

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: July 1, 2025, updated January 14, 2026

TO: Redmond City Council

FROM: Aaron L. Bert, Director, Public Works

SUBJECT: **Executive Summary: PFAS Detection in Drinking Water**

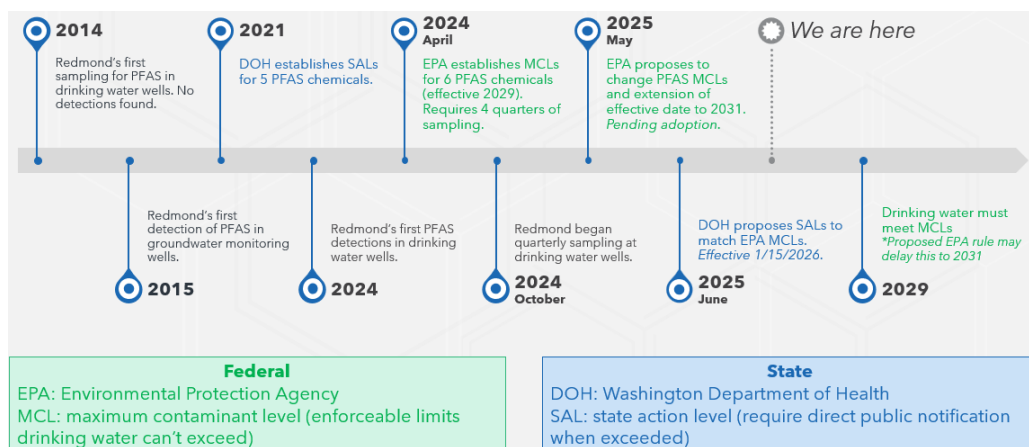
Background:

This memo provides an update on recent per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) detections in the City of Redmond's drinking water supply and outlines the City's proactive approach to ensure continued compliance with water quality standards and evolving federal regulations.

PFAS are human-made chemicals with potential links to various health concerns, including increased cholesterol and decreased birth weights. In April 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized national Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for six PFAS compounds, with an initial monitoring phase required by 2027 and compliance, based on the average of samples, by 2029. Washington State adopted these federal MCLs as State Action Levels (SALs) on January 15, 2026.

It's important to note that in May 2025, the EPA announced its intent to revise this rule. The agency plans to rescind MCLs for three regulated PFAS compounds and the hazard index. Additionally, the compliance deadline for the remaining MCLs (PFOA and PFOS) is expected to be extended by two years, from 2029 to 2031.

Key dates of PFAS regulatory actions and Redmond supply well sampling are shown below.



Key Issue:

Recent sampling has detected PFAS in Redmond's drinking water supply wells, specifically perfluorononanoic acid (PFOS) in Wells 1 and 2. Importantly, compliance with the EPA's new MCLs for individual PFAS compounds, which takes effect in June 2029 (anticipated to be extended to 2031), is determined on a rolling annual average (RAA) consisting of at least four quarterly samples. Results from Wells 1 and 2 indicate that the RAA will exceed the MCL for PFOS. The fourth quarter sample was collected on January 5, 2026, and results are expected from the laboratory in the near future. All PFAS detections in Supply Wells 3 and 5 are below MCLs.

State of Redmond's Groundwater:

- **Drinking Water Supply:** Groundwater from five wells provides up to 40% of Redmond's drinking water.
- **Monitoring:** Regular sampling of supply wells is conducted to comply with federal and state regulations. Semi-annual sampling of groundwater monitoring wells provides an early warning system for the supply wells.
- **Detections:**
 - **Wells 1 & 2:** Individual PFOS sample results have exceeded the future federal MCL in recent sampling (April, May, and October 2024, and May and August 2025). The RAA will be calculated after data is received from the laboratory from the January 5, 2026, sample collection.
 - **Well 4:** Investigatory sampling in 2020 indicated likely MCL exceedances. This well is currently offline due to ongoing issues related to iron and manganese and is not part of Redmond's current PFAS Initial Monitoring phase. Public Works is evaluating the best path forward to bring Well 4 back into service, including the potential to move Well 4 to a new location.
 - **Wells 3 & 5:** PFOS has been detected in recent sampling (October 2024, January, May, and August 2025) but are below the MCL. The PFOS RAA for both Wells 3 and 5 is 0 parts per trillion. Note that detections less than the MCL are counted as 0 towards the RAA.
 - **Groundwater Monitoring Wells:** Groundwater monitoring wells near Supply Wells 1, 2, 3, and 4 have shown PFAS exceedances of the federal MCLs. Groundwater monitoring wells near Supply Well 5 consistently remain below the PFAS MCLs.
- **PFAS Source:** The source of PFAS detections in the supply wells and monitoring wells is unknown. Due to the historic ubiquitous use of PFAS containing materials, the contamination likely resulted from poor management of PFAS containing chemicals (such as pesticides, paints, floor polishes, and cleaning supplies) or historic spills. Concentrations of PFAS in monitoring wells and supply wells have consistently been detected just above the EPA MCL. PFAS concentrations within Redmond's water supply are very low compared to drinking water supplies located near chemical manufacturing facilities, textile mills, or facilities that used high amounts of firefighting foams containing PFAS (military bases and fire training stations). There is no clear indication that firefighting foam is the cause of PFAS contamination of the groundwater within

