

# **Title: Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Position Statement**

**Date of Approval: April 7, 2020**

**Expiration Date: April 7, 2025**

## **BACKGROUND**

Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), or “highly fluorinated chemicals”, are a large group of synthetic chemicals that includes Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA), Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS), Perfluorobutanoic Acid (PFBS), and thousands of other compounds. PFAS are of concern because evolving information about their potential impacts to human health and/or the environment has prompted further evaluation and investigation. In addition, fate, transport and impact, as well as treatment or mitigation are not fully understood. These substances, which are resistant to heat, oils, stains, grease, and water—properties which contribute to their persistence in the environment—were first used commercially in the 1940s in products that include stain- and water-repellent fabrics, nonstick products (e.g., Teflon), polishes, waxes, paints, cleaning products, and fire-fighting foams. In the 2000s, in the United States, PFOS and PFOA were phased out, and other governments started phasing out their use as well due to environmental and health concerns. As with other so-called Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CECs), treatment technologies and analytical methods for the detection of some varieties of PFAS are currently limited. There are no U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved certified methods for detection of PFAS in wastewater or biosolids. Finally, gaps in knowledge about these substances and concern about their presence in drinking water have led regulatory agencies to respond with a patchwork of standards.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH WEF’S MISSION AND CRITICAL OBJECTIVES**

Since 1928, it has been the mission of WEF and its members to protect public health and the environment. This position statement is consistent with our mission and the following critical objectives:

[3c](#): Educate decision makers and elected officials on the infrastructure funding gap and other water policy issues, and engage potential stakeholders

[4b](#): Drive innovation and research in the water sector

## **POSITION**

WEF is concerned about the presence of PFAS in our communities. Protecting public health and the environment has always been, and continues to be, the daily mission of water professionals. However, since water utilities and biosolids reuse programs are receivers and *not* generators or users of PFAS, they should not be penalized by legislation or regulation. WEF supports:

- Development of timely health and environmental assessments for PFAS;
- Development of national science and risk-based standards for PFAS;
- Development of better management practices for PFAS through source control;
- Continued regulation of biosolids under the Clean Water Act in the United States or similar regulations in other countries;
- Increased funding for research and development of the appropriate technologies, processes, approaches, and cost-benefit tools to respond to concerns about PFAS in wastewater and biosolids;

- Development of approved and certified analytical methods for the analysis of PFAS in water, wastewater, and biosolids that provides for consistent and equitable evaluation;
- Ensuring that legislation or regulations to address PFAS that impact utilities address implementation costs and provide adequate funding for municipalities to address PFAS.