

# Conference Introduces Students to Water Challenges, Solutions

MAY 22, 2017

The inaugural **Taconic Mountain Student Water**

**Conference: PFOA** took place in CAPA on Friday, May 19 and Saturday, May 20. Co-organized by David Bond (Bennington) and Ken Facin (Hoosick Falls Central School District), Friday's events were geared towards educating local high students, while Saturday's were open to the public. The second day of the conference provided an opportunity for residents of both the Bennington area and Hoosick Falls to receive updated information and the results from recent tests. Robert Bilott, who spearheaded efforts to expose PFOA contamination of drinking water supplies, gave the keynote speech.



Friday's programming, intended for an audience of local students, was focused on equipping the next generation of environmental scientists by providing them with information about complex topics affecting their region. The conference introduced advanced high school students and educators from our region to the problems and opportunities that define our water resources.

Both local high school and college students have done research on the topic of PFOA, separately and in collaboration with each other, to fill gap in the information that the state is able to provide. On Saturday, the community was presented with their findings. Community members from the Bennington area and Hoosick Falls gathered together to share information.

On a larger scale, as Bond said in a *WAMC* interview, "We also are thinking in a more general way about the civic role of science and science education in our moment, and what role science education and the science classroom in particular can play in beginning to really face up to and think about and practically engage nearby environmental problems"

Bennington College and Hoosick Falls Central School District have longstanding commitments to engaging education with real world concerns. This conference brings such commitments into a more deliberate and collaborative conversation with educators and students across the region. Bringing together leading national voices on PFOA with advanced science students and teachers from 10 local high schools in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York, this conference aimed to demonstrate the vital linkages between learning and citizenship in the contemporary world.

The conference was covered by **WAMC**, **VT Digger**, and the **Bennington Banner**.

**9:00 AM | Welcome and Introductions | *Tishman Lecture Hall***

- David Bond (Bennington College)
- Ken Facin (Hoosick Falls Central School District)

**9:30 AM | How Schools Responded: PFOA in Hoosick Falls, Petersburg, and North Bennington | *Tishman Lecture Hall***

- David Bond (Bennington College)
- Ken Facin (Hoosick Falls Central School District)
- Ricardo Mireles (Academia Avance)

**10:30 AM | Reporting PFOA | *Tishman Lecture Hall***

- Mariah Blake (independent journalist)
- Howard Weiss-Tishman (VPR)

**11:30 | Lunch | *CAPA Patio***

**12:30 PM | Water Sampling: Producing and Interpreting Data on PFOA Contamination**

- Small groups (8-12) – each group takes 15 minutes to design sampling strategy (3 samples) with goal to answer a research question, then one hour to go take those samples.

**1:30 | Breakout Sessions | *Dickenson 209***

Chemistry: “The Properties of PFOA”

- Janet Foley (Bennington College)
- Laura MacManus-Spencer (Union College)

Citizenship: “Safeguarding Water Resources” (CAPA Design Lab Two)

- David Bond (Bennington College)
- Kim Fortun (RPI)

Education: “Community Responses to Water Contamination”

- Ricardo Mireles (Academic Avance) and students

Legislation: “Updating Our State Laws” (CAPA Design Lab One)

- VT State Senator Brian Campion

**2:30 | Breakout Sessions | *Dickenson 209***

### Chemistry: “The Properties of PFOA”

- Janet Foley (Bennington College)
- Laura MacManus-Spencer (Union College)

### Citizenship: “Safeguarding Water Resources” (CAPA Design Lab Two)

- David Bond (Bennington College)
- Kim Fortun (RPI)

### Geology: “The Environmental Pathways of PFOA” (Dickenson 232)

- Chip Kilduff (RPI)
- Tim Schroeder (Bennington College)

### Legislation: “Updating Our State Laws” (CAPA Design Lab One)

- VT State Senator Brian Campion

## **SATURDAY, MAY 20**

### **9:30 AM | Welcome | CAPA Symposium**

- **David Bond** (Bennington College)
- **Ken Facin** (Hoosick Falls Central School District)

### **10:00 AM | Impacted Communities: Residents | CAPA Symposium**

- Jim Goodine (North Bennington)
- Michael Hickey (Hoosick Falls)
- Emily Marpe (Petersburg)

### **11:00 AM | Impacted Communities: Local Government | CAPA Symposium**

- Rob Allen (Mayor, Hoosick Falls)
- Stuart Hurd (Town Manager, Bennington)
- Matthew Patterson (Chair of Village Trustees, North Bennington)
- Alan Webster (Town Board, Petersburg)

**12:00 PM | Lunch**

**1:00 PM | Executive Roundtable: Environmental Governance and PFOA | *Tishman Lecture Hall***

- Judith Enck (Visiting Scholar at Haub School of Law, Pace University and former EPA Administrator Region Two)
- Alyssa Schuren (Partner at the Management Center and former Commissioner of Vermont DEC)

**2:30 PM | Keynote Lecture | *Tishman Lecture Hall***

- "Investigating and Addressing Human Health Threats from PFOA in Drinking Water: Legal Challenges" – Robert Bilott (Partner, Taft, Stettinius, and Hollister)