Frequently Asked Questions about PFAS (August, 2023)

What is PFAS?
It is an abbreviation for per- and polyfluoroalkyl compounds which are manmade chemicals used in metal plating and a wide variety of consumer products including fire-suppressing foam, carpets, paints, polishes and waxes. The most studied types of PFAS are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluoroctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). Other monitored PFAS compounds are for GenX, PFBS, PFNA, PFHxS, and PFBS. The list continues to grow as more PFAS types are detected.

Why are we just now hearing about PFAS if it has been in products for years?
Different types of PFAS compounds are difficult to detect – especially in water. It's only recently that laboratory testing technology could even see them at the levels being discussed. Technological advances now allow us to detect concentrations in the parts per trillion (ppt) range. A part-per-trillion is the equivalent of roughly one drop of water in an Olympic sized pool.

Are PFAS compounds in water regulated?
To date, PFAS compounds (a group of thousands of per and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are not regulated. On March 24, 2023, EPA announced Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for six PFAS compounds. If finalized, the proposal would regulate PFOA and PFOS as individual substances, and PFHxS, PFNA, PFBS and HFPO-DA (commonly referred to as GenX) as a PFAS mixture. The EPA is also proposing health-based, non-enforceable Maximum Contaminant Level Goals (MCLGs) for these six PFAS substances.

Has PFAS been detected in RWSD's drinking water?
RWSD's drinking water has been certified by the state's independent lab to be safe to drink, with concentrations of PFAS either undetectable or well below the EPA's proposed acceptable levels. Click the link below to review RWSD's PFAS initial sampling results: https://www.roxwater.org/wp-content/uploads/08.02.2023-PFAS-Blog-Post_FINAL.pdf.

What is the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) doing about PFAS?
The CDPHE remains committed to identifying where PFAS substances are entering the environment, stopping new releases, and protecting Coloradans. Working closely with the EPA, the CDPHE remains dedicated to tracking and reducing people's exposure to PFAS. You can find additional information from the state at this link: www.colorado.gov/cdphe/pfas.

What can be done about PFAS?
Drinking water providers test their product more than just about any other industry. Water quality is highly regulated, primarily through the CDPHE, which is responsible for enforcement of the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act. Measuring PFAS in water is relatively easy compared to measuring exposure from other sources of PFAS like clothing, food packaging, or dental floss. We encourage residents to avoid anything containing PFAS when purchasing consumers goods and new household products. This will help protect your health and prevent the compounds from further entering our environment.

What is RWSD staff doing to address PFAS?
In 2022, RWSD worked with several water and wastewater utilities and environmental groups from around the state to support a House Bill (HB22-1345) that requires the phase out of PFAS chemicals in consumer products. The Bill was signed into law by Governor Polis in June of 2022. Currently, RWSD's staff continues testing for PFAS compounds and working to address this situation in coordination with the state. RWSD will also continue to provide information about PFAS and lab results on its website.

Where can I see test results of RWSD's drinking water quality?
RWSD's staff continues to provide safe drinking water to the community it serves. The independent lab verified testing results for the over 100 regulated contaminants are available for review on the RWSD's water quality report (Consumer Confidence Report) by clicking on this link: https://www.roxwater.org/wp-content/uploads/RWSD-2023-CCR.pdf.