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SENATE DISTRICT

2024* Water Quality Report

177,000 Constituents | 54% Rely on Private Wells for Drinking Water

Biosolids/Waste Landspreading Sites

Septage, municipal, and industrial wastes are applied to over 134,000 acres.

Wetland Loss

More than 484,000 acres of wetland are categorized by the state as lost but potentially restorable.

Impaired Surface Waters

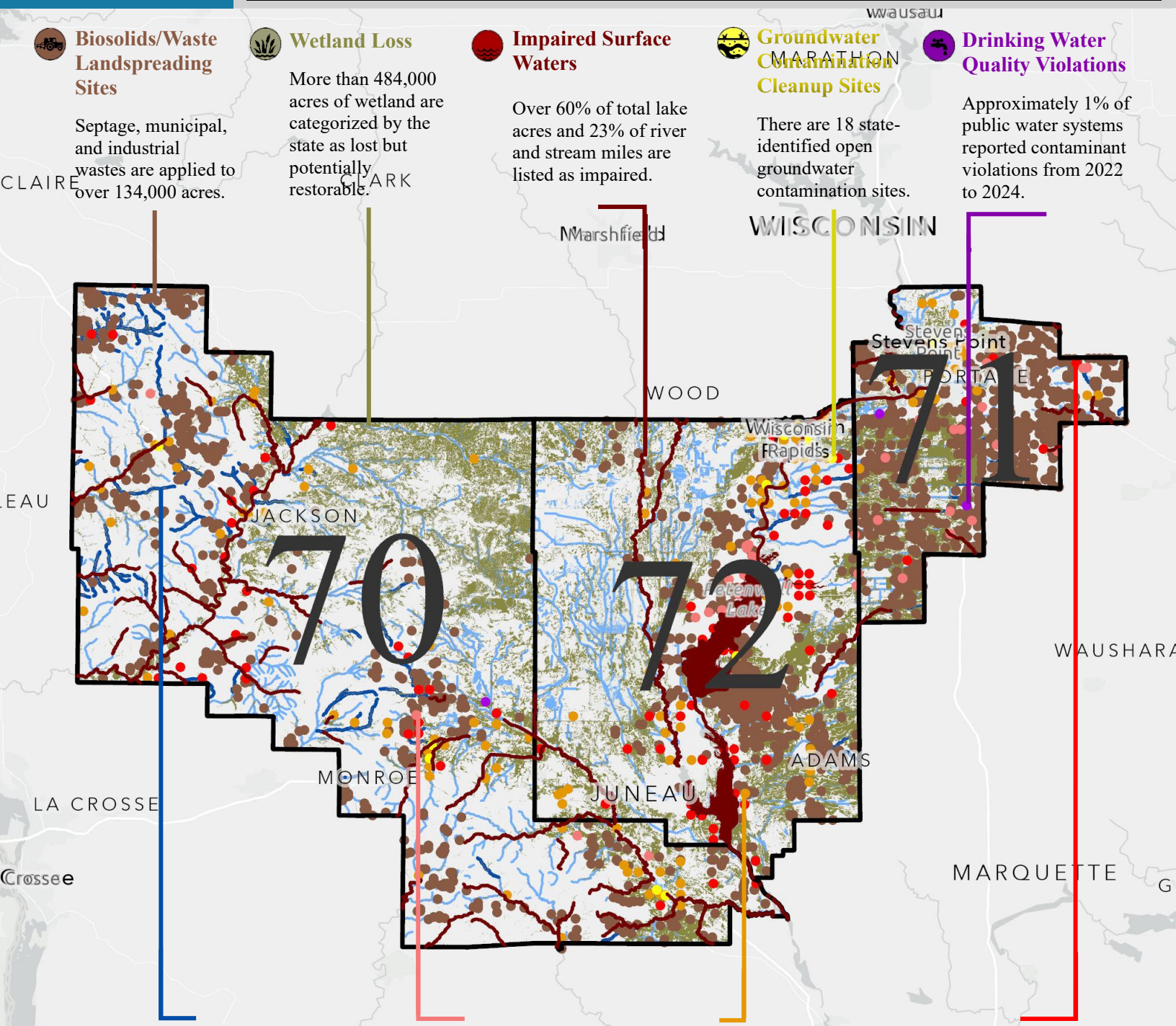
Over 60% of total lake acres and 23% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.

Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites

There are 18 state-identified open groundwater contamination sites.

Drinking Water Quality Violations

Approximately 1% of public water systems reported contaminant violations from 2022 to 2024.



Outstanding/Exceptional Surface Waters

Almost 13% of total river and stream miles are classified as high-quality surface waters.

Neonicotinoid Detects

Between 2019 and 2023, over 2% of state-tested wells contained detectable levels of one of three neonicotinoids.

PFAS Sources and Detects

There are 53 presumed sources of PFAS, and 38% of state-tested wells had detectable levels of at least one of the chemicals in 2023.

Nitrate Exceedances

In the past three years, 39% of public and 39% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.

For policy questions, contact Water and Agriculture Program Director Sara Walling at swalling@cleanwisconsin.org.
For data questions, contact Clean Water Manager Hannah Richerson at hricherson@cleanwisconsin.org.

**Data available as of December 31, 2024.*

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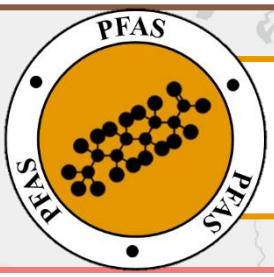
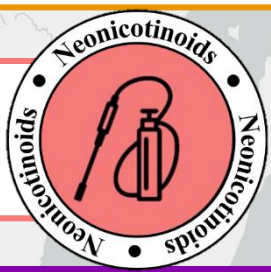
- **Over 140 public and seven private wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.[1]**
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.

- **Current permit holders have applied over 415 million gallons of waste to over 3,300 separate fields.[2]**
- The liquid and solid waste is generated from paper mills, septage operations, and food processing plants.
- Landspreading waste can transport contaminants by contaminating groundwater and food and feed crops in the area.



- **Ten private and 26 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.[3]**
- The 53 presumed sources include facilities that manufacture, manage, and/or discharge PFAS materials.[4]
- PFAS consumption can cause developmental effects in children, decreased fertility, and some cancers.



- **From 2019-2023, 49 private and monitoring wells sampled contained one of three neonicotinoids.[5]**
- Neonicotinoid insecticides are applied to agricultural crops, lawns and gardens, golf courses, and more.
- Negative impacts to non-target insect species cause food chain issues in fish, birds, and potentially other taxa.

- **Nitrate and nickel violations occurred in three public water systems from 2022-2024.[6]**
- These contaminants often enter drinking water from agricultural and natural sources.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause cancer and respiratory issues, respectively.

- **Eighteen groundwater sites are contaminated with PCBs, PAHs, heavy metals, solvents, gasoline, and/or VOCs.[7]**
- These chemical mixtures enter water through industrial discharges, storage tank leaks, and landfill leachate.
- If ingested through drinking water, the pollutants pose serious cancer and organ damage health risks.

- **Of the thousands of wetland acres lost, 21% of the total land acreage has the potential for restoration.[3]**
- Degradation and loss of Wisconsin wetlands is primarily due to invasives, development, and conversion to cropland.
- Wetlands absorb pollutants before they enter water, including drinking water; without them, we lose natural filters.

- **More than 73,700 acres and 585 miles of surface waters are listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act.[3]**
- The mercury, phosphorus, lead, and/or PCBs throughout are often from agricultural and industrial discharges.
- Ingestion of these pollutants can lead to organ damage, cardiovascular and reproductive issues, cancer, and more.

- **Over 350 miles of surface waters are classified as Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters by the state.[3]**
- These waterbodies support fisheries and wildlife and have high water quality from effective management and protection.
- As some drinking water is sourced from surface water, these are essential public health resources, too.

[1]Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Groundwater Retrieval Network (GRN); [2]WDNR data request; [3]WDNR GIS Open Data Portal; [4]Adapted from Salvatore et al. (2022); [5]Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) data request; [6]Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO); [7]WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS)

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