

2024* Water Quality Report

729,000 Constituents | 23% Rely on Private Wells for Drinking Water

**Impaired Surface Waters**

Over 88% of total lake acres and 35% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.

**Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites**

Thirty-three groundwater sites are listed as contaminated.

**Nitrate Exceedances**

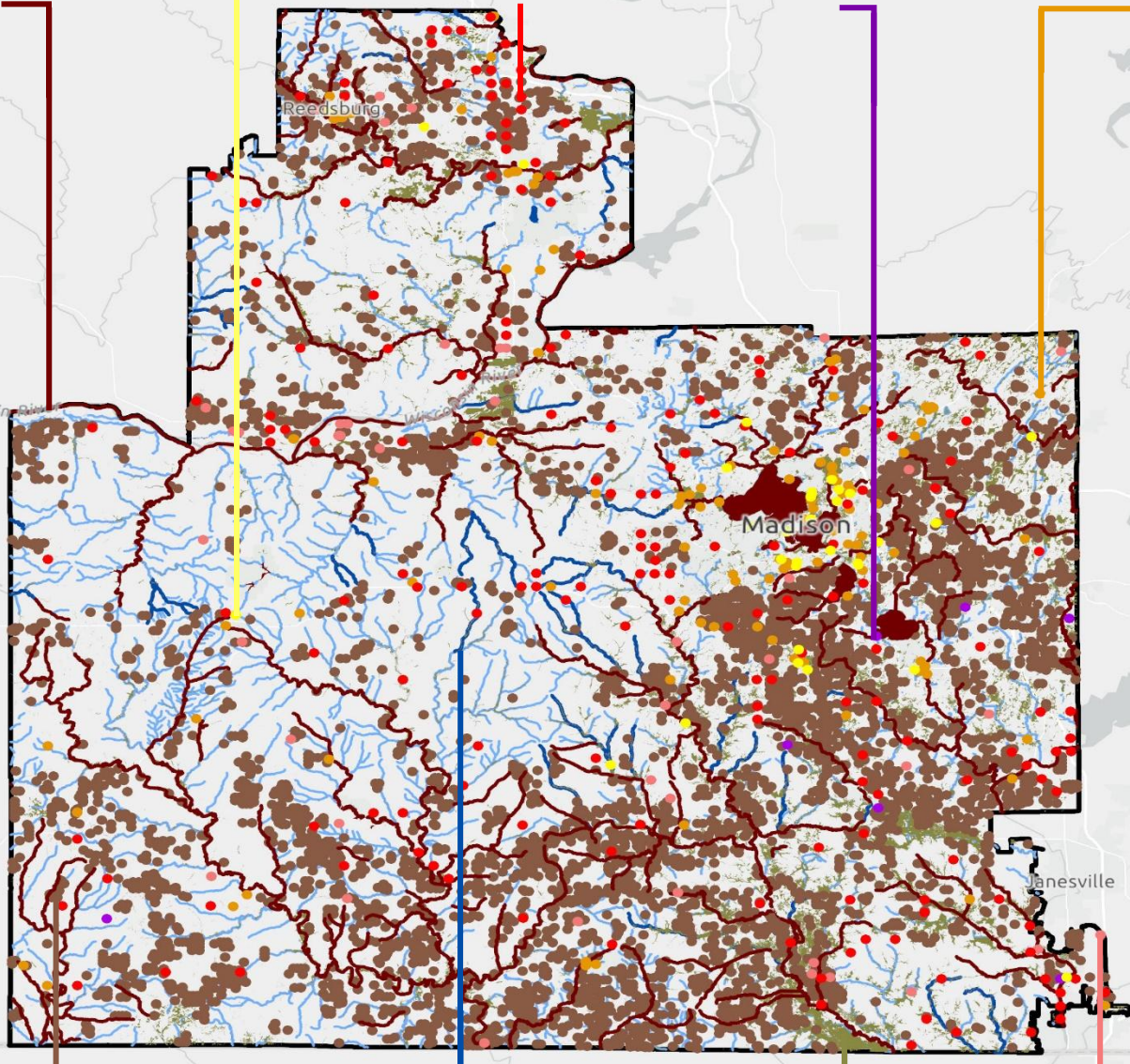
From 2022 to 2024, 67% of public and 80% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.

**Drinking Water Quality Violations**

Approximately 2% of public water systems reported contaminant violations between 2022 and 2024.

**PFAS Sources and Detects**

There are 48 presumed PFAS sources, and 30% of state-tested wells had at least one of the chemicals in 2023.

**Biosolids/Waste Landspreading Sites**

Septage, municipal, and industrial wastes are applied to over 197,000 acres.

**Outstanding/Exceptional Surface Waters**

Almost 13% of total river and stream miles and 1% of lake acres are classified as high-quality surface water.

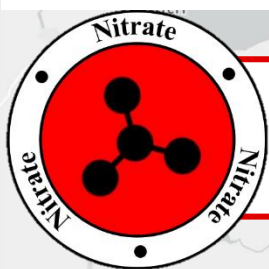
**Wetland Loss**

More than 231,000 acres of wetlands are categorized as lost but potentially restorable.

**Neonicotinoid Detects**

Between 2019 and 2023, 34% of state-tested wells contained one of three neonicotinoids.

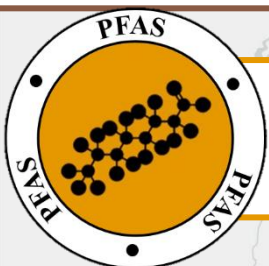




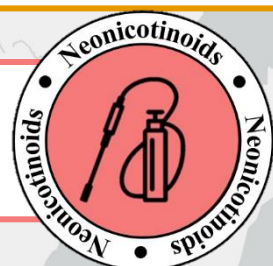
- **Fifty-two private and 192 public* wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.**¹
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.



- **Current permit holders have applied approximately 888 million gallons of waste to over 6,600 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.



- **Twenty private and 45 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.**³
- The 48 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, 52 private and monitoring well samples contained one or more 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.



- **Arsenic, radium, bacteria, and/or nitrate at federal violation levels were found in nine public* water systems.**⁶
- These contaminants often enter drinking water from natural sources, septic systems, and agricultural operations.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause cancer, gastrointestinal issues, and/or numerous other health impacts.



- **Thirty-three groundwater sites are contaminated with solvents, gasoline, and/or volatile organic compounds.**⁷
- These chemical mixtures enter water through industrial discharges, underground 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, over 8% 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 45,800 acres and 1,300 miles of surface waters are listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act.**³
- The mercury, phosphorus, metal, bacteria, 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 485 miles and 440 acres of surface waters are classified as Outstanding or Exceptional 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.

Waukegan

*Public wells include [municipal](#), [other than municipal](#), [non-transient non-community](#), and [transient non-community systems](#). ¹Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Groundwater Retrieval Network; ²WDNR data request; ³WDNR GIS Open Data Portal; ⁴Adapted from Salvatore et al. (2022); ⁵Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection data request; ⁶Environmental Protection Agency Enforcement and Compliance History Online; ⁷WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System