



A Message to our Water Customers in the Cold Spring Water System

Update on the Hearthstone PFAS Treatment Facility

Buckingham Township recently mailed a PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) notice to all water customers in our Cold Spring Water System to let them know that during routine testing, the current average level of PFOA was 14.6 parts per trillion (ppt) or 0.6 parts per trillion (ppt) above the PA DEP standard (MCL) for PFOA at the entry point for wells CS-3 and CS-4, the site of the planned Hearthstone PFAS Treatment Facility. To better understand the amount, 1ppt is equivalent to one drop in 20-30 Olympic swimming pools.

Up until this most recent test result, wells CS-3 and CS-4 always tested below the latest PA DEP MCL for both PFOA and PFOS. However, as dry weather and drought watch conditions developed, we have begun to see an increase in PFAS concentrations in our sampling results. The level for PFOS currently remains below the statewide standard of 18ppt.

PFAS, which stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are long-lasting, human-made chemicals used in consumer and industrial products. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) are two of the most widely known PFAS. Examples include non-stick cookware, food packaging, stain resistant or waterproof fabrics and carpets, and firefighting foam. Because these chemicals are used in a variety of consumer products most if not all of us have been exposed to them. PFAS are known for not breaking down easily in the environment and are sometimes referred to as “forever chemicals”.

In 2023, the PADEP implemented stricter maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for PFAS, setting limits at 14ppt for PFOA and 18ppt for PFOS, replacing the previous guideline of 70 ppt. In 2024, PADEP required large water systems to begin sampling to ensure compliance with these new standards.

At the same time, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) moved toward implementing a more stringent MCL of 4ppt. In response, we worked with our engineering team to design treatment systems capable of reducing PFAS and PFOS levels below 4ppt. Recognizing that design and permitting require time, we also proactively engaged with PennVEST to pursue funding for the project.

Construction on the Hearthstone PFAS Treatment Facility is set to start. The Township issued a Notice to Proceed to the contractor, held the pre-construction meeting and the contractor has begun site preparations. We are also pleased to report that we have secured over \$2 million in grant funding, along with a low-interest loan of \$865,853 to fund the construction.

The project is expected to take approximately one year to complete. The primary driver of this timeline is the extended lead time for specialized treatment equipment, as many water systems across the country are simultaneously implementing similar upgrades.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through this important project. In the interim, we will continue our testing protocol and are exploring measures to help reduce PFOA levels while construction is underway. For ongoing updates, please continue to visit the “Safe to Sip” section on our website at www.buckinghampa.org.