Redmond or the surrounding region. Due to enhanced regulatory and programmatic actions taken by the City to protect groundwater resources, PFAS contamination is believed to be a result of these historic activities, and not an ongoing issue.

- **Purchased Water:** Redmond's remaining drinking water demand (currently about 60% of total demand) is purchased from Cascade Water Alliance (CWA) through the City's membership in CWA. CWA has a contract with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) to supply water to CWA members. SPU is responsible for monitoring their supply sources. The most recent samples collected from SPU's two primary sources – the Tolt and Cedar River reservoirs – have not shown any detections of regulated PFAS compounds. Results are published on the [SPU website](#).

Current Actions:

The following actions are currently underway:

- **PFAS Treatment Feasibility:** A consultant has been engaged to provide technical expertise with a PFAS Treatment Feasibility Study. This study will result in a high-level estimate of treatment needs and initial treatment designs. The contract for this work will be presented at the February 3, 2026, Planning and Public Works Committee of the Whole meeting.
- **Continue Intensive Monitoring:** Maintain quarterly PFAS sampling at all active supply wells through the initial monitoring phase and beyond to accurately determine the average PFAS concentrations for compliance. Additionally, groundwater monitoring wells located upgradient of the supply wells are tested for PFAS twice a year.
- **Track Federal Guidance and Regulations:** In May 2025, the EPA announced plans to develop a rulemaking to provide additional time for compliance, including a proposal to extend the compliance date to 2031. EPA plans to issue a proposed rule and finalize in the Spring of 2026.
- **Communication Strategy:** Public Works has created a communication plan to inform City leadership, the City Council, and Redmond drinking water customers about PFAS detections and planned actions. Results of PFAS detections have been shared via the city website redmond.gov/PFAS, the Water Quality Report with a utility bill insert, and in multiple social media posts. A dedicated QAlert request type has been created for PFAS questions.

Future Actions:

To strategically address PFAS contamination and ensure compliance with upcoming federal regulations, Public Works will take the following actions:

- **Tier 2 public notification:** Initiate Tier 2 public notification to customers in the well service area as required by Washington State Department of Health if concentrations continue to exceed the RAA. Notifications are expected to occur in Quarter 1 of 2027.
- **Proceed with Well 4 Investigation:** Continue the project to evaluate options to utilize Well 4 full water rights, given the historical iron, manganese and PFAS detections, and production issues.

- **Develop Capital Improvement Plans (CIP):** Begin the CIP process for implementing PFAS treatment at Wells 1 and 2 to ensure that the average PFAS concentrations meet the June 2029 compliance deadline.
[Note: in May 2025, the EPA announced plans to extend this compliance deadline to 2031.]
- **Temporary Water Agreement:** Establish a temporary agreement with Cascade Water Alliance to purchase additional water during treatment facility construction, if needed due to treatment construction extending beyond 2029.

Fiscal Implications:

Significant capital investments will likely be required for PFAS treatment. Results from January 5, 2026, sample from Wells 1 and 2 will inform capital investment needs. Funding mechanisms and cost projections need to be a key component of the treatment evaluation and CIP development.

Timeline:

Initial monitoring for federal compliance was completed on January 5, 2026 (pending analytical results). Quarterly PFAS sampling required by Washington State will occur in 2026, based on the RAA from this sampling public notification of SAL exceedances will begin in the first quarter of 2027. Treatment to reduce PFAS levels below MCLs is required to be in place by 2029 to serve water from impacted sources. Acting now is crucial to meet these deadlines and ensure the continued safety and customer confidence in Redmond's drinking water.