



October 5, 2026

Tess Richman
Engineering and Science Division
Office of Water (Mail Code 4504-T)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Submitted via the Federal eRulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov

Re: Comments on EPA's Draft Guidance for Reducing Risk from Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid (PFOS) in Biosolids and Request for Feedback

Dear Ms. Richman:

The Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority (LRWRA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on EPA's Draft Guidance for Reducing Risk from PFOA and PFOS in Biosolids and Request for Feedback.

LRWRA provides wastewater treatment services for the City of Little Rock and surrounding communities through three wastewater treatment facilities. For 45 years, LRWRA has managed up to 6,700 dry tons of biosolids annually through a comprehensive program that serves our community, supports local agricultural partners, and has long been LRWRA's exclusive biosolids management approach. While LRWRA maintains permitted land application sites for biosolids management, the majority of our biosolids are beneficially reused as Class A Exceptional Quality (EQ) biosolids. We have invested significant resources in treatment processes, operations, monitoring, and biosolids management practices to produce high-quality biosolids that meet the most stringent federal standards and provide a sustainable beneficial reuse option.

LRWRA appreciates EPA's recognition that municipal wastewater utilities are passive receivers of PFAS and that PFOA, PFOS, and other PFAS enter wastewater systems from households, businesses, industries, and consumer products that are largely outside the control of wastewater treatment utilities. We also appreciate EPA's continued recognition that land application remains an important and sustainable biosolids management option.

While we support EPA's efforts to provide practical guidance for reducing PFAS risks, we believe several aspects of the Draft Guidance should be strengthened to better reflect real-world biosolids management practices and the operational realities facing wastewater utilities.



I. Recognition of Data Limitations and Real-World Conditions

LRWRA supports EPA's acknowledgment that the Draft Risk Assessment was developed without corresponding nationwide occurrence data for PFOA and PFOS in biosolids. Without a comprehensive national dataset, it is difficult to evaluate how frequently the modeled scenarios may occur or whether they are representative of typical biosolids management practices across the country.

EPA should continue to emphasize that the Draft Risk Assessment evaluated limited, highly conservative exposure scenarios and should not be interpreted as representative of most biosolids programs operating under federal and state oversight. Utilities across the country manage biosolids under extensive regulatory requirements that include treatment standards, land application restrictions, monitoring, recordkeeping, nutrient management requirements, and state oversight. Evaluating highly conservative exposure assumptions without considering their likelihood of occurrence can create a misleading perception of risk.

Additional occurrence data, field studies, and research regarding PFAS fate and transport in real-world conditions are needed before broad policy conclusions are drawn regarding biosolids management.

II. Clarification That the 1 ppb Modeling Assumption Is Not a Regulatory Threshold

LRWRA strongly supports EPA's clarification that the 1 part per billion concentration used in the Draft Risk Assessment was simply a modeling input and not a regulatory standard, health-based threshold, cleanup criterion, or universally applicable safe level.

Unfortunately, the 1 ppb value has already been cited and referenced outside the context of the Draft Risk Assessment in ways that suggest it represents a regulatory benchmark. This misunderstanding creates unnecessary confusion among regulators, elected officials, agricultural stakeholders, landowners, and the public.

The final guidance should repeatedly and clearly state that the 1 ppb assumption was used solely for modeling purposes and should not be interpreted as a threshold for regulating, restricting, or evaluating biosolids.

III. Support for Source Reduction and Tiered Management Frameworks

LRWRA supports EPA's emphasis on reducing PFAS risks through practical and achievable approaches. However, meaningful long-term reductions can only be achieved by addressing PFAS at its source.

Wastewater treatment facilities do not manufacture PFAS, produce PFAS-containing products, or control the many consumer and commercial uses that ultimately result in PFAS entering wastewater systems. Utilities receive PFAS after it has already entered the environment.

EPA should therefore continue emphasizing industrial source identification, pretreatment programs, pollution prevention efforts, product stewardship initiatives, and public education programs. We also support transparent, science-based, state-led management frameworks that begin with data collection, stakeholder engagement, and source identification before restrictions on beneficial reuse are considered.

IV. Best Management Practices Should Be Practical and Implementable

LRWRA encourages EPA to provide more specific and practical guidance regarding best management practices that may be appropriate for utilities, farmers, land applicators, and regulators.

Potential measures such as source investigations, pollution prevention plans, additional monitoring, notification procedures, and targeted management responses may be useful when elevated PFAS concentrations are identified. However, recommendations should be practical, scientifically justified, and clearly defined.

