

Office of the Mayor

*For Immediate Release*

*July 14, 2020*

## **PFAS 101: Nature, Fate, and Risk of PFAS in Rhinelanders, by Dr. James Tinjum now available**

The Rhinelanders City Council commissioned Dr. James Tinjum in January 2020 to report on wellhead protection and PFAS source identification related to City of Rhinelanders municipal water. Dr. Tinjum presented information and his recommendations to the City Council on June 22. First, he proposed testing samples of leachate, ground water coming from the closed landfill. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality developed sampling methods. The second proposal is to test samples of ground water at the Rhinelanders-Oneida County Airport. Dr. Tinjum's third recommendation is to pursue State and Federal Funding.

*“Drinking water collected from City of Rhinelanders Well No. 8 on October 2, 2019 showed that PFAS (per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances) was detected at a concentration of 90.1 parts per trillion (ppt), well above Wisconsin's recommended groundwater standard of 20 ppt. Studies have found that certain PFAS compounds have been linked to various cancers, thyroid problems, low birth weights, and affect other health issues including cholesterol levels, our auto-immune system, fertility, and childhood behavior. That PFAS is showing up at potentially unsafe levels in City of Rhinelanders Wells is of concern to our community's health and wellbeing. This White Paper discusses what PFAS is, the potential health impacts, how it might have gotten into the City water supply, and possible next steps to address this potential public health issue.”*

PFAS is one group of human-made chemicals manufactured and used since the 1940s. PFAS chemical do not occur naturally in the environment. There are more than 40,000 PFAS type chemicals in use. These chemicals are designed to be stable. They not to react with water, grease, heat or dirt. Thus, they earned the label “forever chemicals.” There are no national standards for PFAS chemicals in water or air.

*“My primary responsibility is to look out for the health and safety of Rhinelanders”, said Mayor Chris Frederickson. “Given this topic is largely unstudied and the public health effects of PFOA forever chemicals are not well known, our work is all the more important”, he added.*



# City of Rhinelanders

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In 2019, as a result of the discovery of PFAS, Mayor Chris Frederickson suspended use of two public water supply wells. The mayor's independent citizen advisory group, WATR (Water Action Team Rhinelanders), began to hold monthly public forums in May 2020. Each forum provides information on PFAS topics. Forum recordings are on the WATER Facebook group at [facebook.com/groups/529877514627983/](https://facebook.com/groups/529877514627983/). Individuals who wish to support WATR's work may join the Facebook page or contact Mayor Frederickson.

## **About WATR**

WATR's mission is to empower community through education based on forever chemical research. We encourage: 1) research to understand forever chemicals in the environment and human health, 2) elected officials and government agencies to develop solution-oriented policies 3) industry development of remediation and treatment solutions 4) solutions that benefit Rhinelanders and other communities

## **About JAMES TINJUM, PE, PhD, F. ASCE**

Professor James M. Tinjum is Director of the Geological Engineering Program in the College of Engineering at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He is responsible for outreach, research, and continuing engineering education in the areas of waste geotechnics, remediation engineering, and environmental sustainability. Jim directs UW's online graduate program in Sustainable Systems Engineering in addition to directing and teaching internationally attended professional short courses. His most renowned short course is Solid Waste Landfill Design. Jim has 30 years of experience in environmental remediation in both industry and academics.