to a wastewater treatment plant for processing and treatment.

PFAS research on health and environmental impacts are ongoing. GMWEA supports:

- Restriction of use or a ban on non-essential uses of PFAS containing products.
- Public policy based on sound science and risk assessment.
- Environmental policy and regulation that includes input from those that will be regulated, so that there is a clear assessment of the specific impacts on the people of Vermont.

Other New England water quality colleagues note that our ability to detect PFAS compounds at very low levels greatly exceeds our ability to understand the impact that these PFAS compounds may have at low levels. More research and data are needed to make informed public policy decisions and regulation. Data is currently being collected by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, and others, and should be strongly considered in policy making discussions.

Representatives of the Green Mountain Water Environment Association are available for an open dialogue regarding the public health and environmental benefits and impacts of any proposed water quality regulation related to PFAS.

Thank you for your consideration.