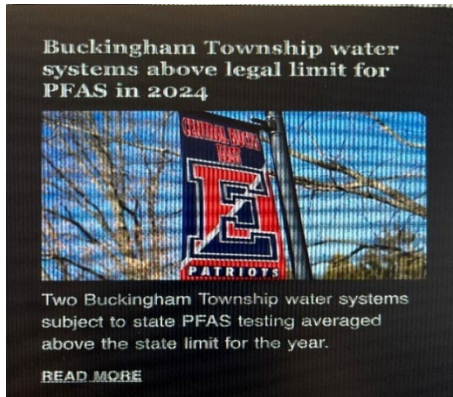


Buckingham Township Owned Water Systems were NOT above PA DEP limits for PFAS



In response to inquiries, comments and to any confusion that may have occurred over the title given to a recent Doylestown Intelligencer article and its Facebook reposts, Buckingham Township wants to assure our residents on our public water systems that the Township was not above the PA DEP legal limits for PFAS in 2024. We would also like to update the public on the ongoing efforts Buckingham Township is making to help address the widespread PFOA/PFOS issues happening across the country and the ongoing improvements to our Water Systems.

What is PFAS?

PFAS, which stands for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are long-lasting, human-made chemicals used in consumer and industrial products. Some examples include non-stick cookware, food packaging, makeup, and stain resistant or waterproof fabrics and carpets, and firefighting foam. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) are two of the most widely known PFAS. 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”. Prevalence of PFAS in the environment is so ubiquitous that they have even been found in remote areas of the world.

Who Owns the Water Systems mentioned in the Article?

Buckingham Township does NOT own or maintain the Water Systems mentioned in the Article but continues to offer to work with the system owners as best we can as they figure out the best solutions. The “systems” referred to in the Intelligencer article include the Central Bucks East well (CBSD) and the Durham Village Community Water System owned and operated by North Wales Water Authority (NWWA). Buckingham Township is in communication with both the CBSD and NWWA regarding their water systems and will continue to offer any assistance the Township can provide.

Specifically, with the CBSD well at Central Bucks East High School (School), the Township has offered and continues to offer to supply public water from the Township water system. As the Township water system is not nearby the School, CBSD is also considering an on-site system.

Both CBSD and NWWA are keeping the Township informed of their efforts and we will continue to monitor and update our website as appropriate.

How many Water Systems does Buckingham Township Own?

Buckingham Township currently owns three Water Systems. They are Cold Spring, Fieldstone, and Furlong (includes Buckingham Village which was interconnected with Furlong in 2023). Buckingham Township also operates but does not yet own the Mill Creek and Fenton’s Corner Water Systems. Those systems are owned by the developer Toll Brothers and will be offered for dedication to the Township.

What is the Regulatory Level of PFAS permitted in Public Water?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) first set a Lifetime Health Advisory Level for PFOA and PFOS in 2016. At that time the EPA advised that combined concentrations of PFOA and PFOS in drinking water should be no greater than 70 ppt (parts per trillion).

After the EPA sets an advisory level, the state environmental protection agencies typically review their regulations to determine if they will set a maximum contaminant level (MCL) allowed in public drinking water. In 2023, the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) joined a small group of states that had set limits for select PFAS in drinking water and established a lower MCL for PFAS than the EPA Advisory Level. On January 14, 2023, PA DEP published the Safe Drinking Water PFAS Rule in the Pennsylvania Bulletin setting the MCL for PFOA at 14 ppt (parts per trillion) and an MCL for PFOS at 18 ppt (parts per trillion).

Then in April of 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the first-ever national, legally enforceable drinking water standard for PFOA, PFOS and four other PFAS setting tighter limits on the levels of PFAS chemicals in all public water systems. The EPA set the National Primary Drinking Regulations (NPDWR) for PFOA and PFOS at an MCL of 4ppt (parts per trillion), the lowest feasible level that water systems can implement.

Under the EPA's new rule, public water systems have three years (2027) to complete the initial monitoring requirements and inform the public of PFAS levels in their drinking water, and five years (2029) to begin the implementation of solutions focused on reducing these PFAS if monitoring shows that drinking water exceeds the MCLs.

What is Buckingham Township Doing in their Water Systems to Combat PFAS?

Buckingham Township conducted sampling for PFAS/PFOS as early as 2019 to establish a baseline for all Township owned or operated water systems. At the time the EPA advisory level remained at 70 ppt and all Township water systems were well under the limit. After PA DEP set their PFAS limit in 2023, the Township determined that while all wells remained under this new lower limit, three entry points were close enough that the Township felt that treatment should be considered. The Township has two projects in the works, one in planning and one in construction to combat PFAS and ensure the continued delivery of safe drinking water to our residents on our public water systems.

As required by PA DEP, formal quarterly sample testing of our two larger systems Cold Spring and Furlong began in 2024. Both systems tested under the PA DEP limits and PA DEP has moved Furlong to annual testing. In 2025 the Fieldstone Water System, a smaller system, was also required to be sampled as well as the Mill Creek and Fenton's Corner Water Systems. All first quarter 2025 test results for PFAS for all Township owned or operated systems were under the PA DEP limits.

Although the Township wells remain under the PA DEP MCL for PFOA and PFOS in their sampling, the PFAS compliance Buckingham Township maintains under state standards no longer align with the most recent EPA rule. As the Township must follow the new EPA requirements moving forward, we continue to evaluate additional improvements that may be needed.

Currently, the Township is moving forward with the following two projects: a permanent interconnection of the Fieldstone Water and Cold Spring Water Systems (under construction) and a Cold Spring Well #4 PFOA/PFOS Removal System (in planning and permitting).

The Permanent Interconnection of the Fieldstone Water System to the Cold Spring Water System has many benefits in addition to assuring that PFAS levels remain below the PA DEP standards and meet the new EPA standards when they go into effect. Some additional benefits include the ability to add fire hydrants to the Fieldstone development, increasing safety and potentially reducing homeowner's insurance premiums, removing the older pneumatic water system ensuring consistent water pressure throughout the system, increasing the water supply by tapping into the Cold Spring wells that produce more water, eliminating costs and PA DEP fees by combining water systems and increasing the overall water quality.

Although Cold Spring Well #4 (there are a total of four active wells in the Cold Spring system) tested below the PA DEP levels, baseline test results demonstrate that the Township should move forward with PFOA/PFOS removal at the site. The Township has been working through the process of permitting and planning with the appropriate agencies – a complicated process with planning started in 2023 and permit reviews taking 6-9 months to get through state and federal agencies. The Township hopes to have those permits in hand and the project out to bid this summer. The Township has also applied for funding in the form of a DCED Grant and is in the process of applying for additional funding through Pennvest (permits needed before we can move ahead) to cover a portion of the costs of these improvements.

With the EPA standards going into effect, the Township continues to monitor other wells in our systems and is considering improvements to our Furlong system as well. Details of those improvements are still under development, and we will keep you informed.

This Sounds Expensive – Who is Paying for these Water System Improvements?

All expenses to the Water Systems are paid by the residents who use and pay fees to receive public water. There are NO tax dollars used in any of the testing, monitoring, operations, improvements – anything. The funding for our water systems acts much like a utility except as a municipality our mission is to provide clean, safe drinking water for those residents we serve not to make a profit. The Township understands the incredible potential costs of the newest EPA standards and continues to investigate all possible funding sources to keep your rates as low as possible while still providing safe clean drinking water.

For our many homeowners on private wells, while we cannot use water customers' monies to fund any testing and/or treatment of private wells, we will be distributing information to assist you in understanding your private wells.