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PRESS STATEMENT

Delaware Riverkeeper Network Calls on States to Take Immediate Action in Response to USEPA Drinking Water Quality Health Advisories for PFOA and PFOS

Bristol, PA – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued a combined drinking water health advisory for Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) of .07 ppb (70 ppt). EPA stated that the agency’s “...assessment indicates that drinking water with individual or combined concentrations of PFOA and PFOS below 70 parts per trillion is not expected to result in adverse health effects over a lifetime of exposure.”

This is a considerably lower level than the short term provisional health advisory that has been in place since 2009; the short term advisory was used as the trigger for action by communities facing PFOA and PFOS contamination. Many people have been drinking water that was considered to be safe under the former short term advisory but is now not considered to be safe. Water suppliers and private well users need to make sure that water that contains this level is taken out of use immediately.

“EPA has substantially revised the drinking water health advisory for PFOA and PFOS from the short term advisory that was previously in place. Many more people are now drinking water that is not considered to be safe, exposing them to the risk of harmful health effects and the potential to develop serious diseases, making this a water crisis affecting millions of people across the nation. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware have amongst the highest PFC levels in the nation and locations in New York State have also been exposed to high levels, making this an especially urgent water quality emergency here. Delaware Riverkeeper Network calls on the Delaware River Watershed states to immediately supply safe drinking water to those affected and to move towards adopting chronic exposure-based safe drinking water standards for PFOA and PFOS that require the complete removal of these toxic compounds from our drinking water. Nature did not put these toxic compounds into our water; those responsible for this pollution must completely remove them. Action is needed to identify the sources, map the pollution, and remove

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PFCs from our environment through clean-up programs designed to address each unique contaminated location. The exposure of people, especially fetuses, infants and children, to these toxic compounds is intolerable and must be addressed on an emergency footing,” said Tracy Carluccio, Deputy Director, Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

DRN is concerned that if considered separately - when PFOA and PFOS are not both found – the .07 ppb is not protective enough of human health. Even when combined, the advisory level is not protective enough, considering all the scientific literature and human health studies available today. DRN advocates for PFOA and PFOS to be removed completely from our drinking water. This means treating water supplies so that PFOA and PFOS are not present at all. These toxic compounds do not occur naturally; they have been introduced to our drinking water and environment by dischargers and do not belong there.

The scientific literature and the data gleaned from health studies show that these perfluorinated compounds (PFC) are linked to serious disease, including cancers, and detrimental human health conditions.¹ Fetuses, infants, and children are the most vulnerable populations due to negative developmental impacts, making it imperative that these compounds are removed completely from the drinking water and environmental media that women of child bearing age, pregnant women, and children are exposed to.

Locations where PFCs have been found each have their own unique conditions. Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware have amongst the highest levels in the nation of some PFCs, and locations in New York State have also been exposed to high levels.² Portions of all of these states are located in the Delaware River Watershed, elevating this to a regional issue that requires the highest level of governmental response.

After providing clean water supplies as emergency relief, the states must investigate the specific conditions at each PFC-contaminated location to find out exactly the areas that are contaminated and who is responsible for the contamination so that the responsible parties can be made accountable to pay for the investigation and reclamation. These contaminated areas need to be mapped and comprehensive environmental and water studies done to accurately identify where these compounds are now and where they are moving towards and, finally, how to remove them from the environment. Health studies with human blood sampling must be done to assess how people who live and work in the contaminated regions have been affected.

The complete removal of these toxic compounds from our environment is the only effective means of addressing this contamination because PFCs are highly toxic at very tiny doses, long-lived, extremely durable and do not naturally break down in the environment, making it imperative that clean-up programs are set in motion as soon as possible.

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¹ <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/ucmr-3-occurrence-data.zip>

² <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/ucmr-3-occurrence-data.zip>