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WATER WORKS & SEWER BOARD
of the
City of Gadsden, Alabama

PRESS RELEASE

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Gadsden Water Works Completes GAC Treatment Facility

(GADSDEN, ALABAMA) – The Gadsden Water Works and Sewer Board (GWW&SB) is pleased to announce the completion of a granular-activated carbon (GAC) treatment facility. The GAC facility is part of the Board's continuing effort to provide safe and high quality water to the citizens of Gadsden. Initial testing indicates that the GAC facility's treatment capacity of six (6) million gallons of water per day has reduced Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) concentrations well below the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA)'s reduced lifetime health advisory limits established in May 2016.

Immediately following the EPA's press release announcing the dramatic reduction in its provisional health advisory limits for PFOA and PFOS, GWW&SB started planning and designing a treatment facility to remove these Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) from its drinking water to a concentration well below the new EPA limit.

"The last couple of years have been difficult to say the least, but I am proud to announce the completion of this project," General Manager Chad Hare said. "I want to thank our customers for their patience while we adjusted to this 'new normal'. Unfortunately, we were blindsided by the EPA announcement reducing the PFOA limit of 200 parts-per-trillion (ppt) and PFOS limit of 400 ppt, to 70 ppt, combined. To think, just two-and-a-half years ago, we did not know these substances were even an issue because the few tests we had performed for PFOA and PFOS were so far under the limit at that time. Then overnight, EPA defined a problem that could not be managed with existing treatment facilities. And now, to see where we are today, in such a short period of time, after extensively researching these substances, then designing, and constructing a GAC treatment facility for the sole purpose of reducing the concentrations well under the EPA limits is a credit to our employees. I would not want to go through any of it again, but I am extremely proud of our response," Hare said.

The PFOA and PFOS concentrations are believed to come from various carpet and chemical plants in and around Dalton, Georgia. Dalton is known to many as the "Carpet Capital of the World". The GWW&SB announced a lawsuit against companies that are believed to be responsible for PFASs being found in the GWW&SB's source water, the Coosa River.

"One of the most frustrating parts of this whole ordeal has been the misinformation spreading throughout the community. I've heard rumors ranging from 'the GWW&SB uses these chemicals in the water treatment process', to 'there was a chemical spill on the Coosa River'. The fact is we are receiving these PFASs from upstream sources that we have no control over", Hare said. "The lawsuit was not something we wanted to pursue, but it is necessary to hold those who are allowing PFASs to be in the water, accountable for the cost of removing them. Simply put, we do not believe that customers of the GWW&SB should be responsible for paying for the removal of these substances because they had nothing to do with them being here in the first place", Hare said.