

## How Safe is Pittsboro's Drinking Water?

### A Problem of Industrial Contaminants

The Town of Pittsboro is the only municipality in the Haw River watershed that takes its source drinking water from the Haw River. Beginning with an investigation and report in 1985, the Haw River Assembly found that the drinking water in Pittsboro was contaminated by industrial pollutants from cities upriver, including Greensboro, Reidsville and Burlington. Most industrial wastewater is treated in municipal wastewater treatment plants, and regulations do not require monitoring for these chemicals. These pollutants enter the river through treated effluent from municipal wastewater treatment plants which are unable to remove the chemicals, or unaware of their presence. We have updated Pittsboro officials over the years on this continuing problem. In 2007, the Town of Pittsboro was given notice of high levels of unregulated contaminants in the Haw River, after a report was published in a scientific journal about a family of chemicals called PFAS. Since that article was published, Haw River Assembly has been working with certified laboratories and a team of scientists in area universities and research facilities to investigate the levels of these contaminants throughout the watershed. We have found that although some of these industrial contaminants are present in treated wastewater, others are contained in the wastewater sludge that is applied to fields, and often runs off into streams during storms.

### What Are These Contaminants?

PFAS (perfluoroalkyl substances), are a class of unregulated contaminants that are not easily removed in traditional drinking water treatment processes and have serious long term health impacts. These chemicals are used in a variety of textile and coating operations, flame retardants and fire-fighting foams. The recent chemical contamination in Wilmington's drinking water was caused by Gen X, a chemical used in Teflon.

Another industrial solvent, 1,4- dioxane, is also contaminating the Haw River at high levels and has been found in Pittsboro's drinking water. This chemical is used in a large number of industrial applications and is also considered a carcinogen and health risk when present above safe levels in drinking water supplies.

### What is Being Done?

After hearing repeated concerns from the Haw River Assembly and from NCSU scientist Dr. Detlef Knappe, the Town of Pittsboro added activated carbon to their drinking water treatment process in 2017. This helps remove most PFAS chemicals, but does not decrease 1,4-dioxane. The state is continuing to take samples from the Haw River and attempting to find the origin of the contamination in upriver sources - made more difficult by the number of possible users of these chemicals. The Haw Riverkeeper (of the Haw River Assembly) is also taking samples, and more frequently, that are analyzed at Duke University and NCSU.

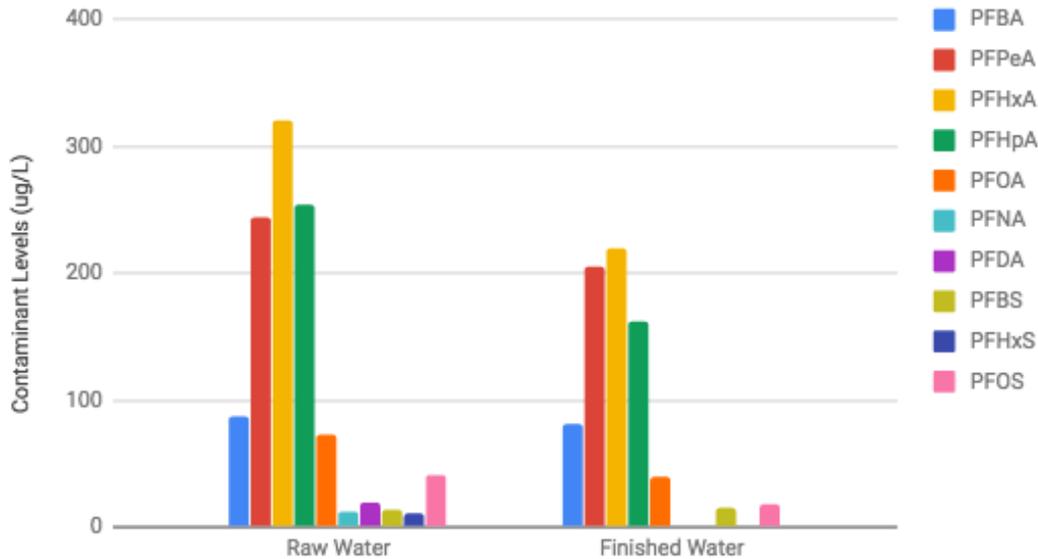
Last month, Haw Riverkeeper Emily Sutton presented to the Pittsboro Town board about the continuing high levels of these contaminants in the raw water and finished water for Pittsboro. She urged the board to take protective measures for the citizens who depend on the town for their drinking water supply, but there has been no new action taken to date.

