COLORADO TEST RESULTS REVEAL CONTAMINATED DRINKING WATER

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Last week, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) released extensive water testing data which demonstrate widespread occurrence of toxic "forever chemicals" known as PFAS (per- and poly-fluorinate alkyl substances) in Colorado waters. The state collected hundreds of samples from drinking water sources, fire station wells, and rivers and streams. In a press release announcing sampling results, CDPHE noted that few samples exceeded the non-enforceable EPA health advisory guideline of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for two of the most common PFAS compounds.

However, the EPA's advisory level of 70 ppt is dangerously out of date. A coalition of the impacted public and environmentalists are concerned about CDPHE's reliance on the EPA's health advisory level as a benchmark given significant evidence that it is not sufficiently protective of human health, and questions how the state plans to inform residents and follow up on elevated PFAS measurements found in more than a dozen newly discovered locations. Ten drinking water systems had PFAS concentrations that would exceed more protective limits set in other states, including Frisco, South Evergreen, Keensburg, as well as some schools and mobile home parks. Also, every river, stream, and drinking water reservoir sampled had detectable levels of PFAS.

There are currently no state or federal limits on the amount of PFAS in drinking water. These "forever chemicals" don't break down in the environment and can accumulate in our bodies. PFAS are highly toxic to human health, and even low levels of exposure can increase risks of immune system problems, kidney and liver damage, and cancer. Children are more affected by the harmful impacts of these chemicals. Several states have set much stronger standards for PFAS in drinking water, including Vermont, which has set a maximum limit of just 20 ppt for the total of 5 or 6 PFAS chemicals. Independent scientists suggest that a truely "safe" level of PFAS in water is less than 1 ppt.

Our analysis of CDPHE data found 10 water systems where treated drinking water contained more PFAS than allowed in Vermont, the state with the most protective water limits. Each of these systems have concentrations of PFOS or PFOA that would require mandatory notification for customers in the state of California. Our analysis of the monitoring data also revealed another 17 samples of untreated drinking water sources that exceed 20 ppt for 6 PFAS chemicals. These drinking water sources may be treated and/or blended with other sources before they reach customers, but conventional drinking water treatment does not remove these chemicals to the levels recommended by health experts.

"The prevalence of PFAS in drinking water sources across our state underscores the urgency to hold polluters accountable to prevent these chemicals from getting into our water and pay for clean up," **said Emily Gedeon, Acting Chapter Director of the Colorado Sierra Club**. "Towns like Brighton, Lochbuie, Frisco, Sterling, Thornton, Frasier, South Evergreen, and Indian Hills should work with CDPHE to identify the sources of PFAS, and ensure the polluters pay the full cost of water treatment or replacement sources."

Unfortunately communities living downstream from Peterson Air Force Base know too much about the toll of PFAS exposure. More than 70,000 people in the Fountain Valley area of El Paso County drank PFAS-contaminated water for decades. Water systems in the area have installed expensive treatment systems to remove PFAS, mostly but not fully paid for by the US Air Force. "The long-term costs of removing PFAS from water in Fountain, Security, Widefield, and Stratmoor are astronomical,**"** said **Liz Rosenbaum of the Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition.** "We can't afford to squander Colorado's precious water supplies, nor expose our communities to these harmful compounds."

The Colorado legislature recently passed two bills that would allocate money for the state to address PFAS contamination and clarify the state's authorities to test for and regulate water contamination. "There are two new bills that give the state clear authority to monitor and control the toxic brew of PFAS. We urge Governor Polis to act quickly and start the process of setting legal limits to protect the health of our most vulnerable communities" said **Ean Tafoya, of GreenLatinos.**

"We can not afford to ignore the work that is going on in other states. PFAS in drinking water should sound alarm bells for parents and for all municipalities," stated **PEER Rocky Mountain Director, Chandra Rosenthal,** noting that this is also potentially a huge liability concern for polluters. "For the health of our children and communities, we urgently need to take a hard look at Colorado's PFAS policy."

"CDPHE's water testing results highlight the need for the state to do more to protect our communities from PFAS," said **Jennifer Peters, Water Programs Director at Clean Water Action.** "Polluters should not be allowed to dump these chemicals into our water, and I urge the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission to pass a strong narrative water policy to rein in discharges of PFAS into Colorado waters."

"Coloradans won't be fully protected until the state sets strong, enforceable federal drinking water standards for PFAS," said **Kristine Oblock of Environment Colorado**.

"Instead of comparing water samples against the EPA's outdated PFAS health advisory, Colorado should follow the lead of other states and adopt stronger protections given the significant toxicity of these man-made 'forever chemicals' even at low levels of exposure," said **Rebecca Curry of Earthjustice**.

