17
SENATE DISTRICT

2024* Water Quality Report

177,000 Constituents | 45% Rely on Private Wells for Drinking Water

Impaired Surface Waters

Over 83% of total lake acres and 28% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.

Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites

There are nine state-identified open groundwater contamination sites.

Nitrate Exceedances

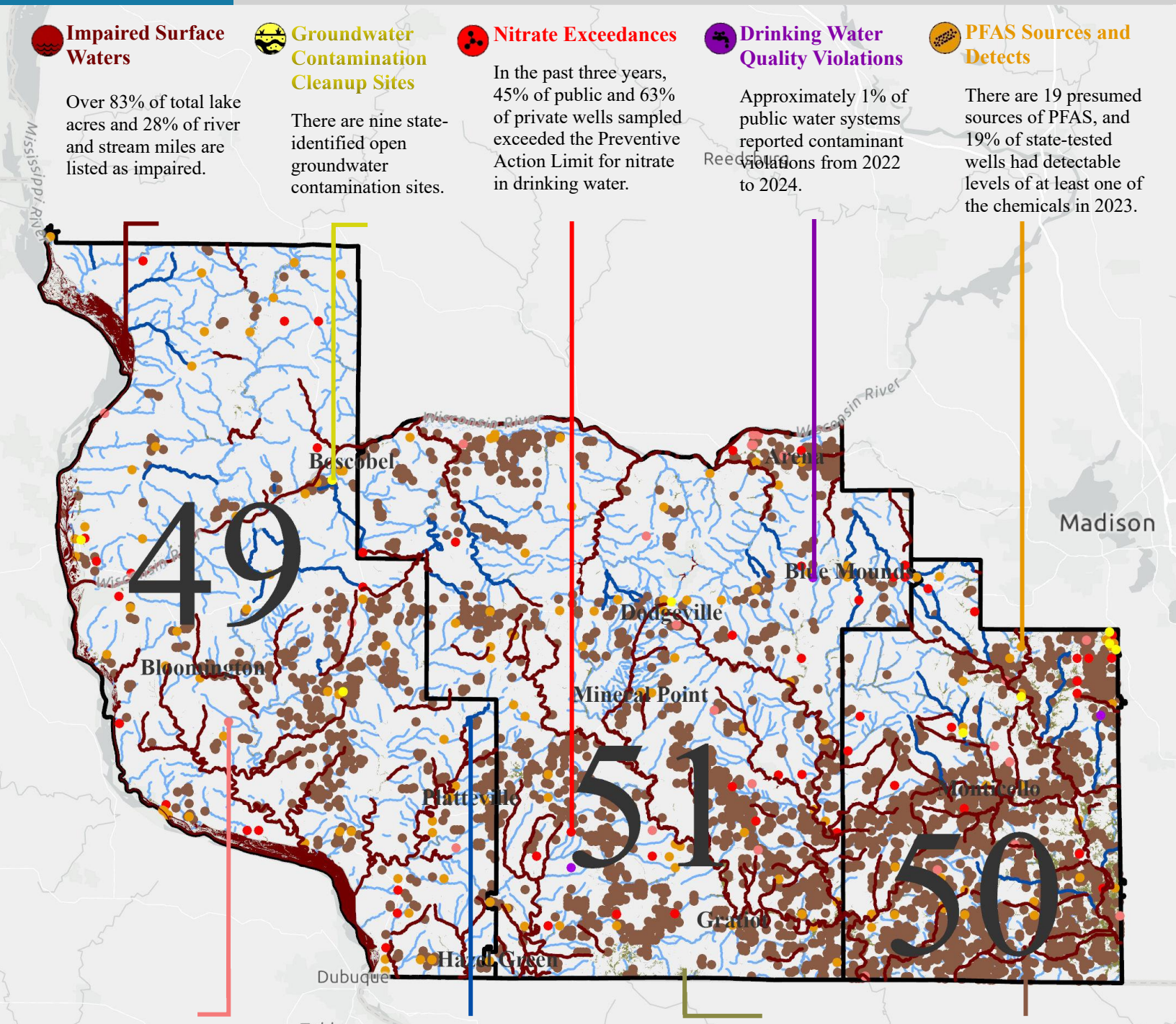
In the past three years, 45% of public and 63% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.

