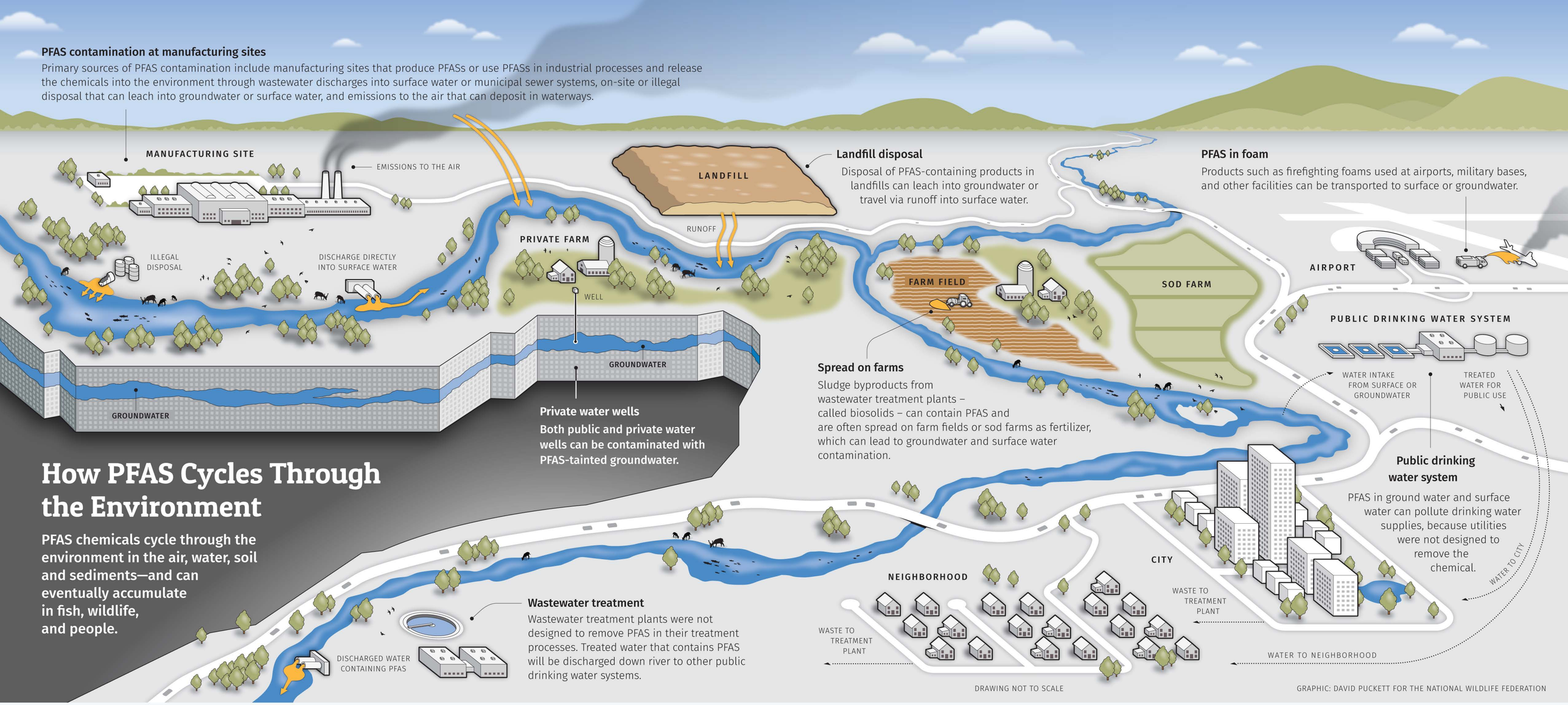
How PFAS Cycles Through the Environment

PFAS chemicals cycle through the environment in the air, water, soil and sediments—and can eventually accumulate in fish, wildlife, and people.



Solutions to Prevent and Remediate Toxic PFAS Contamination

State and federal governments can play an essential role in putting forward common-sense solutions to confront the PFAS crisis to protect the health of people and wildlife. Government can:

1 Phase out PFAS chemicals in industrial processes

- Businesses can voluntarily change their manufacturing processes to eliminate PFAS from their operations to protect the environment and human health.
- The U.S. EPA can also limit or stop the use of chemicals under the Toxic Substances Control Act.

2 Limit pollution from industrial and other discharges

- Under the Clean Water Act, federal and state governments can establish protections to limit industrial discharges of PFAS into the environment.
- States can set numeric standards for how much PFAS is allowable in lakes and streams.
- Industries are then required to treat their wastewater and remove PFAS, based on National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits.
- States develop pollution-reduction plans – known as Total Maximum Daily Loads – for water bodies not meeting water quality standards for PFAS.

3 Set clean drinking water standards

- The U.S. EPA, under the Safe Drinking Water Act, and state governments by legislative or executive action, can set drinking water standards to limit PFAS exposure via public drinking water supplies.
- Local water treatment plants can remove dangerous PFAS from drinking water.
- Local water treatment plants monitor to make sure clean water goals are being met, and the state government evaluates the results.

4 Invest in local drinking water, wastewater treatment plants

- Federal government can increase funding to repair and build water infrastructure.
- States provide state funding as well, and set investment priorities.
- Local communities make needed upgrades to wastewater and drinking water treatment facilities.

5 Invest in cleanup of contaminated sites

- Federal and state governments can designate sites as contaminated hot spots under laws like the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (known as Superfund).
- Polluters pay to restore contaminated sites.
- State and federal government can also invest funding to remediate pollution, such as PFAS.
- Designation of certain PFAS as hazardous allows government and private parties to conduct and pay for cleanup.