PFAS Sampling to be Conducted at Ohio Public Water Systems

In 2019, U.S. EPA released its PFAS action plan which prompted many states to take additional actions, including initiating sampling to determine levels of PFAS in drinking water. On Sept. 27, 2019, Governor Mike DeWine announced the establishment of an inter-agency workgroup to address the emerging issue of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in Ohio. In his announcement, he directed the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) and Ohio Department of Health (ODH) to work together on developing a statewide PFAS action plan to address potential threats to both public and private drinking water systems. On Dec. 2, 2019, the State of Ohio released the statewide action plan. The plan calls for Ohio EPA to gather data from public water systems statewide to determine if PFASs are present in drinking water.

Under the plan, Ohio EPA will coordinate sampling of approximately 1,500 community and nontransient noncommunity public water systems statewide. Raw and finished water (entry point) samples will be collected at these public water systems, with a goal of completing all sampling efforts by the end of 2020.

Public water system sampling efforts, coordinated by Ohio EPA under contracts with qualified consultants and laboratories, will begin in February. Some sampling may also be conducted by trained technicians from Ohio EPA and analysis performed by Ohio EPA’s Division of Environmental Services (DES). Approved U.S. EPA methods will be used for analysis. Ohio EPA and consultants will contact public water systems to arrange sampling. PFAS sampling results for public water systems will be publicly accessible on Ohio’s PFAS webpage.

There are currently no national drinking water standards for PFAS compounds. In 2016, U.S. EPA set health advisory levels (HALs) of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for two of the most studied PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS. Ohio’s action plan includes the use of these HALs for PFOA and PFOS and establishes additional action levels for four additional chemicals in the PFAS family, including GenX, PFBS, PFHxS, and PFNA. The establishment of national drinking water maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) is under consideration by U.S. EPA.

A PFAS toolkit has been developed to assist public water system communication efforts. The toolkit as well as more information about PFAS, the action plan, and additional resources are available at pfas.ohio.gov.
**H2Ohio - A collaborative approach to the issues facing Ohio’s water**

The H2Ohio Fund was proposed by Governor DeWine in March 2019 to invest in targeted solutions to help insure safe and clean water for Ohioans across the state. Through the budget bill, the General Assembly invested $172 million in the plan.

In November 2019, Governor DeWine announced the full details of the plan, which is being implemented by The Ohio Lake Erie Commission, Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

H2Ohio will focus on:
- Reducing phosphorus in Lake Erie and elsewhere through farming best practices;
- Creating new wetlands to reduce excessive nutrients entering lakes and rivers;
- Addressing failing home sewage treatment systems in disadvantaged communities;
- Preventing lead contamination in water at daycares and schools.

In regard to drinking water systems, Ohio EPA utilized the project priority lists of the well established, state revolving loan (SRF) program to identify projects to help fund for this first year of H2Ohio. Ohio EPA looked for shovel-ready projects where H2Ohio funding could be used right away.

The H2Ohio Program has enabled Ohio EPA to extend its principal forgiveness dollars to help more communities to address their drinking water and sewer needs.

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**Fluoridation Assistance Program**

**Ohio Department of Health**

Making fluoridated water available to Ohioans is an important step a community can take to improve the dental health of its residents. This effective, economical, legal, and safe public health measure can be implemented at minimal cost through the Ohio Department of Health’s (ODH) Fluoridation Assistance Program (FAP). The purpose of FAP is to provide financial and technical assistance to communities, enabling them to fluoridate their water systems to the optimum level necessary to prevent dental disease. Presently, 92 percent of the state’s population served by community water systems is enjoying the benefits of fluoridated water.

FAP assists public water supply systems by reimbursing a portion of the cost to purchase new or replacement fluoridation equipment and/or supplies. The program offers financial assistance to community water systems that fluoridate to help offset the costs of replacing fluoridation feeding and testing equipment. Communities that are interested in initiating water fluoridation may be eligible to receive reimbursement for start-up costs, including the first year’s supply of fluoride supplement. This funding is generously offered through a grant from the Delta Dental Foundation, and the amount awarded to each water system is contingent on funding received by ODH.

Please visit the Fluoridation Assistance Program website¹ or Ohio EPA’s Financial Assistance page² to learn more about this program. If you anticipate initiating water fluoridation or needing to replace your fluoridation feeding and testing equipment in 2020, please email Barbara.Carnahan@odh.ohio.gov.

¹ https://odh.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odh/know-our-programs/oral-health-program/media/fluoridation-assistance-program-application-packet
² epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/financialassistance
Celeste Bronson

What is your position at Ohio EPA?
I am an Environmental Specialist in the Division of Drinking and Ground Waters. I am training to review plans, conduct sanitary surveys, and more.

How long have you worked for Ohio EPA?
This is my first full-time position. However, I interned for Ohio EPA during the summer of 2018.

What excites you the most about the work that you do or your field of study?
I am excited to be able to help protect the health of those around us by working to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

Favorite memory or accomplishment with the agency or related to your field?
So far, my favorite memory is getting hired for a full-time position.

What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?
A few of my favorite things to do outside of work include reading, volunteering, attending church, and being with family.

Who inspires you?
Phillis Wheatly (first published woman of African descent) and Mary McLeod Bethune (the founder of Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute) are two women that inspire me. I admire them for accomplishing amazing feats while surrounded by the direct influence of slavery. Also, I share similar morals.

Jodi Elam

What is your position at Ohio EPA?
Environmental Specialist II for DDAGW – CDO

How long have you worked for Ohio EPA?
I’m still new to the agency—a year in December. I’ve been in Ohio for about a year and a half.

