

Rural Water Issues Advisory [9/30/2019]

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#) to view on WaterPro Online or [here](#) for PDF version.

Senator Barrasso (WY) Stands Up for Small and Rural Communities Against House Effort to Extend Superfund Liability to You for PFAS: “Worried” House Democrats are stepping up their push for defense bill conferees to preserve their amendment requiring EPA to list PFAS as “hazardous substances” under the Superfund law in the face of opposition from Senate Environment Committee Chairman John Barrasso (WY). During a September 24 press conference with environmental groups, three lawmakers championed the House bill’s various PFAS provisions. In particular, they sought to make the case for conferees, who are currently working on the final bill, to include the House measure that requires EPA within one year to designate all PFAS as hazardous substances under Superfund. An environmentalist says that on PFAS, the sticking point in conference appears to be the Superfund amendment, with Barrasso “really putting up a roadblock” and unwilling to negotiate on the matter ([Inside EPA](#)). Thank you, Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems.

Senate Appropriations Committee Passes EPA Funding Bill Including \$13 Million for New Rural Water Wastewater Technical Assistance Initiative:

- Senate Appropriations Announcement ([Senate](#))
- New Rural Water Initiative ([NRWA](#)).
- YouTube Flashback: Dennis Sternberg testifies before U.S. Senate ([YouTube](#)).

EPA Water Official Says Water Operators are Heroes: At a September 12 conference in Utah, Dave Ross, chief of the EPA Office of Water, called water operators the “*silent everyday unsung heroes... who are on the front lines for protecting public health... skilled workers who provide clean drinking water at the tap and treat wastewater often go unnoticed.*” He added, “*These are great people who care passionately about their jobs* ([Utah news](#)).”

Former Kansas Water Operator Pleads Guilty to Making False Report: Arthur Wolf, a former operator in Garden Plain (KS), pleaded guilty last week to falsifying a report on the quality of the city’s drinking water to the state health agency by certifying bacteriological samples taken at the water treatment plant as samples taken at other locations. He faces a penalty of up to a year in federal prison and a fine up to \$100,000. News reports do not include any mention of potential risk to the public from the falsified samples ([Salina Post](#)).

Manganese Raises Concern with Many State Agencies: Nebraska to require testing in all 700 water systems ([NBC news](#)); Pennsylvania to restrict wastewater levels due to drinking water concerns of harm to children’s developing brains ([local news](#)); the EPA’s [health advisory level](#) for manganese is 300 ppb for infants and 1,000 ppb for the general public; as of July 1, Iowa’s water agency started collecting water samples from each of the state’s roughly 1,840 public water supply systems ([public radio](#)); and Canada has set a Maximum Acceptable Concentration of 12 ppb and an Aesthetic Objective of 200 ppb for manganese in drinking water ([Canada](#)).

Klamath River Now Has the Legal Rights of a Person: A Yurok Tribe resolution allows cases to be brought on behalf of the river as a person in tribal court ([NPR](#)).

EPA Threatens California’s Primacy for SDWA and CWA: In a September 26 letter to California’s Governor, the EPA Administrator wrote, “*Based on data and reports, the EPA is concerned that*

California's implementation of federal environmental laws is failing to meet its obligations required under delegated federal programs." EPA outlines its issues with California including CSO and stormwater into San Francisco Bay, numerous NPDES exceedances, SDWA health-based violations, etc. EPA's letter repeatedly cites San Francisco, Los Angeles and California generally for homelessness problems leading to human feces on city streets and sidewalks, following President Trump's September 18 assertion that EPA would soon cite San Francisco for allowing its homeless population to pollute the ocean. The EPA Administrator has acknowledged that he has spoken with the President about the issue ([WashPost](#)).

EPA Accepting Applications for New Small Community Water Infrastructure Funding Program that Includes Household Water Testing for PFAS, Replacing Lead Service Lines, etc: EPA to hold webinar on October 9 ([EPA](#)).

North Carolina Legislature Passed a Bill to Help Small Towns Close to "Dissolving" Due to Cost of Water Systems: Last week, state lawmakers have approved legislation to help small, rural towns struggling to maintain their aging water and sewer systems. Bill supporters said about 15 to 20 towns statewide are close to dissolving because they cannot pay their bills or afford to pay mounting bills for crumbling utilities. In the town of Eureka, which has fewer than 200 residents, bills can skyrocket to \$28,000 when the system is overwhelmed by floodwater the town can afford a bill of just \$7,000 a month). Local official said not rescuing the struggling towns isn't an option, noting the public health implications of dissolving the towns and leaving residents without water or sewer service ([local news](#)).

National Rural Water Association

Contact: Mike Keegan, Policy Analyst <keegan@ruralwater.org>

The National Rural Water Association is the country's largest public drinking water and sanitation supply organization with over 30,000 members. Safe drinking water and sanitation are generally recognized as the most essential public health, public welfare, and civic necessities.

Reprint Policy: *this report, including any portion, may be distributed publicly without permission or citation.*