Drinking Water Quality Violations

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

PFAS Sources and Detects

There are 19 presumed sources of PFAS, and 19% of state-tested wells had detectable levels of at least one of the chemicals in 2023.



Neonicotinoid Detects

Between 2019 and 2023, 38% of state-tested wells contained detectable levels of one of three neonicotinoids.

Outstanding/ Exceptional Surface Waters

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

Wetland Loss

More than 75,000 acres of wetland are categorized by the state as lost but potentially restorable.

Biosolids/Waste Landspreading Sites

Septage, municipal, and industrial wastes are applied to over 109,000 acres.

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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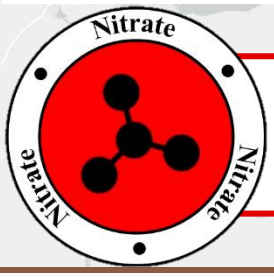
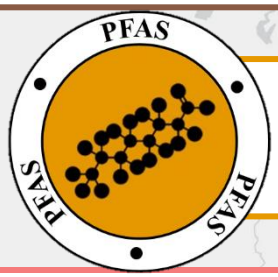
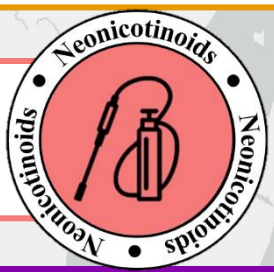


- **Sixty-six public and 17 private* wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.[1]**
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.

- **Current permit holders have applied approximately 1.2 billion gallons of waste to more than 3,600 separate fields.[2]**
- The liquid and solid waste is generated from paper mills, septage operations, and food processing plants.
- Landspreading can transport contaminants by contaminating groundwater and crops grown in the area.

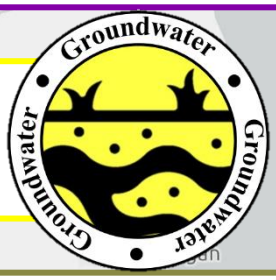


- **Eleven private and 13 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.[3]**
- The 19 presumed sources include facilities that manufacture, manage, or discharge PFAS materials.[4]
- PFAS consumption can cause developmental effects in children, decreased fertility, and some cancers.



- **From 2019-2023, 24 private and monitoring wells sampled 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 species, such as fish and birds, raise potential human health concerns.

- **Elevated levels of radium, arsenic, and nitrate were found in three public* water systems.[6]**
- These often enter drinking water from natural sources, agricultural operations, and septic systems.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause tissue damage, stomach ailments, and cancer, respectively.



- **Nine groundwater sites are contaminated with solvents, gasoline, and volatile organic compounds.[7]**
- They enter the water through industrial discharges, underground storage tank leaks, and landfill leachate.
- If ingested through drinking water, these pollutants pose serious cancer and organ damage health risks.

- **Of the thousands of wetland acres lost, 2.8% of the total land has the potential for restoration.[3]**
- Degradation and loss of Wisconsin wetlands is primarily due to development, drainage, and agriculture.
- Wetlands absorb pollutants before they enter drinking water; without them, we lose natural water filters.

- **Over 34,700 acres and 1,074 miles of surface waters are impaired under the Clean Water Act.[3]**
- The phosphorus, heavy metal, and PCB contamination is often from agricultural and industrial discharges.
- Ingestion of the pollutants can lead to organ damage, cardiovascular and reproductive issues, and cancer.

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

*Public wells include municipal, other than municipal, non-transient non-community, and transient non-community systems. [1]Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Groundwater Retrieval Network; [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 data request; [6]Environmental Protection Agency Enforcement and Compliance History Online; [7]WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System

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