What excites you the most about the work that you do or your field of study?
I enjoy helping protect our drinking water quality and that every day is different. Plus, actually doing work in the subject that I went to school for is a great feeling.

Favorite memory or accomplishment with the agency or related to your field?
When I graduated with my Master in Environmental Management in 2018 from Western State Colorado University.

What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?
I love taking my two dogs out for walks and playing with them. We have a terrier mix named Duffy and a chihuahua puppy named Chloe.

Who inspires you?
My mom.

Celeste and Jodi are a part of Ohio EPA’s Division of Drinking and Ground Waters in Central District Office. CDO serves Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Knox, Licking, Madison, Marrow, Pickaway, and Union County.
Southwest Licking Community Water & Sewer District

Southwest Licking Community Water & Sewer District obtains its water from six ground water wells capable of producing 2.4 million gallons of treated water. The District currently serves over 6,000 customers in Etna Township, Harrison Township, and portions of the city of Pataskala. There are six water operators at the facility.

In October 2019, the District had the grand opening of the new York Road water treatment plant, which employs state-of-the-art membrane filtration treatment. Superintendent and Class 3 operator CJ Gilcher has worked for the District over 16 years. He is extremely knowledgeable about the water system and has enjoyed his interactions with Ohio EPA staff. “The District’s Ohio EPA representatives have always been great to work with. All of the Ohio EPA staff have been responsive to any questions that we have had. We have never felt that there was a question that couldn’t be asked. Ohio EPA has always been helpful from permitting to process issues and everything in between,” said Gilcher.

The District is very proud of the collaboration between operators, engineers, and staff in getting the York Road treatment plant online. Gilcher said, “The District’s Board of Trustees and General Manager allowed a real hands-on approach with operations staff in the design and construction of the facility.

“Operations staff submitted input on plan drawings and plant specifications every step of the way. It gave the staff a sense of ownership and has made the commissioning of the facility that much easier.”

SWLCWS offers tours to the public upon request. Contact CJ Gilcher or Chad Sims at (740) 927-0410.

Photos of Southwest Licking Community Water & Sewer District courtesy of Infinite Impact & Aerial Image Solutions
Harmful Algal Bloom Technical Assistance

When it comes to harmful algal blooms (HABs), source water management can be an important tool to prevent a cyanotoxin finished water detection. HABs can be short-lived and unpredictable. It is not uncommon for public water systems (PWS) to experience several years without a HAB in their drinking water source, and when problems arise, it can be difficult for PWSs to determine the best management of their drinking water source. Ohio EPA’s Emerging Contaminants Section (ECS), along with district office staff, are available to provide technical assistance to public water systems with source water HAB issues. Ohio EPA has assisted PWSs with treatment train sampling and jar test studies to inform treatment optimization, such as advising dose, application location, and type of powdered activated carbon. Similarly, source water sampling may include cyanotoxin and cyanobacteria screening samples, concentrated net tow samples, and phytoplankton identification to support avoidance and reservoir management strategies, such as algaecide application.

When providing technical assistance at a PWS, Ohio EPA staff will meet with the operators, review the plant and treatment process, and survey the source waters. Sampling instruments and equipment that the PWS may use throughout the HAB season to help manage their reservoirs and other source waters can be discussed as well. Sampling water quality parameters in the reservoir is an important step in source water management. It helps the PWS understand what is occurring in the source water so the PWS can better treat it and address any issues prior to the water entering the treatment plant. Ohio EPA staff can collect concentrated plankton samples and examine phytoplankton under a microscope, along with providing a quick introduction to microscopy and phytoplankton identification.

Basic information on size, shape, and characteristics of cyanobacteria can be explained to the PWS staff. Knowledge of which cyanobacteria are present and abundant may help target algaecide use for that specific cyanobacteria. Additionally, supplemental cyanobacteria screening (qPCR) can detect when cyanotoxin-producing genes are present during the visit.

PWS staff can use the information and training provided during these visits to better equip their staff with the tools and knowledge to prevent and respond to HAB events. For more information about HABs, please visit [epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/HAB](http://epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/HAB). To request technical assistance from ECS, please call (614) 644-2752 and ask to speak with someone in the Emerging Contaminants Section.

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For More Information:
Call the operator certification hotline at 1-866-411-OPCT (6728) or visit: [epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/opcert.aspx](http://epa.ohio.gov/ddagw/opcert.aspx) for more information.
Rulemaking Activities

Below is a brief summary of recent and upcoming rule changes. For more details, including notice of opportunities to comment on draft rules, sign up for our electronic mailing list, or visit us on the web at epa.ohio.gov/ddagw.

Interested Party Review (IPR)
- Disadvantaged Community Loans

To be filed with Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR)
- Laboratory Certification Rules
- Primary Drinking Water Standards rule 3745-81-24
- Underground Injection Control Rules

Filed with Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR)
- Primary Drinking Water Standards
- Surface Water Treatment Rules

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- Resiliency and Water Security: Emergency Management Information for Public Works
- Harmful Algal Blooms Mailing List: Updates for Public Water Systems and Laboratories
- DDAGW Spigot News: Newsletter for Public Drinking Water Systems
- Drinking Water: Rulemaking Activity and Policy Notification
- Monitoring and Compliance Information
- Underground Injection Control: Rulemaking Activity and Program Notification
- Operator Certification Program: Drinking Water and Wastewater
- Electronic Reporting: Lab Reporting or Water System Reporting