Sierra Club, Conservation Colorado, Clean Water Action, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Colorado Latino Forum, Earthjustice, the Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition and GreenLatinos submitted detailed comments to the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission on May 8th, urging the Commissioners to strengthen and adopt the CDPHE proposed narrative water quality policy for PFAS. The WQCC will vote on the policy on July 13-14, 2020. Read the comments here.

SUPPORTIVE TABLES AND DATA

CDPHE's data reveals that ten *drinking water systems* have PFAS concentrations in treated drinking water that would exceed the 20 ppt limits set in Vermont and proposed in Massachusetts. Each of these sites also exceeds a mandatory notification level set by the state of California for PFOS and/or PFOA.

CDPHE-tested treated drinking water samples	Max. total of 6 PFAS chemicals (ppt)
Frisco	59
Johnson Auto Plaza, Brighton	44
Guffey Charter School, Guffey	32
Christ Haven Lodge, Florissant	28
Forest Hills Metropolitan District and Riva Chase, Golden	26
South Evergreen	23
Arapahoe County Water and Waste Water Authority	23
San Lazaro Manufactured Housing Community, Boulder	22
Keenesburg	22
Deer Creek Elementary School, Bailey	21

In addition to these locations, CDPHE identified *specific wells or drinking water sources* with notable PFAS levels. These drinking water sources may not always be used year-round, or may be treated or blended with uncontaminated water before reaching people's taps. Currently, there are no legal requirements for CDPHE and water systems to investigate and manage these contaminated drinking water sources.

CDPHE-tested specific wells or pre-treated source water samples	Max. measurement of 6 PFAS chemicals (ppt)	Notes
Lochbuie	142	Sample from well 2, which had higher levels than well 1 or water treatment entry point
Brighton	116	Sample from well 18, higher levels than some other wells and the entry point
Yellow Barn Limited, Conifer	77	Sample from well 2 results, which had higher levels than well 1 or water treatment entry point
Indian Hills Water District	53	Sample from well 5
Sterling	41	Sample from Well 15, but 6 wells had elevated PFAS levels
Rocky Ford	31	Sample from ditch intake
Thornton	30	Samples collected at treatment plant entry
Keenesburg	27	Samples collected at treatment plant entry
Fraser	26	Sample from well 2
La Junta	24	Sample from well 11
Todd Creek Village Municipal District	23	Sample from treatment plant entry
Avondale Water Service District	22	Sample from treatment plant entry
Highland Lakes Water District	22	Sample from storage tank
Valley Maint Corp No 1, Divide	22	Sample from well 3
Farmers Korner Mobile Home Park, Breckenridge	21	Sample from well 1
Platte Canyon High & Fitzsimmons Middle School, Bailey	47	Sample from well 1
Deer Creek Elementary School, Bailey	35	Sample from treatment plant entry

In 2016, the EPA set a non-enforceable 70 ppt health advisory for just two of the thousands of PFAS chemicals that are found in the environment or used in commerce. Since, several states have proposed or finalized more protective standards for PFAS in drinking water.

Examples of states with more protective water standards for <u>combined</u> groups of PFAS chemicals:

State	Type	PFAS Group	limit
VT[1]	Ground and drinking water	*Sum* of PFOA, PFOS, PFNA, PFHxS and PFHpA	20 ppt
MA[2]	Groundwater (proposed)	*Sum* of PFOS, PFOA, PFNA, PFHxS and PFHpA	20 ppt

Examples of state with more protective water standards for <u>individual</u> PFAS chemicals:

State	Type	Individual PFAS	limit
NJ[3]	Ground and drinking water	PFOA	14 ppt
		PFOS	13 ppt
		PFNA	13 ppt
NH[4]	Ground and drinking water	PFOA	12 ppt
		PFOS	15 ppt
		PFNA	11 ppt
		PFHxS	18 ppt

[1] Vermont Department of Health, *PFAS in Public Drinking Water*, available at: https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ENV_DW_PFAS.pdf.
[2] *PFAS-related Revisions to the Massachusetts Contingency Plan* (April 24, 2019), available at: https://www.mass.gov/doc/pfas-related-proposed-mcp-revisions-2019/download.
[3] *Ground Water Quality Standards and Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctanesulfonic Acid (PFOS)* available at: https://www.nj.gov/dep/rules/proposals/20190401a.pdf (The proposal setting MCLs for PFOA and PFOS was submitted for finalization on Mar. 31, 2020. The MCL for PFNA was set in Sept. 2018)
[4] *NHDES Submits Final Rulemaking Proposal for PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS and PFNA*, available at: https://www4.des.state.nh.us/nh-pfas-investigation/?p=1044.