

Supporting Research on Social and Economic Impacts of PFAS in the Great Lakes Region

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a suite of 10,000+ toxic, manufactured chemicals of emerging concern. Key exposure pathways include ingestion through food and water, inhalation through air and dust, and dermal exposure with consumer products. As with other chemicals, certain communities are at higher risk of experiencing negative effects than others. Some of these, e.g., firefighters, are relatively well-aware of the potential risks, with policies being enacted to mitigate their exposure, while others have little or no awareness of neither the risks nor how to mitigate them. It is unclear how to best share information in a way that encourages Great Lakes communities and individuals to take protective actions, in part because there remains so much to be learned about the mechanics of PFAS toxicity, exposure routes, and which PFAS are most problematic in a given area or for a given population. However, despite the unknowns, it is important to communicate what is known to those experiencing exposure, establish the relevant needs of community groups, and emphasize that more information is forthcoming. This presentation will summarize work led by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant to support communities that are exposed to PFAS and related compounds, including information gathered via three scoping sessions and the resultant competitive research opportunity that highlights regional research questions that were identified.

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