RA BRIEF
GA PFAS

Date Updated: February 28, 2020 **Date Original Prepared:** February 28, 2020 **Priority Level:** 3. February 28, 2020, GA/AL PFAS studies and Summerville drinking water advisory.

EPA Goal Supported: Provide for clean and safe water

Issue: EPA conducted three studies of PFAS in NW GA water bodies in 2019. One study identified concerns about PFOA/PFOS levels in the Summerville drinking water system, and additional sampling has raised question about safe PFAS levels in biosolids generate and applied in the area.

Location: Summerville, Georgia

Context:

1. EPA coordinated with ADEM and GA EPD on PFAS sampling studies of Weiss Lake, the Upper Coosa watershed and the Chattooga River.
2. Approximately 75% of PFAS mass loading into Weiss Lake is attributed to the Coosa River, which has a higher flow rate than the Chattooga. However, the Chattooga river generally had higher PFAS concentrations.
3. PFAS levels increase in water and sediment after the Dalton Utilities Land Application Site, Loopers Bend, where past biosolids and current wastewater are applied
4. The major contribution of PFAS levels in the Chattooga are associated with tributaries near known biosolids application from the City of Trion POTW.
5. The City of Summerville issued a drinking water advisory after discovering PFOA and PFOS levels above EPA"s recommend Lifetime Health Advisory.

Critical Messages:

- Since the issuance of the PFOA/PFOS Health Advisory (HA), the EPA has remained closely engaged with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) to discuss drinking water system monitoring results, assist with public notification efforts, and to identify options for reducing PFAS levels in two drinking water systems in Centre and Gadsden, AL.
- The EPA has also coordinated closely with ADEM and the Georgia Environmental Protection Department (GA EPD) on providing analytical support and sampling of rivers and lakes that are the sources for the two drinking water systems.
- In January, 2020, GA EPD conducted additional sampling that identified PFOA/PFOS above the HA at a drinking water system in Summerville, GA.
- The EPA is in ongoing discussions with both ADEM and GA EPD on monitoring needs, providing technical assistance on treatment decisions and exploring additional ways to reduce PFAS exposure.

Considerations:

1. GA EPD has moved quickly to conduct follow-up sampling of facilities with suspected PFAS wastewater and biosolids potentially impacting the Summerville drinking water system. Similar data collection efforts have not been made for the broader facilities suspected of impacting the Centre and Gadsden drinking water systems.
2. Disposal of biosolids and landfill leachate with known PFAS is becoming a greater challenge for WWTPs and landfills. GA EPD has asked EPA what is a safe level of PFAS to allow biosolids application.

Recommendation:

1. Continue to monitor GA EPD efforts to increase their response to PFAS concerns and consider federal action where state efforts are not deemed adequate for protecting public health.

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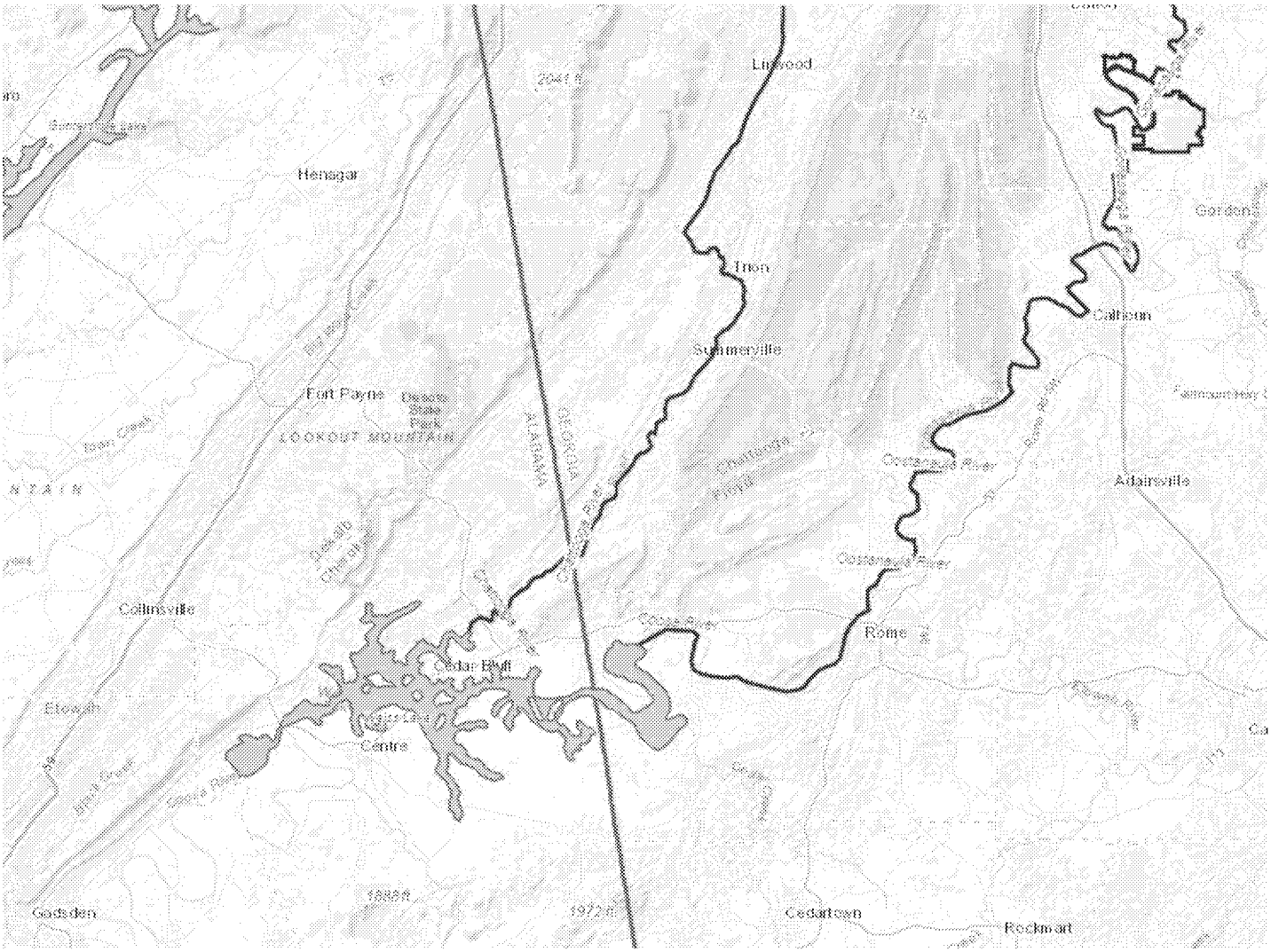
Location Visual: Map of Weiss Lake, Chattooga and Coosa Rivers



