UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

February 27, 2019

OFFICE OF THE
ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Directive to prioritize federal research on impacts to agriculture and rural economies in EPA's Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Action Plan

FROM: Andrew R. Wheeler
Acting Administrator

TO: Jennifer Orme- Zavaleta, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Science, Office of Research and Development (ORD), EPA Science Advisor

On February 14, 2019, the Agency released the Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) Action Plan, an historic, first-time EPA research and communications effort to understand and identify additional short- and long-term solutions for addressing PFAS contamination concerns. I appreciate ORD's assistance in drafting the action plan and your leadership in establishing much needed research to fill important gaps in our understanding of PFAS contamination.

EPA career staff, as well as state and local officials, have indicated to me the present strong need for quality scientific research specifically on best practices for managing PFAS-contaminated well/irrigation water and soil systems common in rural America. Everyday farmers, ranchers, farm workers and food industry managers and employees work daily to protect and enhance U.S. food security, and therefore urgently need access to scientifically-driven information regarding PFAS chemicals and potential impacts on agriculture and rural communities.

Consistent with EPA's PFAS Action Plan and the research program highlighted in *Section VII. Research, Development and Technical Assistance for Addressing PFAS-Related Public Health Questions*, I am directing ORD to build on the PFAS research program and find ways to direct existing funds immediately towards research projects that will generate practical and actionable science to help manage PFAS chemical issues impacting agriculture and rural economies. Additionally, consistent with the Action Plan *Section VI. Identifying PFAS and Addressing PFAS Exposure in Affected Communities; Work with Federal Partners*, ORD should work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other federal partners as appropriate on PFAS-related research projects and, subsequent to their findings, work on risk- based communications plans specifically for agricultural and rural communities. In addition, ORD

should lead the coordination with OW, OLEM, and EPA Regions to identify and activate other Agency resources as needed, including the full EPA Laboratory enterprise.

Upon releasing EPA's PFAS Action Plan, I emphasized that it should operate as a living, breathing document given the evolving nature of environmental challenges surrounding PFAS. As such, directing Agency resources towards projects important to U.S. agriculture, agriculture workers and all rural Americans, is consistent with EPA's PFAS Action Plan.

cc: Dave Ross, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Water

Barry Breen, Acting Assistant Administrator for the Office of Land and Emergency Management

Tate Bennett, Agriculture Advisor to the Administrator & Associate Administrator for Public Engagement and Environmental Education

Regional Administrators