

authority to the program.”

This source doubts Wright is an “insider” so his influence may be limited, although he knows EPA enforcement chief Susan Bodine well — which this source calls a “first among equals” among the assistant administrators. Bodine was the head of the waste office at EPA during the George W. Bush administration.

**Nonetheless, the former official says Wright’s challenge will be Administrator Scott Pruitt’s efforts to take so much Superfund oversight on himself “it will be difficult for him to let [Wright] do his job.”**

And the second former EPA official believes Wright will work well with career staff and “better adhere to the requirements of the [National Contingency Plan] in Superfund decision making.”

This source believes Albert Kelly, the former banker who has been leading the high-profile Superfund reforms effort under Pruitt, will leave once Wright is confirmed. This source doubts Kelly and Wright can work together, noting that “[y]ou can only have one political decision maker.”

Pruitt during his tenure has closely overseen high-profile Superfund cleanups as well as ushered in a slew of reforms to the Superfund program. In a few cases, Pruitt has chosen strict cleanup remedies in line with communities’ wishes and out of step with industry parties — decisions that have drawn concern among potentially responsible parties (PRPs).

Several PRPs have been concerned that Pruitt is moving toward more excavation and costlier cleanups at some sites where cleanup remedies will be signed this year, the second former EPA official has said. This source believes Pruitt is skirting Superfund remedy selection criteria with such moves.

Wright’s nomination has won praise from some industry officials who hope that he may blunt the sometimes adversarial approach to industrial parties that Pruitt has taken in some of these recent Superfund cleanup decisions. Wright will “help rebuild some of the bridges that Pruitt has totally burned” among PRPs, one industry source has said. — *Suzanne Yohannan*

## PFAS

### EPA Plans Meeting With State Officials To Address PFAS Contaminants

Responding to calls from state officials, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is inviting state and tribal officials to a leadership summit aimed at sharing information and identifying near-term actions for addressing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), the class of chemicals that is contaminating drinking water in scores of states.

But it is not clear whether the meeting will ensure adoption of consistent risk values that state drinking water officials are seeking, given that EPA does not appear to be adopting federally enforceable standards that could preempt state requirements.

Pruitt March 19 announced that EPA will host a “National Leadership Summit” to address PFAS May 22-23 in Washington, DC, “to bring together stakeholders from across the country to build on the steps we are already taking and to identify immediate actions to protect public health.” He added, “Through this event, we are providing critical national leadership, while ensuring that our state, tribal, and local partners have the opportunity to help shape our path forward.”

But Rob Bilott, an attorney who represents plaintiffs harmed by PFAS and has long pushed EPA to address the threat of PFAS-contaminated drinking water, says of the meeting, “It remains to be seen who is invited and allowed to participate in this summit, whether impacted community residents or representatives would be allowed to participate and attend.”

EPA and other federal agencies have been under pressure from states to offer more clarity and uniformity on addressing PFAS.

The Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) asked federal agencies earlier this year to form a working committee with states to address a list of recommendations covering all aspects of drinking water programs, and called on the federal government to develop a unified message on PFAS. “Without this unified message and information, we’re concerned that several sets of differing risk numbers will be communicated from each agency, which will cause confusion, delay, or worse, no action at all,” ASDWA said in a Jan. 12 letter to federal officials.

While EPA in 2016 set health advisory levels for two PFAS compounds — perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) — at 70 parts per trillion, the agency stopped short of setting an enforceable drinking water standard and provided limited guidance to states and public water systems on how to use the advisory levels.

Instead, the agency has been leaving it up to states to shoulder the responsibility for what may become a patch-

work of standards even as public pressure to address the issue has grown.

ASDWA in its Jan. 12 letter to EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for instance, raised differing state interpretations of the agency's health advisories for PFOA and PFOS, noting the advisories are unclear on what actions public water systems should take to protect susceptible populations.

Nevertheless, Pruitt said in separate letters to the leaders of 56 states and territories that the agency plans to work with states, tribes and others to: “[s]hare information on ongoing efforts to characterize risks from PFAS and develop monitoring and treatment/cleanup techniques; [i]dentify specific near-term actions, beyond those already underway, that are needed to address challenges currently facing states and local communities; and [d]evelop risk communication strategies to help address public concerns with PFAS,” EPA says in its letter. *The letter is available on InsideEPA.com. (Doc. ID: 210271)*

The agency also plans to develop a management plan for PFAS in the fall, according to the agency's website. That may include a plan to develop human health toxicity values for perfluorobutane sulfonate and a newer generation of PFAS known as GenX.

## Federal Facilities

### New DOE Environment Chief Plans To Reduce Aging Infrastructure

Anne White, the Energy Department's (DOE) newly confirmed environmental chief, is pledging to decontaminate and demolish aging infrastructure and renew a “completion and closure mindset” that had previously existed in the massive cleanup program, according to answers she provided to the Senate Armed Services Committee.

White, who the Senate confirmed March 22 to lead the DOE's \$6 billion Environmental Management (EM) program, says a major challenge is ensuring that EM funding is allocated more productively toward fulfilling the cleanup mission, noting that a large cost for the program is maintaining aging infrastructure and the “high ‘hotel load’ at the facilities across the EM complex which leads to investments that do not advance the EM mission,” she said.

White notes that the program has not had a major closure since those at Rocky Flats in Colorado, and Fernald and Mound plants in Ohio over a decade ago.

She calls for re-energizing the “completion and closure mindset that was present earlier in the EM program.” She also says she would explore whether an accelerated cleanup model should be used at any EM sites. “Accelerated cleanup could yield positive result, but may require a higher, up-front investment,” she says. *White's responses are available on InsideEPA.com. (Doc. ID: 210387)*

While White's nomination cleared both the energy and armed services committees, Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) had put a hold on a floor vote as he sought to end the department's practice of transferring or selling excess uranium from its inventory, which Barrasso claims is harming the private-sector uranium industry. But Energy Secretary Rick Perry at a March 20 Senate energy committee hearing conditionally committed to stop selling excess uranium, according to news reports.

The new EM chief is a nuclear engineer with credentials in the nuclear regulatory compliance and waste management areas. The White House announcement of White's nomination noted that she has extensive field experience at many of the EM sites, and was previously a consultant with Bastet Technical Services, LLC, which she founded, addressing environmental issues across the DOE complex.

In her responses to the advance policy questions, White said she would address funding challenges by reviewing EM site budgets to ensure they are being used for the cleanup mission. For example, White said she “will prioritize the use of budgetary resources to decontaminate and demolish aging buildings and infrastructure rather than maintaining them.”

She said such an approach will advance cleanups and apply funding more productively.

While funding for the program has generally remained stable in recent years, it has fallen short of meeting regulatory requirements. A DOE official towards the end of the Obama administration pointed out the difficulties the EM program faced given the disparities between regulatory needs and budgetary levels. For instance, in acknowledging the shortfall, then-Principal Deputy Assistant Energy Secretary for EM Mark Whitney said at a 2016 forum that an effort to pare back operational costs at EM cleanup sites across the country would not be enough to close a \$2 billion gap between regulatory requirements and appropriated budgets.

The regulatory requirement per year is \$8 billion, he said. “So a \$2 billion shortfall is substantial” and is creating many issues, he said.

In response to a question about the Government Accountability Office's continued findings of environmental liabilities being on its high risk list, White says she believes that EM's environmental liabilities “are not being addressed in a timely fashion.” She promised to study the issue further.