MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
APRIL 25 – 27, 2023

MANAGING PFAS

ISSUE: Two of the most common Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA), in high concentrations have been linked to increased cancer and birth defect risks. Due to the health risks associated with PFOS and PFOA, Congress and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) is acting with urgency to try to regulate the entire family of over 4,700 PFAS chemicals, in many cases before having conclusive science regarding the health impacts of each of these chemicals.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group (MMG) has several requests related to PFAS in drinking water:

1. Support the science-based regulatory process established under the Safe Drinking Water Act as the best approach for the USEPA's consideration and development of drinking water regulations to address any contaminant or family of contaminants, including PFAS.
2. Oppose legislation mandating a federal maximum contaminant level that is not grounded in the scientific process, or any legislation mandating an arbitrary deadline for promulgating a maximum contaminant level for drinking water.
3. Support efforts to ensure drinking water and wastewater facilities are not liable for PFAS and instead hold polluters of PFAS responsible for remediating PFAS.
4. Support investment in further development of scientifically validated analytical methods to measure various PFAS more reliably and accurately in drinking water, wastewater, and solids.
5. Urge the Department of Defense (DOD) to be responsive in mitigating PFAS contamination of public water supplies specifically linked to DOD activities, which includes funding for:
    a. Replacement water for the water supplies that have been taken out of service due to concerns over detections above the federal health advisory and state notification levels, and
    b. The cost of water treatment infrastructure, operations, and maintenance necessary to mitigate the PFAS contamination and restore the water to drinking water quality.

BACKGROUND: PFAS are a family of over 4,700 man-made chemicals manufactured and utilized around the globe since the 1940s. PFAS are ubiquitous in our homes and the environment, and are used in common household, commercial and industrial uses such as firefighting activities, stain and water repellents, food packaging, cosmetics and non-stick cookware, to name a few uses. The chemicals are persistent in the environment and in the human body – meaning they do not break down, and therefore accumulate over time.

Public concern regarding this class of chemicals emerged quickly, more quickly than the science used to understand the full health effects of these chemicals. The public's reaction caused Congress to act by legislating drinking water quality standards rather than allowing USEPA to follow the methodical, scientific process that thoroughly evaluates human health impacts before setting standards. While the concern among the public and Congress has focused on drinking water quality, there are far greater concentrations of PFAS in food and food wrappers, clothing, cookware, cosmetics, and the dust in homes than in drinking water. Rather than narrowly focusing on PFAS in water supply, the goal should be to view the issue holistically and determine the most effective steps needed to reduce human exposure and act with the broad context of protecting human health. Also, the liability needs to rest with the PFAS manufacturers and users, not the passive "receivers" of PFAS such as water and wastewater agencies.

PFAS is a broad and complex group of chemicals that deserve a thorough, peer-reviewed scientific evaluation in advance of establishing regulations. Instead of legislating water quality standards, Congress should direct the USEPA to consider individual PFAS, and focus on those that are the most persistent and pose the greatest human health risk. Congress can also assist by directing funding to water and wastewater agencies for treatment, so the cost of cleanup is not borne by water and wastewater customers.