

GRAFTON WATER DISTRICT
PRESS RELEASE
April 11, 2024

Federal Environmental Protection Agency announces New Federal Drinking Water Standards for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances

The Grafton Water District, Board of Water Commissioners, has been closely monitoring a family of chemicals called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have been detected in some public water supplies in Massachusetts and across the nation. PFAS were widely used in manufacturing, many consumer products, and firefighting foam. When discarded, PFAS has leached from these products and into water sources. The presence of PFAS is the result of pollution and not any action taken by our water system.

Massachusetts passed a drinking water standard for PFAS in October of 2020 which applies only to Public Water Systems (PWS) in Massachusetts. On Wednesday, April 10th, 2024, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that they have finalized a new federal National Primary Drinking Water Rule for PFAS, which will apply to PWS across the country. EPA's Maximum Contaminant Levels for PFAS compounds, PFOA and PFOS, at 4 parts per trillion (ppt), and PFNA, PFHxS, and GenX Chemicals at 10 ppt, are quite a bit lower than the Massachusetts Maximum Contaminant Level of 20 ppt for the sum of six PFAS compounds, which is referred to as PFAS6. **The Grafton Water District has been monitoring for PFAS since the Massachusetts standard took effect and our results have been below the 20 Parts Per Trillion standard.**

Now that a federal standard has been adopted, PWS across the country will be grappling with how to come into compliance with the new standards. What does this mean for our water system?

1. Anticipating the EPA new standard, the District has been proactive and has already begun the process to build three new treatment facilities that will bring us into compliance with the new EPA standard.
2. Funding for two of the treatment facilities in the amount of \$23 million dollars has been granted by the State Drinking Water Trust. This is a low or no interest loan that requires the District to pay it back to the Trust over 20-30 years.
3. Pilot studies to determine the best method of treatment have been awarded to Tighe and Bond Engineering and will start soon.
4. Once the treatment technology is approved for the treatment of the PFAS compounds, design and bidding for construction will happen.
5. Construction of 2 of the treatment facilities should start in the summer of 2025 and be completed within 2 years.
6. The District is working on acquiring a parcel of land on Powerline Drive to provide a location for the Trinity Avenue well treatment facility. Wright-Pierce Engineering

has been hired to facilitate the application required for the Chapter 97 land acquisition.

7. The Trinity Avenue treatment facility will be the last to be built, as it requires more “hurdles” as acquiring use of land from the Town of Grafton for the placement of the facility. Also, this water supply has a water quality issue from natural occurring iron and manganese and will require more testing and design. The cost of this treatment facility is likely to top 15-20 million dollars.
8. The Board of Water Commissioners has already taken steps to develop a rate structure that will pay for the approximately \$35-40 million financial burden that this will have on the District’s financial position. A rate increase of 10% took effect on April 1, 2024 and it is anticipated that service charges and future rate increases will be required over the next few years.
9. In addition to an extremely high debt that will be incurred as a result of these three new treatment plants, the future operations and maintenance of these facilities is going to be a huge burden financially and on staffing requirements.

The District is dedicated to providing safe and reliable water to all of our customers and to be in compliance with State and Federal regulations and mandates. Any questions regarding the water system can be directed to Dave Erickson, Water Superintendent at the District office 1-508-839-2302.