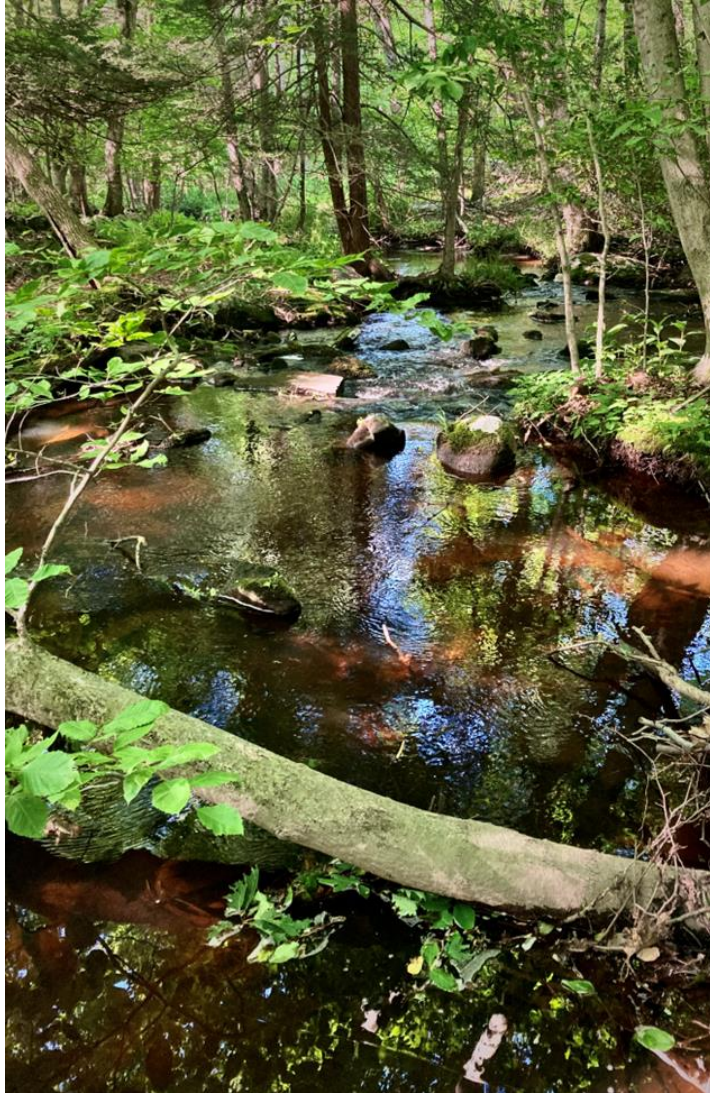


Water at Risk: “The people have a right to clean air, pure water...”
Written by: Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association



CAPTION: Everyone has a right to pure, clean water. Avoiding manmade PFAS “forever chemicals” in your daily life is one way to protect yourself and your family.

That promise in the Pennsylvania state constitution goes on: “and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment.”

You might be thinking, “Well, duh. Of course.” Clean air and pure water are essential to life; natural beauty and our woods-and-water heritage are essential to a good life.

And yet.

Many small, everyday conveniences we don't give a second thought to give off "forever chemicals" that get into the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Even small amounts of these chemicals can contribute to a lowered immune system, high cholesterol, increased cancer risk and reproductive problems. And, crucially, they are everywhere: they're found not just around us, but in us — in our blood and bodies. Even in newborns.

The chemicals are called PFAS for short. They're in non-stick cookware, waterproof rain gear, stain-resistant carpets, and the grease-proof paper box your restaurant leftovers go home — just a few examples of products that use these chemicals to make them slippery and water-resistant. Firefighters are at special risk: some firefighting foams also use PFAS chemicals.

Drinking water can be a source of PFAS (perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances). In the Brodhead watershed, the public water supplier Brodhead Creek Regional Authority has been testing for PFAS in its water sources since 2019. Results have been heartening: sampling results have been below proposed state standards for PFAS.

These manmade chemicals can also be found in groundwater — and therefore well water. There are many reasons to get your well water tested periodically. This is one of them.

The risks of PFAS to humans are still being studied. But because they are so pervasive — in air, water, fish, soil and the human body around the world — it just makes sense to be cautious in your own life and home.

Switching out your non-stick frypan for a good old, newly-fashionable cast-iron one is a place to start. Why not keep a re-useable container in your car to bring home restaurant leftovers? Many furniture-textile and carpet manufacturers make PFAS-free products. Same with clothing makers.

We all have a right to clean air and water and a healthy environment for ourselves and our children. Steering clear of "forever chemicals" is one step in the right direction.

Find out more: A "Shopper's Guide" to avoiding PFAS is here:
[https://www.cleanwateraction.org/sites/default/files/MA PFAS Fact Sheet -](https://www.cleanwateraction.org/sites/default/files/MA%20PFAS%20Fact%20Sheet)

Shopper's Guide to Avoiding PFAS.pdf. And the Environmental Protection Agency has updated information here: <https://www.epa.gov/>

Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member! www.brodheadwatershed.org