

# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Kerrie Romanow

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** March 13, 2024

Approved



Date

3/14/24

## INFORMATION

**SUBJECT: ROUTINE PFAS SAMPLING AT SAN JOSE MUNICIPAL WATER SYSTEM GROUNDWATER WELLS - NOTIFICATION LEVEL EXCEEDANCE**

## BACKGROUND

This memorandum updates the San José City Council on the levels of one substance in the category commonly known as “PFAS” in San José Municipal Water System (Muni Water) groundwater wells based on routine water quality sampling. Muni Water’s supply meets safety standards and no actions are necessary.

PFAS is a large class of chemicals known as perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances. PFAS are human-made substances that do not occur naturally and their presence in the environment is due to human activity.

A maximum contaminant level (MCL) is the maximum concentration of a chemical that is allowed in public drinking water systems. MCLs are adopted as regulations and are health protective drinking water standards to be met by public water systems. There are currently no federal or state MCLs for any PFAS chemical. Federal and state agencies have not yet determined an acceptable PFAS concentration for health and safety within drinking water, however, the state has determined notification and response levels for some PFAS chemicals.

Notification Levels (NL) are nonregulatory, health-based advisory levels established by the state for chemicals in drinking water that lack MCLs and require a report to a utility’s governing body when exceeded. Response levels are established levels for a chemical at which additional steps, beyond notification, are recommended to reduce public exposure.

Muni Water’s PFAS monitoring is required by the State Water Resources Control Board General Orders and began in November 2020 for four Evergreen wells and expanded to a well in the North San José/Alviso service area in January 2023. This testing generally occurs quarterly, so City Council will be updated on a routine basis as necessary.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

March 13, 2024

**Subject: Routine PFAS Sampling at San José Municipal Water System Groundwater Wells - Notification Level Exceedance**

Page 2

## **ANALYSIS**

On October 31, 2022, State Water Resources Control Board established a NL of 3 ng/L (nanograms per liter) and response level of 20 ng/L for a specific PFAS chemical called perfluorohexanesulfonic acid, or “PFHxS.” This chemical has characteristics that help lift and suspend soil or other particles. As a result, this compound has been used in numerous commercial products to offer water and stain-repellent properties and in fire-fighting foams. PFHxS is resistant to degradation and persists in the environment and in biological organisms. PFHxS adversely affects the growth and development in fetuses, infants, and young children.

Routine sampling for fourth quarter of 2023 occurred during November and December 2023. On February 12, 2024, staff was notified by the testing laboratory that a PFHxS level of 3.1 ng/L (above the 3.0 ng/L NL) was found at Evergreen Well 2. This level is consistent with previous sample results at this location. No other groundwater well sample contained any PFAS chemical result above an established NL. Staff anticipates that the PFHxS levels at some or all of its wells may continue to exceed the NL but remain within the acceptable limits and not require action. The source of PFAS in the Muni Water groundwater wells is unknown. The State Water Resources Control Board, along with the Santa Clara Valley Water District and local agencies, are actively testing and searching for potential sources.

Muni Water’s Evergreen service area is primarily supplied with treated surface water purchased from the Santa Clara Valley Water, supplemented by groundwater. All Evergreen Wells continue to supply water, and during 2023 provided approximately 1% of the total potable water supply to the Evergreen area.

Staff will continue to follow all state regulations and may periodically return to City Council with further information.

/s/

KERRIE ROMANOW  
Director, Environmental Services

For questions, please contact Jeffrey Provenzano, Deputy Director, at (408) 277-3671.