Orange Water and Sewer Authority

Our community's trusted partner for clean water and environmental protection

Clear Waters: Navigating your PFAS Questions and Concerns

April 7, 2024

Thank you for your interest in how OWASA is addressing PFAS in our community's water. Our goal is to connect with our community and become partners with you in understanding and addressing PFAS in our drinking water, wastewater, and biosolids. With this quarterly newsletter, we hope to keep you well-informed of our research and design of new treatment facilities, as well as regulations that affect how we manage your drinking water and wastewater treatment.

At Your Fingertips: PFAS & Your Water

It is important to us for our community to understand PFAS and what OWASA is doing about it. We are happy to share our new online information hub, PFAS & Your Water. The hub includes monitoring data from our source water and treated drinking water, as well as our recent results for wastewater and biosolids, and updates on our ongoing efforts to mitigate PFAS in our water. In addition, we want to connect our community members with accurate, reliable information about PFAS that may be outside our realm of expertise. You can find links from our hub to other resources about health impacts, regulations, and what you can do to further reduce your PFAS exposure.

PFAS & Your Water

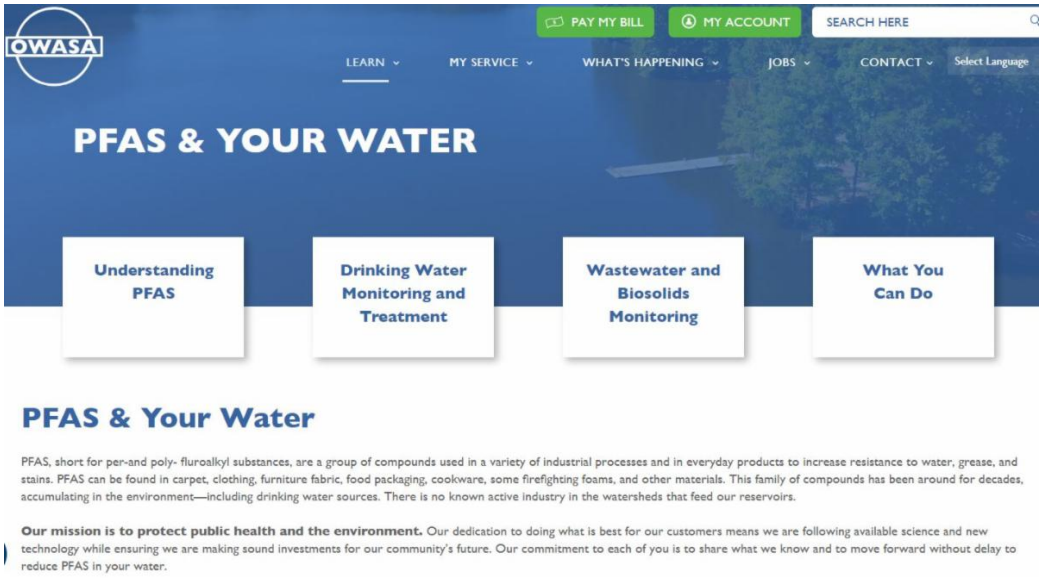

Image: Landing page of PFAS information hub, "PFAS & Your Water."

Supporting Research: N.C. Pure Pilot Project

OWASA is committed to advancing our understanding of PFAS and how to effectively reduce it in water and our environment. Currently, we are supporting a pilot project run by UNC-Chapel Hill researchers at our Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant. The project, funded by the N.C. Collaboratory, is testing the effectiveness of innovative absorbent materials, called "novel sorbents," in removing PFAS compounds from drinking water. This research will advance cutting-edge science and engineering that could improve the future effectiveness and affordability of water treatment. Learn more about N.C. Pure's work here.

Image: Novel sorbents testing at N.C. Collaboratory

Punching-Up The PAC

OWASA uses Powdered Activated Carbon (PAC) as part of our water treatment process. This material works by adsorbing certain compounds, improving the taste and odor of our drinking water; it also adsorbs PFAS. In November 2023, we began testing different types of PAC to determine which is best at adsorbing PFAS compounds from our source water. Early monitoring data shows promising results for higher levels of PFAS removal using a specific type of PAC. We will continue to monitor and test the effectiveness of PAC to optimize PFAS removal using our existing processes in the near-term.

