GADSDEN WATER

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The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) defines a water contaminant as any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substance or matter in water. The law enables the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set legal limits on the levels of certain contaminants in drinking water.

The SDWA sets a process that the EPA must follow to develop the national primary drinking water standards intended to control the level of contaminants in the nation's drinking water. The EPA currently has drinking water regulations for more than 90 contaminants.

Following years of scientific testing and evaluation, in February 2021, EPA implemented the national primary drinking water regulation development process for two PFAS contaminants, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). PFAS stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a group of thousands of man-made chemical compounds in use since the 1940s to make products resistant to high temperatures, water, and stains.

PFOA and PFOS are two PFAS compounds believed to have adverse health effects at very low concentrations. Because of these properties, PFOA and PFOS were phased out of production by U.S. manufacturers in the mid-2000s. However, PFOA and PFOS can still be imported into the U.S. through consumer goods. They also remain in some drinking water sources due to decades of industrial pollution and consumer product use. The EPA has stated that approximately 80% of a person's exposure to PFAS comes from consumer goods such as cookware, cosmetics, food wrappings, stain/water-resistant clothing, and carpet and furniture treatments.

On March 14, 2023, the EPA announced its proposed national drinking water standards – also known as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) – for PFOA and PFOS. The announcement now starts public comment and scientific review processes that will take place over the next several months. After these processes are complete, the EPA's final drinking water standards may differ from the proposed MCLs announced today.

Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) were also announced. It is important to note the difference between an MCL and an MCLG. An MCL is an enforceable drinking water standard, while an MCLG is a public health goal.

When EPA issues the final MCLs later this year, it will also announce an effective date set in the future so water providers have time to meet the new standards. *The effective date for the final PFOA and PFOS MCLs is expected 36 months after finalizing the regulation.*

The proposed MCLs announced today are 4.0 parts per trillion for PFOA and 4.0 parts per trillion for PFOS. These proposed MCLs are both above the levels found during a range of tests Gadsden

Water continues to conduct in accordance with current federal and state regulations. All these test results can be found on our website at www.gadsdenwater.org/environmentalreporting.aspx .

Our running annual average (RAA) concentration, which is calculated using results from sampling over the latest four (4) quarters, as of 07/15/2026, for PFOA is 11 parts per trillion and 9 parts per trillion for PFOS. Gadsden Water installed granular activated carbon in December 2018.

It is important to repeat that the proposed PFOA and PFOS MCLs are not enforceable drinking water standards at this time. For more information about how the EPA determines their proposed and final PFOA and PFOS MCLs, we invite you to visit their website: https://www.epa.gov/sdwa/and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas

EPA recommends that public water systems that find PFOA or PFOS in their drinking water take steps to inform customers, undertake additional sampling to assess the level, scope, and source of contamination, and examine steps to limit exposure. That is what Gadsden Water has done for years. Since 2016, Gadsden Water has routinely sampled our source water before treatment and our finished water, the water you drink, for PFAS. Again, all our test results can be found on our website at www.gadsdenwater.org/environmentalreporting.aspx .

Because conventional water treatment does not remove these chemicals, in December 2018, Gadsden Water added granular activated carbon (GAC) to our treatment process. Since GAC became operational, Gadsden Water was routinely well below the health advisories issued by the EPA in 2016.

Gadsden Water also filed a lawsuit in September 2016 against the companies/industries responsible for PFAS being present in the Coosa River, our source water. Earlier this year, an agreement was reached that will aid our efforts to reduce PFAS levels in the drinking water below the levels for PFOA and PFOS proposed by the EPA.

As a result, Gadsden Water is moving forward with the construction of an additional advanced treatment process – reverse osmosis – on our C. B. Collier Water Treatment Plant. In May we began construction on Gadsden's reverse osmosis treatment facility.

Gadsden Water is proud to be in a position where we can resolve this growing water quality concern on behalf of our customers for generations to come. You can follow our progress on our website by clicking on the Environmental Reports tab and the Reverse Osmosis tab.