

Stuart Relay

From: DEC EH Director (DEC sponsored) <decehdir@alaska.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2026 9:32 AM
To: Stuart Relay
Cc: reece.williams@alaska.gov
Subject: HB 235 – Response to Questions from House State Affairs (April 23)

Good morning,

Following the House State Affairs Committee hearing on April 23, Representative Story, Vice Chair asked about the complexity of PFAS sample collection and testing, particularly in comparison to homeowner testing. Below is the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Division of Environmental Health's response.

Compared to homeowner testing, PFAS sampling conducted for public water systems must meet more stringent requirements to comply with federal drinking water standards. Under HB 235, this would include expansion to Transient Non-Community systems, which are not currently required to sample for PFAS and often do not have trained operators. While individuals can collect samples in certain contexts, sampling for a regulated public water system is performed by system operators or responsible parties, not consumers, and must follow established protocols to ensure results are valid for regulatory use.

Unlike simpler water quality tests, such as coliform or nitrate, PFAS sampling requires specific handling procedures to prevent contamination, including the use of approved materials and adherence to detailed instructions. These protocols are necessary because PFAS compounds are commonly found in everyday items and can easily affect sample integrity if not properly controlled. As a result, the Drinking Water Program provides technical assistance, training, and oversight to help ensure samples are collected correctly.

This level of rigor is higher than what would apply to homeowner testing, which is generally more flexible and limited in scope. Public water systems serve multiple users, including populations that rely on the system without direct knowledge of water quality conditions. For that reason, the state must ensure that sampling and testing are conducted in a consistent, compliant, and defensible manner to support public health protection and regulatory decision-making.

Once samples are received, the DEC Environmental Health Laboratory performs an initial quality review to confirm they were collected and handled correctly. This includes verifying that samples were taken from appropriate locations within the water system, confirming that required field quality control samples (such as blanks) were properly prepared, and checking that samples were maintained at the correct temperature and delivered within required timeframes. Laboratory staff also verify that sample bottles were preserved correctly to maintain sample integrity.

Following this review, chemists conduct PFAS analysis using federally approved methods and highly sensitive instrumentation capable of detecting contaminants at extremely low concentrations. Additional quality assurance checks are applied throughout the process to ensure results are accurate, reliable, and suitable for regulatory and public health decision-making.

Please contact Reece Williams, DEC Legislative Liaison with any follow-up questions.

Thank you,

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

Environmental Health Division

555 Cordova Street

Anchorage, AK 99501

(907) 269-7645 | shaundy.perry@alaska.gov

www.dec.alaska.gov