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EPA's PFAS Action Plan

Table 1. Key PFAS-Related Challenges and Planned and Ongoing EPA Actions

Stakeholder Concern or Challenge	EPA Action(s)	Purpose	Anticipated Timeframe
EPA Priority Actions			
Regulatory uncertainty (e.g., MCL) for PFAS in drinking water	Propose a national drinking water regulatory determination for PFOA and PFOS, highlighting key information gathered by the Agency and our partners to date and additional data needs.	Provide the opportunity for the public to comment on and contribute to the information the EPA may consider related to the regulation of PFAS in drinking water.	2019
Hold responsible parties accountable for PFAS releases into the environment	The EPA has initiated the regulatory development process for listing PFOA and PFOS as CERCLA hazardous substances.	Listing PFOA and PFOS as CERCLA hazardous substances would provide additional authority to address PFOA and PFOS, including the ability to require responsible parties to carry out and/or pay for response actions.	Ongoing Started 2018
Provide guidance for groundwater cleanup actions at contaminated sites	Develop interim cleanup recommendations to address groundwater contaminated with PFOA and PFOS.	Recommendations will provide a starting point for making site-specific cleanup decisions. These recommendations may be considered for federal facility and private-party cleanup under CERCLA, RCRA corrective action programs, and state cleanup programs, where appropriate.	Anticipated 2019
Increase understanding about potential human health impacts of additional PFAS	Finalize draft toxicity assessments for GenX chemicals and PFBS; develop additional PFAS toxicity values for PFBA, PFHxA, PFHxS, PFNA, and PFDA.	Finalized toxicity assessments can be combined with specific exposure information by government and private entities to help characterize potential public health risks associated with exposure to these chemicals.	Final toxicity assessments for PFBS and GenX chemicals in 2019; Draft toxicity assessments for five additional PFAS in 2020

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Proposal for whether to set a drinking water standard for PFOA and PFOS submitted to OMB December 2019, but not yet published, reportedly due to interagency disputes.

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Proposal not yet submitted to OMB.

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Weakened from what EPA submitted to OMB in August 2018.

Slowly

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Delayed.

Stakeholder Concern or Challenge	EPA Action(s)	Purpose	Anticipated Timeframe
Expand knowledge about whether new PFAS chemicals entering commerce are safe	Use new statutory requirements added by the Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act to review new PFAS and issue supplemental proposed Significant New Use Rules (SNUR on PFAS).	New chemical reviews under TSCA ensure that unreasonable risks are addressed prior to commercialization. The issuance of SNURs for existing PFAS chemicals prohibits new uses for these chemicals until the EPA determines whether the significant new use presents an unreasonable risk and takes appropriate actions as required by TSCA to address any unreasonable risk.	Ongoing Started in 2016
Short-Term Actions			
Understanding and Addressing PFAS Toxicity and Occurrence			
Establish and curate a clearinghouse of chemical information for PFAS	The EPA's CompTox Chemistry Dashboard has been updated to include several curated lists of PFAS chemicals with links to known chemical, physical, and other properties.	Provide simple access to a comprehensive array of up-to-date information for PFAS of interest.	Ongoing
Expand analytical methods to accurately test for additional PFAS in drinking water	Expand the current drinking water Method 537 to include GenX chemicals and additional PFAS; develop a new drinking water method for additional short-chain PFAS not measured by Method 537.	Improved and/or additional methods would help stakeholders and the EPA accurately test, analyze, and quantify a broader suite of PFAS in their drinking water, including GenX chemicals and other short-chain PFAS.	Method 537.1 completed November 2018; additional methods in 2019
Test for PFAS and PFAS precursors in media other than drinking water	Develop and validate methods for other water matrices (wastewater, surface waters, groundwater), solids (soil, sediment, biosolids, fish tissue), and air (ambient, stack emission, off-gases).	Provide additional methods for stakeholders and the EPA to identify the presence of PFAS in concentrations of concern for media other than drinking water.	2019 – 2021
Coordination across federal agencies with common interests in PFAS toxicity	Participate in a cross-federal-agency working group on PFAS information gathering and sharing.	Better leverage federal investments and reduce redundancies. Provide states, tribes, and communities with consistent cross-federal information for making decisions.	2019

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2015 Proposed PFAS Significant New Use Rule still not finalized. EPA approved at least 15 new PFAS under TSCA since 2017.

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EPA Method 8327 for Potable Water proposed in June but not yet finalized, other progress unknown.

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Any information developed not easily found on EPA website. Most described state outreach efforts date from 2018.

