

Tony Evers
Governor

Andrea Palm
Secretary



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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March 12, 2019

Laura Olah
Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger
E12629 Weigand's Bay South
Merrimac, WI 53561

Dear Ms. Olah:

Thank you for your February 26, 2019 email to Secretary Andrea Palm with questions about per- and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) in light of recent water testing conducted by the Madison Water Utility. Secretary Palm has asked that I respond on her behalf and I welcome the opportunity to do so. PFAS contamination of groundwater is a concern nationally, and federal agencies and many states are confronting the complex technical issues that these environmental contaminants pose.

There are no state groundwater or drinking water standards for any PFAS compounds as individual species or in combination. We are currently assisting the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the development of groundwater standards for 27 substances, which includes two PFAS compounds (PFOA and PFOS). In the absence of a state or federal groundwater or drinking water standard for PFOA and PFOS, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Lifetime Health Advisory Level, or LHA (70 nanograms per liter), is available as a decision-making tool. Although this advisory number does not have the power of law, it can be used in a similar manner to determine drinking water safety. The EPA LHA is based on the same process of developing a safe reference dose that is used in establishing a drinking water or groundwater standard. With regard to Madison municipal Well 15, the combined PFOA and PFOS concentration detected most recently in the well water was 12 nanograms per liter. This concentration is below the EPA LHA and any drinking water advisory levels used by other states for these compounds.

You asked about the safety of the water in Well 15 for public use given the detection of PFOA, PFOS, and eight other PFAS compounds in the water. While the EPA LHA covers PFOA and PFOS, health-based guidelines are not currently available for the other PFAS found in Well 15. We have noted that these eight PFAS are part of the set of twenty-six PFAS compounds that the DNR, in response to a petition, added to its list of substances to be considered for future rounds of the State's groundwater standards development process.

As is the case with other emerging contaminants in groundwater or drinking water, the Department of Health Services works closely with the DNR as they have jurisdiction over the regulation of public water systems and groundwater quality. Although we are currently focused on DNR's most recent request for groundwater standards, we will also continue to work with DNR to identify and address health risk assessment needs to support risk management decisions

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for situations involving environmental contamination, such as PFAS in groundwater. When these risk assessments involve multiple similar chemicals like PFAS, we will use the available scientific information to determine if developing a standard for combinations of these chemicals is toxicologically appropriate.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Roy Irving". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Roy Irving, Ph.D.

Chief, Hazard Assessment Section

Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health