### What Can We Do?

The problem of unregulated chemicals is widespread and ignores the possibility that these compounds may be responsible for harmful impacts to human health and the environment. We need much broader discharge control at the factories and advanced techniques for contaminant monitoring and removal to stop this problem at the source, instead of trying to remove chemicals already in our water supplies. The public and our elected leaders should have confidence that our drinking water supplies are safe, and that our streams, lakes and rivers are healthy for recreation and wildlife. Although there are technologies available for home filtering to remove many of these chemicals, such as reverse osmosis systems, they are very expensive. We are concerned

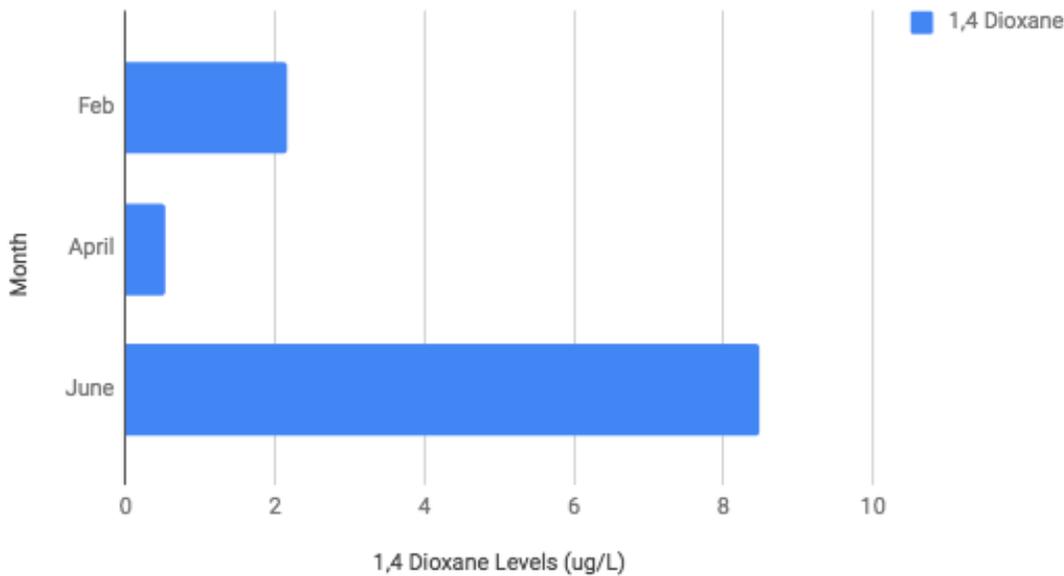
for the safety of our community who depend on this source of drinking water including the children and youth that attend schools in Pittsboro. Urge your Pittsboro officials to take action to ensure clean drinking water to protect our community and to work with the state to hold polluters accountable.

### PFAS Levels in Pittsboro



The health advisory goal for the combined total of PFOA and PFOS is 70ug/L. These are only two of several PFAS compounds we have found in Pittsboro. The combined total for all 10 of these PFAS compounds in 1076.1 ug/L.

### 1,4 Dioxane in Pittsboro



\*The health standard for 1,4 Dioxane is 0.35 ug/L. The numbers in Pittsboro vary widely, with some readings as high as 8.49 ug/L.

**For more information contact:**

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Find more resources online at <http://hawriver.org/river-issues/industrial-contaminants/>