Designing Future Drinking Water Treatment

While enhancing our use of PAC allows us to employ our current treatment process to further reduce PFAS levels in our drinking water, more advanced treatment is necessary. Advanced treatment is required to ensure that we consistently meet our goals to minimize impact on public health and meet forthcoming federal drinking water regulations. We are in the very early stages of designing and constructing a new facility next to our Jones Ferry Road Water Treatment Plant in Carrboro to reduce PFAS to targeted levels. OWASA will pilot test two technologies —Granular Activated Carbon and Ion Exchange—both individually and in combination to identify the most effective method for PFAS removal. This project is an investment in our community's health for decades to come.

Tracking PFAS in Wastewater and Biosolids

We are also paying attention to PFAS levels in the community's wastewater. Our wastewater treatment process does not remove PFAS. As a result, we have detected some PFAS in both the treated wastewater and biosolids. Results of our quarterly monitoring can be found on our PFAS Wastewater and Biosolids Monitoring page. We are continuing to monitor flow into our wastewater system and tracking technological developments that will allow us to better protect the environment.

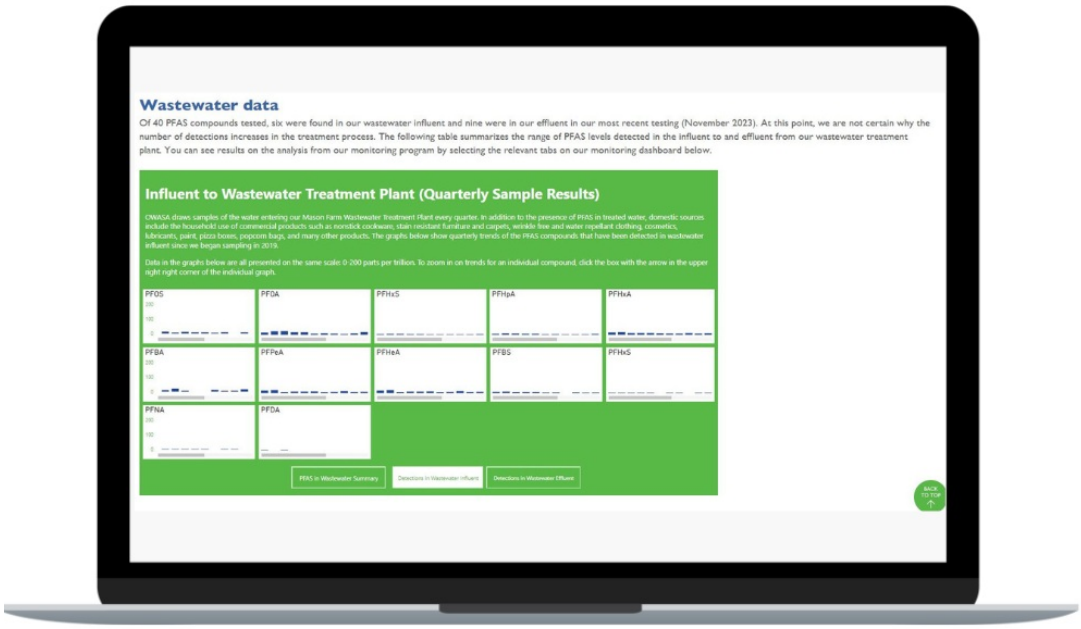

Image: Wastewater monitoring data on owasa.org/pfas-and-your-water

Safeguarding Our Water: PFAS Q&A

OWASA is planning a series of discussions this summer that will bring experts on public health, water treatment science, engineering, and state and federal regulations together with members of our community to advance understanding of PFAS in water, wastewater, and biosolids. These discussions will be hosted by OWASA as a casual gathering where you can ask questions, share concerns, and learn from experts, including members of the OWASA team, who are tackling PFAS challenges head-on. These events will be advertised on our website and social media as well as through this newsletter's contact list. If you received this message from a friend and would like to receive future PFAS updates from OWASA, sign up here.

Image: OWASA will host Safeguarding Our Water: PFAS Q&A chats this year for our community to discuss PFAS issues with local experts

Thank you for keeping in touch with us on this important issue. Please reach out to us with questions related to this newsletter at info@owasa.org

www.owasa.org

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