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Johnson County Declares State of Disaster Due to PFAS Contamination of Agricultural Land

CLEBURNE, TX - Johnson County officials today declared a state of disaster following the discovery of widespread PFAS contamination in local agricultural land, stemming from the application of contaminated biosolids used as fertilizer. The contamination has already resulted in reported deaths of fish and cattle in the affected areas as well as the contamination of groundwater.

The emergency declaration, signed by the Johnson County Judge, cites extensive testing that revealed dangerous levels of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), commonly known as "forever chemicals," in biosolids derived from the City of Fort Worth's wastewater treatment plant. Testing has confirmed PFAS contamination in soil, groundwater, surface water, and animal tissue throughout the affected area of the county.

Of particular concern, well water near biosolid application sites has tested positive for PFAS at levels several hundred times higher than the EPA's safe drinking water limits. The contamination poses an immediate threat to the county's agricultural sector, drinking water supplies, and public health.

County Commissioner Larry Woolley said "this is not just an environmental issue; it is an agricultural issue." Woolley, an agricultural producer and former ag teacher, emphasized the importance of agriculture to quality of life in the region.

"This situation threatens the very foundation of our agricultural community and the safety of our residents," added County Judge Christopher Boedeker. "We are taking immediate action to protect our citizens and support our farming community through this crisis."

The County has requested that Texas Governor Greg Abbott join in the declaration and seek federal disaster assistance. Despite the known contamination, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality continues to approve the application of biosolids as fertilizer in Johnson County, prompting urgent calls for regulatory intervention.

The disaster declaration enables Johnson County to:

- Seek immediate federal assistance for affected agricultural producers

- Implement emergency measures to protect public health and safety
- Coordinate with state and federal agencies for contamination assessment and cleanup

Agricultural producers who have been impacted by PFAS contamination are encouraged to contact Deputy Constable Dana Ames at 817.556.6363 for guidance on available assistance programs.

Updates on this developing situation will be posted on the Johnson County website at johnsoncountytexas.org.