

# 2024\* Water Quality Report

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



## Wetland Loss

More than 197,000 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 122,000 acres.



## Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites

There are 17 state-identified open groundwater contamination sites.



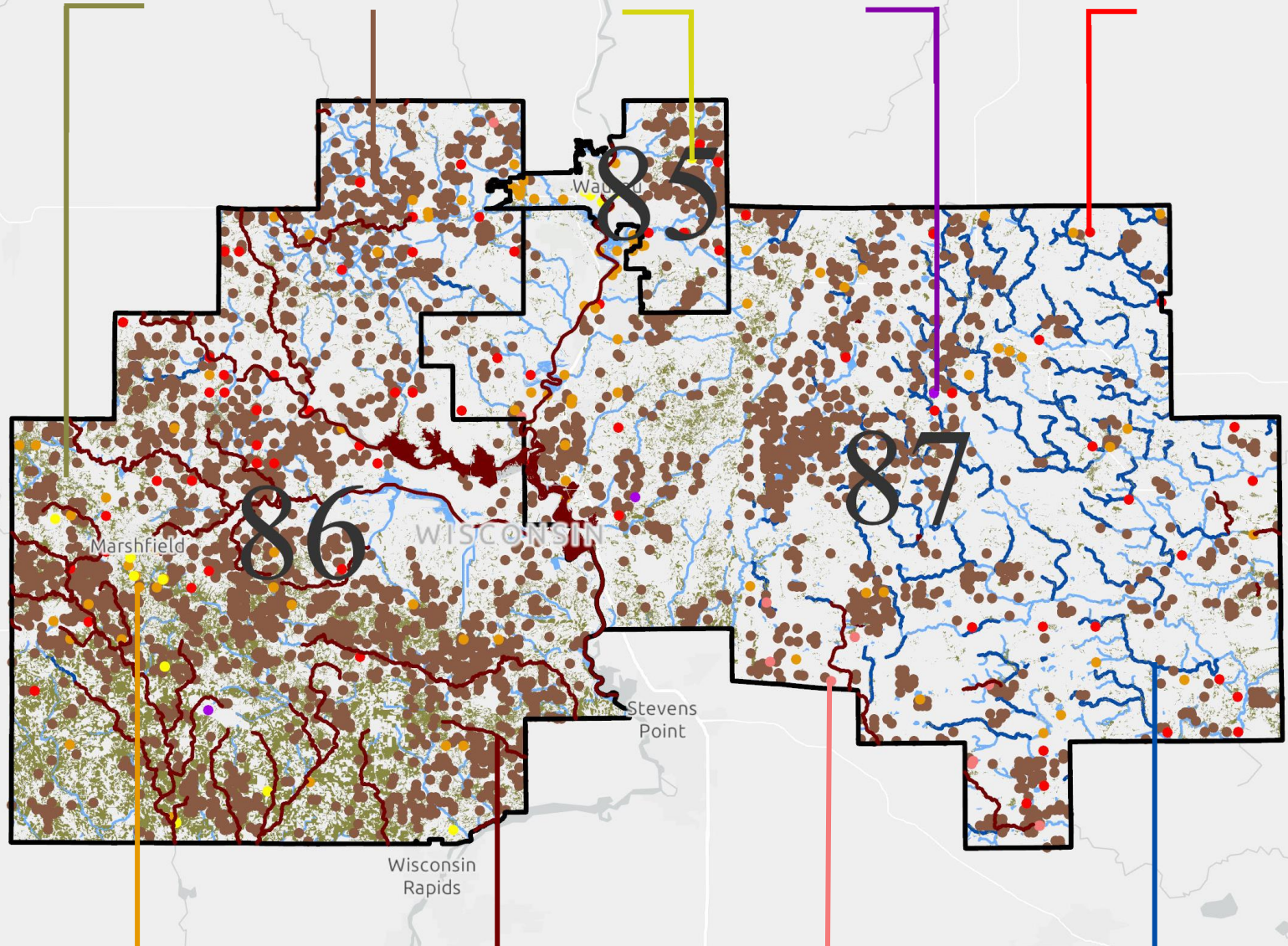
## Drinking Water Quality Violations

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



## Nitrate Exceedances

In the past three years, 60% of public and 70% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.



## PFAS Sources and Detects

There are 39 presumed sources of PFAS, and 55% of state-tested wells had detectable levels of at least one of the chemicals in 2023.



## Impaired Surface Waters

Over 46% of total lake acres and 21% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.



## Neonicotinoid Detects

Between 2019 and 2023, nearly 27% of state-tested wells contained detectable levels of one of three neonicotinoids.



## Outstanding/Exceptional Surface Waters

Almost 23% of total river and stream miles and <1% of lake acres are classified as high-quality surface waters.

Petenwell Lake

Wisconsin Rapids

Stevens Point

WISCONSIN

Marshfield

Wausau

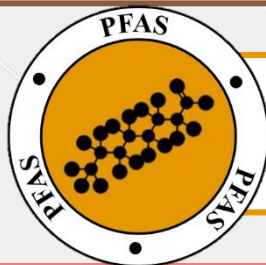




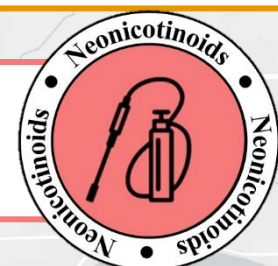
- **Over 100 public\* and seven private wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.<sup>1</sup>**
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.



- **Current permit holders have applied approximately 1.4 billion gallons of waste to 4,743 separate fields.<sup>2</sup>**
- 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.



- **Twelve private and 29 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.<sup>3</sup>**
- The 39 presumed sources include facilities that manufacture, manage, and/or discharge PFAS materials.<sup>4</sup>
- PFAS consumption can cause developmental effects in children, decreased fertility, and some cancers.



- **From 2019-2023, 11 state-tested private and monitoring wells contained one or more neonicotinoids.<sup>5</sup>**
- 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.



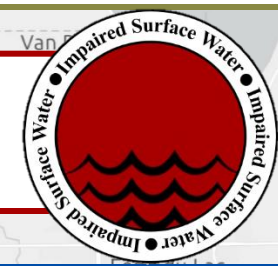
- **Radium, bacteria, and nitrate violations occurred in three public\* water systems from 2022-2024.<sup>6</sup>**
- These contaminants often enter drinking water from natural sources, agricultural operations, and septic systems.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause tissue damage, stomach ailments, and cancer, respectively.



- **Seventeen groundwater sites are contaminated with solvents, gasoline, and/or volatile organic compounds.<sup>7</sup>**
- 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, 13.5% of the total land has the potential for restoration.<sup>3</sup>**
- 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.



- **Approximately 19,900 acres and 379 miles of surface waters are impaired under the Clean Water Act.<sup>3</sup>**
- The phosphorus, heavy metal, 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 400 miles and 126 acres of surface waters are classified as Outstanding or Exceptional by the state.<sup>3</sup>**
- These waterbodies support fisheries and wildlife and have high water quality from management and protection.
- As some drinking water is sourced from surface water, these are essential public health resources, too.