Expanded Facts:

1. Past monitoring identified the Coosa and Chattooga Rivers, which originate in GA, as contributors to the PFOA and PFOS levels in Weiss Lake, in AL, the source water for Centre and Gadsden.
2. Dalton Utilities, in GA, land applies wastewater from their treatment plant and a county landfill, which includes discharges from carpet/textile manufacturers, to a 10,000-acre sprayfield that is located on Looper's Bend. The Loopers Bend land application site (LAS) is adjacent to the Conasauga River which flows into the Coosa River.
3. Past monitoring conducted upstream, downstream and onsite of the Loopers Bend LAS has demonstrated a PFAS input to the Coosa River.
    - The EPA worked with the GA EPD and Dalton Utilities to connect GA residents with private well PFAS levels exceeding the PFOA and PFOS HA to municipal water supply.
4. In the Chattooga River, a significant source of PFAS exposure appears to be related to the distribution of biosolids from a local wastewater treatment plant that serves an industry known to use PFAS.
5. The City of Summerville, GA has a drinking water intake downstream of an area where biosolids have been applied and recent monitoring identified various PFAS chemicals present in both the raw and

treated drinking water. Combined PFOA and PFOS levels exceed the HA, which prompted the city to issue a drinking water advisory.

6. The EPA has been working with GA EPD to provide monitoring and technical assistance to Summerville's drinking water system as they consider operational and treatment options to reduce PFAS exposure.
7. Gadsden Waterworks & Sewer Board completed their GAC treatment installation in December 2018. Their current treatment has been effective in reducing combined levels of PFOA and PFOS in finished water from 120 ppt to 30 ppt.
8. Centre Water & Sewer System will complete their GAC treatment installation by November 2020. Similar to the Gadsden water system, Centre has had combined levels of PFOA and PFOS as high as 130 ppt; however, the most recent analytical results show levels near 77 ppt (December 2019).
9. Centre and Gadsden (AL) and Rome (GA) water systems have pending lawsuits against multiple Dalton-area businesses, including carpet manufacturers, known to use PFAS compounds alleging contribution to the downstream contamination near the intakes of their systems.
10. On two occasions (May 3, 2017 and August 7, 2018), ADEM transmitted letters to GA EPD, requesting state-sampling data related to PFAS released or present in the Coosa and Chattooga rivers. Additionally, ADEM asked GA EPD for information on actions taken or planned to address the sources in Georgia.
    - ADEM currently requires PFAS sampling in their NPDES permits and has consistently shared all PFAS results with EPA.
    - GA EPD does not require PFAS monitoring in discharge permits. The EPA has discussed NPDES permitting options for Dalton Utilities, but GA EPD has not pursued any permitting action to date.
11. The EPA continues to support data collection and information sharing efforts with the states to help determine PFAS inputs impacting the receiving waters of Weiss Lake.

Technical Discussion:

1. The EPA recently made a preliminary regulatory determination to regulate PFOA and PFOS under the Safe Drinking Water Act.