Illinois EPA to Begin Testing All Illinois Community Water Supplies for Per- and PolyFluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

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SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director John J. Kim announced plans to conduct a statewide investigation into the prevalence and occurrence of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in finished drinking water at all 1,749 community water supplies in Illinois. Data gathered as part of this investigation will aid in the development of future Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) regulatory standards for PFAS. The statewide investigation is expected to take 12 to 15 months to complete. Illinois EPA has directly notified each of the community water supplies undergoing testing and appreciates their cooperation in this important project. If PFAS chemicals are detected, Illinois EPA will work with community water supplies to ensure residents are informed and to determine next steps to reducing exposure.

“Our statewide drinking water investigation will produce essential data on these emerging contaminants, which will allow us to identify areas where action must be taken to reduce human health risks associated with these chemicals in drinking water,” said Director Kim. “Illinois EPA is committed to a transparent process and will publish confirmed sampling data online as it becomes available. The data will also be used to

support the development and promulgation of maximum contaminant level standards for PFAS in Illinois."

If PFAS chemicals are detected in concentrations above laboratory minimum reporting levels (MRL), Illinois EPA will return to collect a confirmation sample at the distribution system entry point(s). Based on results of confirmation sampling, additional evaluation or actions may be necessary to protect human health and the environment. Illinois EPA's analysis will include a total of 18 PFAS chemicals.

Illinois EPA has established a comprehensive webpage to inform the public about Illinois EPA's Statewide PFAS Investigation Network including background, exposures, health effects, minimum reporting levels for each of the 18 PFAS chemicals and regulatory status of these emerging contaminants. As community-specific data become available, they will be posted to the webpage, which includes an interactive dashboard and map.

PFAS chemicals are human-made and do not occur naturally in the environment. They are widely used for waterproofing and stain-fighting applications in a range of commercial products such as firefighting foam, waterproof clothing, food wrappers and many household products (e.g. non-stick products, polishes, cleaning products, and paints). PFAS chemicals do not break down when released into the environment and move easily into surface and groundwater. Due to their persistence, historic and ongoing use and mobility, PFAS chemicals have been found widely in the environment including in unpopulated areas.

U.S. EPA established a federal Health Advisory for PFAS in 2016 but has taken no action to set drinking water standards. When Illinois EPA proposes its own MCL regulatory standards for PFAS chemicals, occurrence data obtained from the statewide investigation will be essential to justifying state action.

Illinois EPA is also preparing to file proposed groundwater quality standards with the Illinois Pollution Control Board for five PFAS chemicals. Unlike MCLs, which consider treatability and cost, the proposed groundwater values are exclusively health-based values protective of sensitive populations including children and infants.

For additional information, please visit the Statewide PFAS Investigation Network webpage at:
http://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/water-quality/pfas/Pages/default.aspx.