

11th Annual GC3 Innovators Roundtable Session Proceedings

Hosted by Seventh Generation in Burlington, VT

May 25th, 2016

KEYNOTE III

Alyssa B. Schuren, Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation

Commissioner Schuren oversees the State of Vermont's federally delegated and state environmental programs. Her department has 350 employees and a \$7 million budget. Commissioner Schuren described the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) recent response to PFOA contamination in the town of North Bennington, VT. While she is proud of their response to the local residents needs and concerns, she noted that the widespread use of green chemistry would have precluded the problem from happening in the first place.

In February 2016, test results showed PFOA contamination as high as 2700 ppt in well water. As hundreds of homes were on wells, DEQ worked with the National Guard and Emergency Response to put homes within a 1 mile radius on bottled water, and the long-term plan is to put homes on municipal water, which tested clean.

Commissioner Schuren noted that government failed here to protect people from toxic exposures and that there is a need to address the root cause of a toxic exposures such as this one. PFOA was unregulated and was not tested before went on the market. It was dumped down drains, spread on farmland, put in drums and disposed in landfills where it then leaked. It has an odd fate and transport pattern. It is key to pass laws at state and federal levels (such as TSCA reform) that might keep these kinds of problems from happening. .

In 2014, Vermont passed the Kids Safe Products Act. It lists 66 chemicals of concern that must be disclosed by Vermont companies that use them. In the future, the State of Vermont will decide whether to ban these substances. In addition, a new committee on emerging chemicals of concern has been. Among other things, this committee will look at the impacts of new TSCA regulations. Commissioner Schuren noted that government typically acts in reaction to crises, but the Emerging Chemicals work group will help the State to be more proactive before crises arise.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Opportunities for Safer Chemicals and Products:

- Industry must see green chemistry, engineering, and design as smart business strategy.
- Educators must teach about green chemistry.
- Funders must support green chemistry efforts.

Key Drivers for Safer Chemicals and Products:

- Liability from exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment.
- Potential for tarnished reputation.

Role for the GC3 in Helping to Advance Green Chemistry in This Area:

- Bring all stakeholders to the table – including policy makers, government, businesses, and NGOs—to resolve issues.