EPA should also clarify terms that are open to interpretation such as recommendations to avoid application "near" drinking water sources or other sensitive receptors. Utilities and regulators need objective, implementable guidance rather than subjective terminology that may result in inconsistent application across states and regions.

V. EPA Must Recognize That All Biosolids Are Not the Same

One of LRWRA's most significant concerns is that the Draft Guidance does not adequately distinguish among different classes of biosolids.

The majority of LRWRA's biosolids are beneficially reused as Class A Exceptional Quality biosolids. Class A EQ biosolids represent the highest quality category recognized under federal regulations and must meet stringent requirements for pollutant concentrations, pathogen reduction, vector attraction reduction, and product quality. These materials are specifically approved for broad use because they satisfy the most protective standards established under the federal biosolids program.

The Draft Guidance frequently discusses biosolids as though all biosolids are managed under the same conditions and present the same considerations. This is not the case. Management practices developed for site-restricted agricultural application of other biosolids classifications should not automatically be applied to Class A EQ biosolids.

EPA should clearly recognize the distinction between Class A EQ biosolids and other biosolids classifications and provide reassurance that the long-established federal biosolids framework continues to support the beneficial reuse of these materials. Failure to do so may undermine public confidence in Class A EQ biosolids programs and discourage future investments in advanced treatment technologies designed to produce higher-quality biosolids.

VI. Disposal and Incineration Alternatives Require Greater Consideration

The Draft Guidance should more fully acknowledge the consequences of limiting land application and beneficial reuse opportunities.

LRWRA manages approximately 6,700 dry tons of biosolids annually. Beneficial reuse remains the most sustainable, environmentally responsible, and cost-effective management option available to the utility. While alternative disposal methods such as landfilling and incineration are often discussed as substitutes, these options come with significant environmental, operational, and economic challenges.

Restrictions on beneficial reuse could increase hauling distances, fuel consumption, disposal costs, and ratepayer impacts. In addition, many regions lack sufficient landfill or incineration capacity to accommodate large increases in biosolids disposal volumes.

EPA should also recognize the cyclical relationship between wastewater treatment facilities and solid waste facilities. PFAS-containing consumer products are disposed of in landfills, landfill leachate can contain PFAS, and that leachate is frequently returned to wastewater treatment facilities for management. Any discussion of PFAS management should recognize this interrelationship and avoid focusing exclusively on biosolids.

VII. PFAS Risk Reduction Must Focus on Sources

LRWRA believes the most effective long-term strategy for reducing PFAS concentrations in biosolids is reducing the amount of PFAS entering commerce, consumer products, industrial processes, and wastewater systems in the first place.

Wastewater utilities are often placed at the end of the PFAS lifecycle, yet they have limited ability to control the widespread residential and commercial sources that contribute PFAS loadings. Expectations that utilities eliminate PFAS through wastewater treatment alone are neither technically realistic nor economically sustainable.

EPA should continue advancing source reduction initiatives while supporting industrial pretreatment programs, public education efforts, and product stewardship measures that address PFAS before it enters wastewater collection systems.

VIII. EPA Should Revisit the Draft Risk Assessment Framework

The Draft Risk Assessment appears to rely upon assumptions that may not adequately reflect present-day agricultural practices, biosolids management programs, chemical fate and transport mechanisms, or actual exposure conditions.

Before finalization, EPA should consider incorporating additional occurrence data, more realistic exposure assumptions, probabilistic risk assessment methods, and updated information regarding PFAS transport and uptake under real-world conditions.

Improving the underlying framework will increase confidence in the resulting risk assessment and provide a stronger scientific basis for future policy decisions.

IX. Conclusion

LRWRA appreciates EPA's recognition that municipal wastewater utilities are passive receivers of PFAS and that biosolids land application remains an important component of sustainable residuals management.

We encourage EPA to strengthen the final guidance by:

- Expanding and emphasizing PFAS occurrence data collection;
- Clarifying that the 1 ppb concentration used in the Draft Risk Assessment is not a regulatory threshold;
- Supporting source reduction and industrial pretreatment efforts;
- Encouraging practical, state-led, risk-based management frameworks;
- Providing clear and implementable best management practices;

- Recognizing distinctions among biosolids classes, particularly Class A Exceptional Quality biosolids; and
- Preserving beneficial reuse as a sustainable management option for communities across the country.

LRWRA urges EPA to ensure that future guidance and policy decisions are grounded in sound science, reflect real-world biosolids management practices, recognize wastewater utilities as passive receivers of PFAS, and preserve safe and sustainable beneficial reuse options for the communities we serve.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and for your consideration of these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Ryan Benefield', with a stylized, flowing script.

J. Ryan Benefield, P.E.
Chief Operating Officer
Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority