



EPA reiterates call to address PFAS as chemical class

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EPA Region I Administrator Alexandra Dunn is reiterating the agency's interest in treating perfluorinated chemicals found in drinking water systems across the country as a "class of compounds," rather than individually, even as officials continue to address the substances individually.

Dunn June 25 told the Seacoast Media Group's editorial board that if EPA were to address each of the more than 3,000 per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) individually, "we could put ourselves on a treadmill of never really catching up with the science," according to [Fosters.com](#), a service of seacoastonline.com.

"This is where the conversation may come around to regulating these chemicals as a class of compounds," the article says. But she told the media group there still could be "different degrees of toxicity for each chemical," the article says.

She also referenced Massachusetts' recent approach, the article says. The state environment department's Office of Research and Standards earlier this month made final recommendations to expand the application of EPA's drinking water health advisory levels, which were developed for two PFAS. The state now plans to apply the levels to five PFAS, combined.

Her comments on the possibility of regulating PFAS as a class echo remarks made by Peter Grevatt, the agency's top policy official on PFAS, when he spoke May 22 at a national PFAS summit sponsored by EPA in Washington, D.C.

As *Inside EPA's* Suzanne Yohannan [recently reported](#), Grevatt acknowledged that given the thousands of chemicals in the class, they will eventually have to be considered in groups rather than individually, an approach that the agency has previously struggled to advance. The progress made on individual compounds "doesn't really even begin to tell us the whole story that we need to understand," he said.

In his May 22 remarks, Grevatt referenced much of the work being done on development of toxicity data. But he said "at least as important" is a focus "to begin to look at these compounds in groups, and understand that when you're dealing with thousands of them, there's no way to handle one at a time."

The remarks from EPA officials appear to respond to citizen groups' demands that regulators address the entire PFAS class of compounds, rather than its current approach of responding to individual substances.

Dunn's June 25 remarks came in the midst of the agency's first PFAS community engagement meeting -- in this case hosted by Region 1 in Exeter, NH -- where EPA sought communities' comments on how to address PFAS contamination that is affecting a multitude of drinking water systems across the country.

"It is critical EPA hears directly from the public as we work to manage the issue of PFAS in communities," Dunn told the meeting June 25, according to an EPA press release. She said the feedback from communities will aid EPA in developing a PFAS management plan, to be released later this year.

The New England meeting included presentations from citizen groups concerned about PFAS contamination, along with a panel of state regulators speaking about their regulatory efforts, and panels on lessons learned about identifying PFAS in a community and identifying solutions, and on communicating about PFAS.

In addition, the acting director of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) toxicology division, William Cibulas, Jr., also made remarks, distinguishing his agency's recent release of minimum risk levels

as differing from regulatory action levels, according to [Politico](#).

The remarks echo [documents released last week](#) when ATSDR issued its draft toxicological profile for PFAS, including MRLs more conservative than EPA's. The agency cautioned the public not to read its levels as cleanup or health effects standards.

In his remarks, Cibulas said of the MRLs, "These are not regulatory actions. They're not necessarily thresholds," according to *Politico*.

Instead, he added, communities with contamination above the report's minimum should get a closer look to see what other contaminants they may be exposed to and what industries are nearby.

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