

# Rural Water Policy Advisory [1/7/2019]

**NPR Implies Shutdown Threatens Drinking Water Safety:** *“Limits EPA’s capacity for activities including inspecting water that people drink and regulating pesticides (NPR).”*

**Reminder About Who Keeps the Public’s Water Safe:** *The public is the guarantor of the safety of their public drinking water through their local governments. The public owns and operates their public drinking water supply and is responsible for its safety. Local water supplies are operated and governed by people whose families drink the water every day and people who are locally elected by their community. Every day, someone who works for your local community is making second-to-second decisions about adding essential purifying chemicals, killing pathogens, watching for changes in complex water delivery systems, and keeping the public drinking water safe because that is the nature and purpose of local government.*

**Democrats Take Over House of Representatives and Take Aim at Trump Environmental Rule and Rollbacks:** EPA is planning to finalize many of its major rules in March and April, just as Democrats plan oversight hearings. The new House environmental committee chair, Frank Pallone (NJ), recently said, “We are going to move aggressively on climate change. It will be one of the first things out of the box.” Pallone has slammed President Trump for “denying climate change” and planning to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

**PBS NewsHour Turns to Water Issues:** On Tuesday, PBS NewsHour reported that “water crisis may make Gaza Strip uninhabitable by 2020;” 97 percent of freshwater is unsuitable for human consumption in the Gaza Strip, and raw sewage pours into the Mediterranean Sea (PBS NewsHour). Friday’s program featured New Mexico ranchers’ battle over water rights and endangered species’ protection that ranchers say violates their water rights they were afforded generations ago. Rancher explains, *“My rights come long before New Mexico became a state, long before there was a U.S. Forest Service.”* Rural ranchers fear their interests are losing out to those who live in urban areas and favor environmental protections (PBS Newshour).

**New Hampshire Proposes Drinking Water Limits On 4 PFAS Chemicals:** The state proposed drinking water limit for PFOS is 38 ppt. For PFOA and for the two chemicals in combination, the proposed limit remains at 70 ppt. The other two chemicals included in the proposals are currently unregulated in nearly all states. Regulators are seeking a limit of 23 ppt on PFNA, and 85 ppt on PFHxS (NH Public Radio). Earlier in December, the New York State Drinking Water Quality Council recommended that the state adopt enforceable drinking water standards of 10 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS (the strictest limit yet for the chemicals). On December 7, an advisory panel in Michigan suggested the EPA advisory levels of 70 ppt may not be protective enough. New Jersey recently adopted a drinking water standard of 13 ppt for PFNA and is slated to adopt standards as low as 13 ppt for PFOS and 14 ppt for PFOA. EPA plans to release a PFAS management plan in early 2019.

**New Mexico Dairy Farmer Contaminated by Local Air Force Base PFOA:** *“I don’t know what it’s going to do to my health, and my kids’ health, what the future looks like, I have no idea. I’m here in desperation; I don’t know what to do. I’m a recipient of their poison in my water. They ruined my business and they’re going to ruin my life (NM News).”*

**Polluted Wisconsin Wells Spark Push for Tougher Rules:** More than a third of private wells tested in southwestern Wisconsin had unsafe levels of nitrate and coliform bacteria. The incoming governor’s administration is expected to push for more groundwater protections that could result in new requirements for farmers to keep animal waste from washing into water. The state’s January 2nd study found unsafe levels of nitrates and coliform bacteria, including E. coli, in 42 percent of 301 private wells sampled in November 2018 in three counties (Wisconsin Public Radio).

**Flint Must Face Civil Rights Suit Over Water Contamination:** Flint residents may proceed with federal civil rights claims against the city and several of its top officials stemming from the 2014 water contamination crisis, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruled. According to the plaintiffs’ lawyer, federal civil rights law allows a party to bring a private cause of action against anyone who, *“under color of state law, deprives a person of rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution or conferred by federal statute.”*

**EPA Extension to Lead Testing Grants Deadline:** The new deadline is February 11th for submission of the letters of intent to participate in EPA’s grants for lead testing in schools and childcare facilities (EPA).

