



Haw River Assembly

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Attn: Mayor Nass and Pittsboro Board of Commissioners
July 6, 2020

Mayor Nass and Board members,

The drinking water contamination in the Town of Pittsboro has been a statewide concern for nearly three years. Academic researchers, state health department staff, and Department of Environmental Quality staff have repeatedly expressed concern for this public health crisis, but have offered little support or guidance for long term solutions. Meanwhile, town residents, school children, and patients in our healthcare facilities are facing ongoing exposure to high levels of PFAS compounds through their drinking water. We need urgent leadership from our Pittsboro elected officials to protect our community now. Now is the time to step up and place the health of our communities ahead of economic growth and development. This is a public health crisis, and we need your bold leadership to treat it as such.

In Pittsboro, we have seen levels of PFAS above 1200 ppt in the raw water directly at the drinking water intake. For comparison, the EPA has set a guidance for no higher than 70 ppt for combined PFAS. Vermont and Massachusetts have proposed limits for less than 20 ppt for combined PFAS. Though we are encouraged by the ongoing pilot treatment study in Pittsboro, it has been made clear that the completion of a treatment plant to eliminate PFAS is several years away. Haw River Assembly has continued to partner with academic researchers to collect data, and is participating in upstream investigations to identify and stop the PFAS discharges at the source. However, removal of all sources from the Haw River will take years.

Haw River Assembly, our academic partners, environmental advocates, public health experts, and downstream communities have expressed several opportunities for the town to take leadership and address this drinking water crisis to protect Pittsboro residents. As Pittsboro grows, adding nearly 60,000 people to the drinking water supply, it is more urgent than ever to address this contamination problem and protect future residents, as well as those who have been exposed for years to high levels of toxins. We urge elected officials take leadership now to address the PFAS contamination in the drinking water supply in the following ways:

1. Actively pursue an end to upstream discharges by engaging in conversations with Burlington, Greensboro, and Reidsville elected officials and staff.
2. Pursue drinking water treatment methods to supply safe water to all residents of Pittsboro through options previously discussed, and provide short term safe drinking water to all Pittsboro residents now. Engage with state legislators and agency staff for financial assistance.
3. Actively engage with NC Department of Environmental Quality and state legislators to invoke laws to protect downstream drinking water users impacted by PFAS contamination throughout the state.

We are happy to discuss these options and assist in a plan moving forward. However, action needs to be taken expeditiously. Pittsboro residents need bold leadership from our elected officials to address this urgent issue.

Thank you,
Emily Sutton, Haw Riverkeeper
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