

# 2015 Groundwater Legislation



## What's at stake?

- » 99% of lakes, 92% of rivers and streams, and 98% of springs are unprotected by current groundwater statutes
- » The Little Plover River was named one of the country's "Most Endangered Rivers" in 2013 because it has periodically dried up over the last 10 years
- » At the same time, there has been a 40% increase in high-capacity well permit applications the last 3 years

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While the bipartisan 2004 groundwater laws were an important step forward at the time, they are clearly proving inadequate to protect our waterways from over-pumping. Today, citizens are desperately seeking changes to protect their waterfront properties, keep their favorite trout streams from running dry, and ensure they have water to drink.

## Getting worse

Current groundwater statute leaves most of Wisconsin waterways unprotected, and rivers, lakes and streams are still drying up due to over-pumping of groundwater. While the increase in agricultural irrigation wells plays the biggest role, other water-intense industries, such as frac sand mining, are increasingly stressing the system as well.

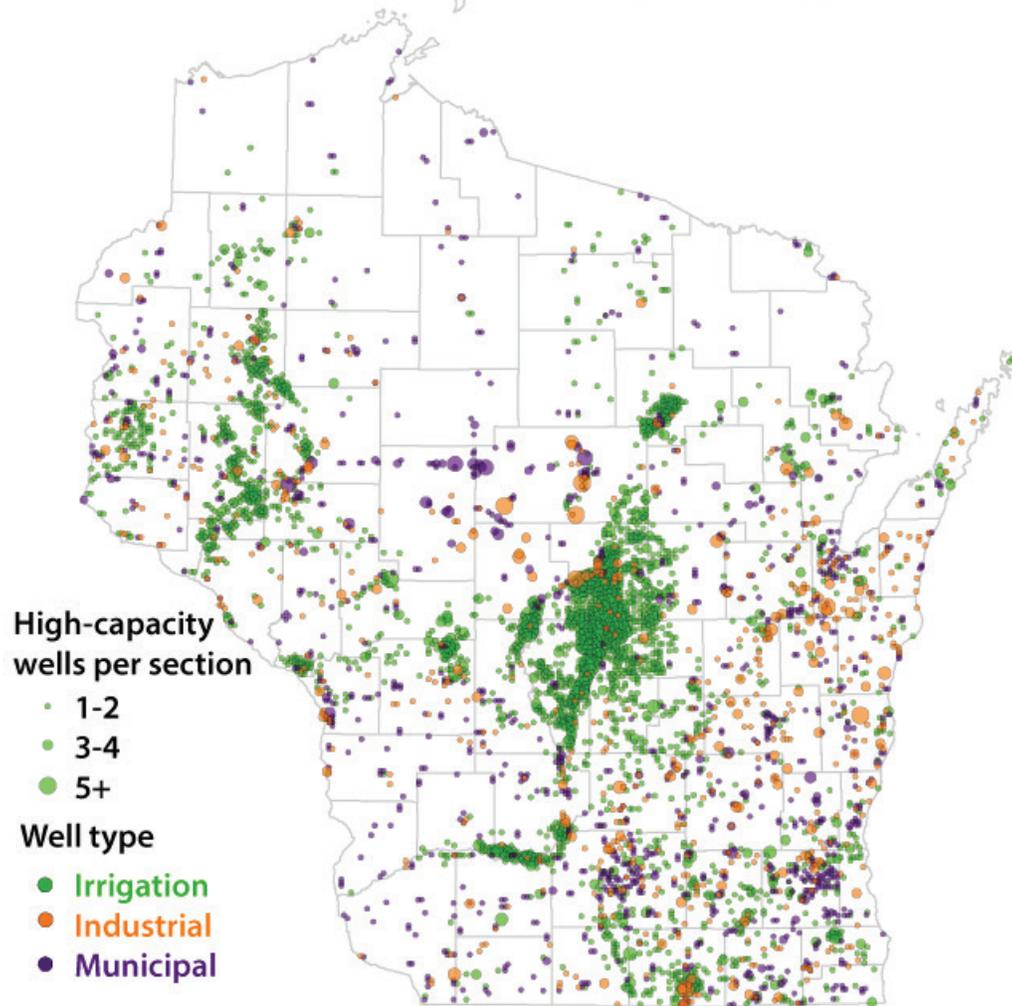
## Water for all

While Wisconsin residents are left no recourse other than to go to the courts to protect their waterfront properties and residential wells, both Minnesota and Michigan have figured out how to provide sustainable groundwater resources for all users and funded programs that allow for a robust and ecologically protective process for issuing high-capacity well permits.

As the Legislature considers how to provide adequate water supplies for all, these core principles should be part of any meaningful step forward:

- 1. New legislation should help citizens and natural resources that are currently being impacted by over-pumping**
- 2. Any meaningful legislation should prevent problems caused by over-pumping of groundwater in the future**
- 3. New legislation should not roll back current protections**
- 4. Groundwater management and permitting must be based on science**

# Wisconsin's high-capacity wells



Data: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Credit: Kate Pregelman/Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism