

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2022

Edwin H. Oshiba, SES, DAF
Acting Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
Energy, Installations, and Environment (SAF/IE)
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Nancy J. Balkus, P.E., SES
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
Environment, Safety and Infrastructure
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Mr. Oshiba and Ms. Balkus:

We write to call your attention to the harmful use of firefighting foam laden with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) at Peterson Space Force Base. This foam has contaminated the local Widefield aquifer that provides drinking water to thousands of El Paso County residents and supplies surface water to area ponds, some which are used for recreational fishing.

We understand that multiple pilot projects are ongoing at Peterson Space Force Base to test technologies that can remove PFAS from groundwater and soils. Given the elevated levels of PFAS discovered in the fish and surface water of El Paso County linked to contamination from Air Force operations, we request that a pilot project be conducted at Willow Springs pond to test technologies which may be used to remove PFAS from surface water bodies. To the extent possible, the Air Force should coordinate with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the other state partners who research the effects of PFAS contamination.

Furthermore, we request the Air Force include the preliminary findings of CDPHE's PFAS in Fish Pilot Project in the remedial investigation of the of PFAS contamination of the Widefield aquifer in El Paso County, Colorado. The project, which the Colorado School of Mines and Colorado Parks and Wildlife conducted, led to a public health notification on elevated levels of PFAS in fish in this recreational fishing pond.

In March 2022, CDPHE in partnership with the Colorado School of Mines and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, published the results of their PFAS in Fish Pilot Project. The study gathered preliminary data from select water bodies across Colorado to understand the prevalence of this toxin in our natural environment and how people could be exposed to PFAS through the consumption of fish. This valuable data will help to illuminate the scope of contamination, the potential hazards to human health, as well as other ecological risks that are being assessed in

your ongoing environmental investigation.

In June 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) released a report for the Security-Widefield, El Paso County, Colorado, Exposure Assessment investigating exposure to PFAS. The report highlights disturbing data on elevated blood levels of PFAS in residents exposed to drinking water contaminated by operations at the Peterson Space Force Base. These findings reinforce the urgency of improving our understanding of and regulating the use of these forever chemicals. We appreciate the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) action in developing a proposed National Drinking Water Regulation for publication by the end of this year for PFOA and PFOS. However, as EPA undertakes this action, it is imperative the broader administration evaluate the use and regulatory actions necessary to address PFAS as a group of chemicals, particularly seeking to prevent contamination of our precious water supplies in the first place.

Finally, we ask the administration to commit to partnering with CDPHE and other relevant Colorado agencies, our local communities, and other key stakeholders to address PFAS contamination stemming from military activities. In particular, communication and coordination between all parties studying and working to remedy the PFAS contamination in El Paso County, Colorado is critically important. It is critical that we use the best available science to protect the health and well-being of Coloradans and our communities. We look forward to hearing from you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



John Hickenlooper
U.S. Senator