

Press Statement

November 10, 2020

Statement from Organizations Advocating for Action to Remove Toxic PFAS from New Jersey Drinking Water and the Environment

Representatives of organizations that have recently submitted letters to NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) speak out in support of NJDEP Natural Resource Damage Lawsuit against Solvay Specialty Polymers of West Deptford, NJ and Arkema, its predecessor.

Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Environment New Jersey, NJ Sierra Club and Clean Water Action expressed support for the historic legal action taken by New Jersey today against Solvay and Arkema for the widespread and continuing contamination of drinking water and the environment from their plastics manufacturing operations in West Deptford, Gloucester County, New Jersey on the Delaware River. The recovery of natural resource damages from the egregious pollution caused by Solvay and the adverse health effects that have been linked to the chemicals released is recognized by the groups as an essential and vitally important legal action by DEP and the state Attorney General. The cleanup that is being demanded is of great importance and starts the process through which the cost must be shouldered by the polluter – Solvay and Arkema.

The lawsuit will help in documenting the harm that has been done and the costs associated with it and making the companies accountable. The health effects of the public's exposure to the chemical pollution are still being investigated and many impacts are not known or revealed yet, putting the people of the region in precarious and unjust circumstances. The organizations submitted two letters over the summer to DEP with many questions prompt by two recent peer-reviewed articles that were released in scientific journals, authored by scientists from EPA and NJDEP. The articles were groundbreaking and provided forensic analysis that has not been done by anyone else, reflecting well on the ability and aptitude of the DEP and EPA researchers who conducted the study on which the reports were based. The groups received no response to their letters.

The reports revealed that the replacement chemical being used by Solvay today has been released into the environment and the water from the plant. In addition to other areas, the replacement compound contaminated the very area that was polluted by Solvay with PFNA and other PFAS until they replaced that toxic compound with the replacement around 2010. The groups are calling for NJDEP to fully investigate the occurrence of the replacement compound and to fully research the toxicity of the compound. People today may be drinking water that is contaminated but don't know it. The fact that these are the same people who were exposed to PFNA in the past is intolerably unjust and the groups are calling for immediate action by DEP to address the issue. The organizations are calling for the replacement chemical to be immediately removed from use by Solvay until a full investigation can be completed into its

occurrence and toxic properties. The articles that the letters were based on questioned the replacement chemicals toxicity; it could be that it is even more toxic than the original PFNA it was supposed to safely replace.

Exposed in 2013 by Delaware Riverkeeper Network as the source of contamination of the water supplies for municipalities surrounding Solvay, NJDEP began to address the water crisis as it emerged in the region around the facility in 2014 through various regulations and laws. In 2013, five municipalities around the Solvay facility had to shut down water wells contaminated with highly toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), particularly PFNA, a PFAS compound that is more toxic at lower doses than most other PFAS. Action by Paulsboro and other municipalities spurred the resumption of the state's Drinking Water Quality Institute that had been shut down by the Christie Administration in 2010 and eventually led to the adoption of safe drinking water standards by New Jersey for PFNA, PFOA, and PFAS, as discussed in the lawsuit filed today. New Jersey was the first state to adopt any drinking water standard for any PFAS in the nation.

The groups will continue to advocate for Solvay to stop using the replacement chemical and for NJDEP to take action outside of today's lawsuit to publicly share with New Jerseyans vital information about the safety of their drinking water and their potential exposure to toxic compounds currently being emitted by Solvay to the air, ground, and water.

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