



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District Commission greenlights plan, timeline for PFAS research and testing

Plan will fill gaps in knowledge, provide meaningful data

MADISON, WIS. — Today the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) Commission approved a resolution that allows the District to move forward with a comprehensive plan and timeline for testing and monitoring for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, in wastewater and biosolids.

“There is still much we need to learn about PFAS to respond appropriately, and the District’s plan and timeline are a commitment to doing that,” says Michael Mucha, chief engineer and director. “We look forward to ongoing dialog about our PFAS work and its results and ensuring that we are making science-based decisions to do what’s best for public health and the environment.”

In use since the 1940s, PFAS are broadly present throughout the environment and in our homes and our diets. They are commonly found in American homes, in products such as non-stick cookware, furniture, clothing, pizza boxes, dental floss and more. The PFAS family comprises thousands of manmade chemicals, but only a few compounds, including PFOA and PFOS, are well studied, which makes this family of compounds difficult to address.

Core to the work approved by MMSD’s Commission today is a comprehensive sampling and analysis plan. The District has retained a consulting firm that is developing that plan, which includes gathering data about PFAS in the District’s wastewater and biosolids, and recommendations for routine monitoring to track concentrations over time. The consultant is also creating a site model depicting the fate and transport pathways of PFAS compounds within the wastewater treatment cycle, from the collection system and to our receiving streams and fields receiving land application of biosolids.

“We have developed a comprehensive approach that helps fill some sizeable gaps in the science of PFAS in wastewater and biosolids and establishes a baseline, through

standardized testing, for us to better monitor PFAS in our system,” says Martye Griffin, director of ecosystem services for MMSD. “Our work with the consultant also provides the District with a roadmap to move forward as the PFAS issue continues to evolve.”

Wastewater treatment plants are not original sources of PFAS and do not add or have the capability to remove these chemicals during the treatment process. The District has completed an initial review of its service area and has verified that it currently contains no known original industrial manufacturers or users of PFAS.

The District’s consultant is currently at work on the sampling and analysis plan. Testing is anticipated to begin in the first quarter of 2020, dependent on the state’s certification of labs; the state has indicated it will have final approved methods for testing for PFAS compounds in wastewater and biosolids in the coming weeks and anticipates having labs certified to test for PFAS in early 2020. Having state-certified labs ensures that wastewater treatment facilities in Wisconsin, including the District, receive results that are standardized, reliable and comparable and that align with the state’s established testing methods.

“We are raising the bar on the science of PFAS and doing our due diligence to get a clearer picture of how this compound gets into, moves through and interacts with our systems and the environment,” says Griffin. “This comprehensive approach to testing will allow both the District and our customers to better understand the results and inform how we best move forward to protect public health and the environment.”

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ABOUT THE DISTRICT Established in 1930 to protect the lakes and streams of the upper Yahara watershed, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District today serves 26 Madison area customer communities covering some 184 square miles and 380,000 people. The District owns and operates 141 miles of pipe and 18 regional pumping stations that convey approximately 41 million gallons of wastewater to the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant each day. Organized as a municipal corporation, the District is a leader in sustainability and resource reclamation; its rates are established by the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District Commission.