

Rural Water Issues Advisory [3/25/2019]

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EPA's New Administrator Says Drinking Water is Top Issue: On Wednesday, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler participated in his first network interview since his confirmation last month. Drinking water issues were the main focus of his comments. Wheeler spoke about the agency's new Lead and Copper Rule, the national PFAS in drinking water agenda, how the Green New Deal would harm public water access, and his agenda for global safe drinking water challenges. See the full CBS News interview ([CBS](#)).

Congressional Attention to Water Rate Affordability Raises Concerns About Federal Role In Local Water Rates: Key House of Representatives Democrats are exploring the possibility of creating an EPA program for low-income households to help them pay for water and sewer services, a plan that previously has won bipartisan support in the Senate though House Republicans are questioning whether the plan would give the agency a role in setting local rates. The topic was raised at a House Clean Water Act [hearing on March 7th](#). Some Republicans on the panel questioned whether the federal government should be involved in setting water rates including Representative Westerman (AR) who asked the witnesses, "Should the federal government set rates?" Witness Jill Heaps, Vermont Law School, replied that rates have traditionally been set locally but the federal government can provide financial or other incentives for local utilities to develop good policies to assist low-income households.

EPA Requests Funding for Senator Wicker's New Clean Water Technical Assistance Act Initiative: For the first time, the EPA has requested funding for [rural water sponsored technical assistance](#). Page 542 of the recently released details of EPA's budget includes: "\$7,500,000 shall be for grants under section 104(b)(8) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. § 1254(b)(8)), as added by section 4103 of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-270)."

Senators Concerned that U.S. Defense Department Pressuring Federal Government to "Weaken" PFAS Levels ([NYTimes](#)).

NPR Features Plattsmouth, Nebraska, Water Operator: "The generator is completely under. Our switch gears, fuse boxes, chemical feed pumps, air blowers... Fixing those problems will cost a lot. The city council's authorized emergency borrowing of up to \$15 million - equal to last year's budget - so repairs can begin. But Portis says that's a heavy burden ([NPR](#))."

Flooded Iowa Communities Without Drinking Water: The Iowa National Guard and private companies are hauling fresh water and bottled water into Hamburg and Glenwood after Midwest floods caused drinking water treatment plants to shut down ([news](#)).

Flooding Impairs Drinking Water for Kansas City: Record flooding has impaired treatment of drinking supply, raising health risks for infants, the elderly and others with compromised immune systems. The water utility, which serves 170,000 mostly residential customers with water drawn from the river, said it had failed to meet "enhanced treatment technique standards" including turbidity ([NBC news](#)).

Midwest Flood Risk May Persist for Months: As temperatures start to warm, snowmelt in the Dakotas and Minnesota will escalate, sending more water down the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries ([AP News](#)).

Iowa Town Gets Do Not Drink Order from High Manganese Levels: The 200 residents of Bagley have been warned not to drink tap water after tests showed 1.4 milligrams per liter of manganese in their drinking water. The state found out about the manganese levels after a resident raised concerns to news media ([local news](#)).

Judge Dismisses Flint Water Hero (Dr. Marc Edwards) Lawsuit Against Activists Who Criticized Him: The suit claimed defendants Melissa Mays, Yanna Lambrinidou and Paul Schwartz entered into an ongoing civil conspiracy to attack and damage Edwards' professional reputation. Edwards said, "Maybe it is my fate to be the last person to adapt to a post-truth world ([Public Radio](#))."

Senator Booker Campaign Video: America has a drinking water "crisis." "Flint Michigan is not an anomaly... easier for children to find unleaded gasoline than unleaded water..."([Cory 2020](#))."

Senate to Hold PFAS This Week: The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) will hold a hearing entitled, "Examining the federal response to the risks associated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)." Witnesses are likely to be David Ross (EPA), Maureen Sullivan (DoD), Pat Breyse (ATSDR) and Linda Birnbaum (NIH). NRWA Regulatory Committee Chairman is planning on attending. The hearing will be webcast live ([EPW Committee](#)).

[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.

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