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Dane County Regional Airport Announces Tests to Remove PFAS Demonstrate an Average of 97% Removal Rate Over Time

Initial PFAS pilot project remediation study test results are promising

MADISON, Wis. -- Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA) and the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs (DMA) have announced that the initial testing results of a pilot project to remediate the effects of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) from a targeted affected area has demonstrated a removal rate averaging 97% at a downgradient testing well over the nine-month pilot study. The compounds involved in the affected area are PFOS and PFOA, which are present in the FAA-mandated fire-fighting foam used during aircraft emergencies at the airport and the adjacent Air National Guard base.

The remediation pilot project supported by DCRA and DMA began in 2020 in conjunction with ORIN Technologies, a Verona, Wisconsin-based company and Fixed Earth Innovations, headquartered in Canada. The two companies have now formed a joint venture called Onur Solutions. A three-part remediation process utilizing a bio-absorbent “sponge,” microbes that break down complex chemicals in soil, and electrodes to generate oxygen supply, reduced high concentrations of PFAS in controlled long-term tests on airport grounds.

The three-part remediation approach has continually degraded PFAS effects in groundwater within the treatment area at removal rates that increase the longer the remediation process continues. The initial findings indicate that this process should result in continual removal of PFAS from the targeted area over time.

“We are proud to partner with DCRA and Orin Technologies on this pilot study, and we are highly optimistic about the first results,” said Maj. Gen. Paul Knapp, the adjutant general of Wisconsin. “While the federal CERCLA process through the National Guard Bureau is ongoing, we are dedicated to finding new and innovative ways to solve this national problem. It will be exciting to see where this cutting-edge technology will take PFAS remediation into the future.”

Given the strong initial results, DCRA will expand the PFAS pilot remediation process to other known affected areas on the airport grounds, including the site of the former Darwin firefighting training area, and other spots not encompassed by the National Guard’s investigation process. Lessons learned during the initial phase of the pilot project will guide the response strategy at the Darwin site to improve overall rates of reduction across the larger area.

“We’re encouraged by the early results of the program and looking forward to expanding it and continuing our dedication to this effort,” said airport director Kim Jones. “Airports across the United States are all seeking solutions to combat this issue, and DCRA is proud to be on the leading edge of this innovative and promising technology,” Jones said.

Dane County Regional Airport’s ongoing initiative related to environmental sustainability is referred to as EcoMentality, which includes dedicated programs on energy savings, reductions in stormwater and wastewater, waste reduction, habitat and wildlife management and more. For more information on the airport’s ongoing PFAS efforts, visit <https://msnairport.com/about/ecomentality/PFAS-Information>.

The Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs prioritizes the safety of our communities, our installations and the populations that live and work on or near our facilities and is committed to being good stewards of the environment that is shared with the local community. The DMA will continue to cooperate with the Wisconsin DNR, local communities, and the National Guard Bureau to manage the risks of mission related PFOS and PFOA. For more information on the DMA’s ongoing PFAS efforts, visit <https://ng.wi.gov/pfas>.

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