Stakeholder Concern or Challenge	EPA Action(s)	Purpose	Anticipated Timeframe
Identifying and Addressing PFAS Exposures			
Additional robust treatment and remediation technologies for PFAS in the environment	Conduct additional research to identify performance and costs associated with treatment and remediation approaches to address PFAS in the environment, along with any potential unintended consequences associated with specific technologies.	Identify new/additional treatment and remediation options that can be used to address PFAS contamination.	2019
Information about drinking water treatment effectiveness and costs for different PFAS	Incorporate the latest research results for additional PFAS into the EPA's online drinking water treatability database.	Support stakeholders in selecting the most effective drinking water treatment approaches to address concerns with PFAS in the environment.	Ongoing
Hold responsible parties accountable for PFAS releases into the environment	Employ an enforcement strategy that relies first on state and local authorities and utilizes federal authorities as appropriate where, for example, state and local authorities are not available or responsible parties do not address PFAS voluntarily.	Support communities that have PFAS releases by using federal enforcement authorities, where relevant and appropriate.	Ongoing
Understand sources and concentrations of PFAS in the environment	Partner with ECOS to build an interactive map to provide users with easy access to publicly available data on potential PFAS sources and occurrence.	Enable states, tribes, and communities to use the best available data to guide PFAS management decisions.	2019
Risk Communication and Engagement			
Coordinated messaging on PFAS across the federal government	Participate in and coordinate with an interagency PFAS risk communication workgroup to develop consistent communication materials that can be used across the federal government and are informed by the best available science.	Ensure coordinated messaging from the federal government is provided to the states, tribes, and local communities.	Ongoing Start 2019
Communication materials that can be used to inform the public of concerns related to PFAS	Work with other federal agencies, states, and tribes to develop a risk communication toolbox that includes materials and messaging for federal, state, tribal, and local partners to use with the public.	Provide states, tribes, local officials, and utilities with communication tools that convey clear and consistent messages to the public.	2019

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EPA website compiles lists of technologies and research papers with no evaluation or endorsement of any of them.

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EPA's Drinking Water Treatability Database information for PFOS and PFOA Appears to Date from 2018.

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Some enforcement actions under TSCA in 2019, but no proposed hazardous substance declaration under CERCLA.

Map is neither complete nor publicly available...

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Reports indicate White House-led task force is delaying PFAS studies.

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No materials have been developed.

Stakeholder Concern or Challenge	EPA Action(s)	Purpose	Anticipated Timeframe
Long-Term Actions			
Increase knowledge about PFAS releases	Explore data availability for listing PFAS chemicals to the Toxics Release Inventory (Section 313 of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act).	Make information about PFAS releases reported by industrial and federal facilities available. This information may be helpful to inform decision-making by communities, government agencies, companies and others.	Start 2019
Reduce PFAS releases into ambient waters and sources of drinking water	Determine if available data and research support the development of Clean Water Act Section 304(a) ambient water quality criteria for human health for PFAS.	When adopted by states and tribes as water quality standards, criteria can be used to set permit limits on discharges to a waterbody and to determine if a waterbody requires cleanup to protect human health and aquatic life.	2021
Hold responsible parties accountable for PFAS releases into the environment	Examine available information and beginning in 2019 seek additional information from industry to explore identification of industrial sources that may warrant potential regulation through national ELGs to be described in preliminary ELG plan 14 (2019).	ELGs require that a technology-based, minimum level of control be applied to any NPDES permit for direct discharge to waters or be directly applicable for indirect dischargers.	Start 2019
Characterize potential health impacts from a broader set of PFAS	Generate PFAS toxicology data through new approaches such as high throughput screening, computational toxicology tools, and chemical informatics for chemical prioritization, screening, and risk assessment.	Inform a more complete understanding of PFAS toxicity for the large set of PFAS chemicals without conventional toxicity data and allow prioritization of actions to potentially address groups of PFAS.	Ongoing
Develop more drinking water occurrence data for a broader group of PFAS	The EPA will propose nationwide drinking water monitoring for PFAS under the next UCMR monitoring cycle utilizing newer methods available to detect more PFAS chemicals and at lower minimum reporting levels (MRLs) than previously possible in earlier monitoring.	Monitoring results will improve understanding of the frequency and concentration of PFAS occurrence in finished U.S. drinking water.	Anticipated 2020
Develop a PFAS data inventory and best practices for contributing data	Develop a data standards best practice that allows sharing of soil, air, water, fish tissue, and other PFAS monitoring data.	Provide a way to share PFAS testing results for media other than drinking water that facilitates integration and easy access and use of PFAS data.	Start 2019

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Followed law enacted by Congress, but did not propose a rule to list additional PFAS on TRI. Instead just issued an Adanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Progress unknown.

Progress unknown.

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Toxicity values for two PFAS expected in 2019 remain unfinalized, progress unknown on other efforts.

Progress unknown.

Congress enacted legislation mandating such monitoring.

Progress unknown.

Stakeholder Concern or Challenge	EPA Action(s)	Purpose	Anticipated Timeframe
Access ecological risk information to protect ecosystems	Identify sensitive and susceptible species; synthesize information on bioaccumulation in organisms and food chains; where appropriate develop benchmarks and thresholds for ecological toxicity.	Enable action to protect aquatic ecosystems; establish cleanup levels for contaminated sites; protect recreational and cultural values, such as hunting and fishing.	2022 Progress unknown.
Understand potential for atmospheric transport of PFAS	Incorporate PFAS information into the EPA atmospheric models to understand the potential for atmospheric fate and transport of PFAS.	Enable risk managers to understand the full range of potential PFAS exposure pathways so that they can prioritize appropriate action.	2022 Progress unknown.