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SENATE DISTRICT

2024* Water Quality Report

177,000 Constituents | 67% Rely on Private Wells for Drinking Water

Drinking Water Quality Violations

Approximately 1% of public water systems reported contaminant violations between 2022 and 2024.

Nitrate Exceedances

From 2022 to 2024, 38% of public and 32% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.

PFAS Sources and Detects

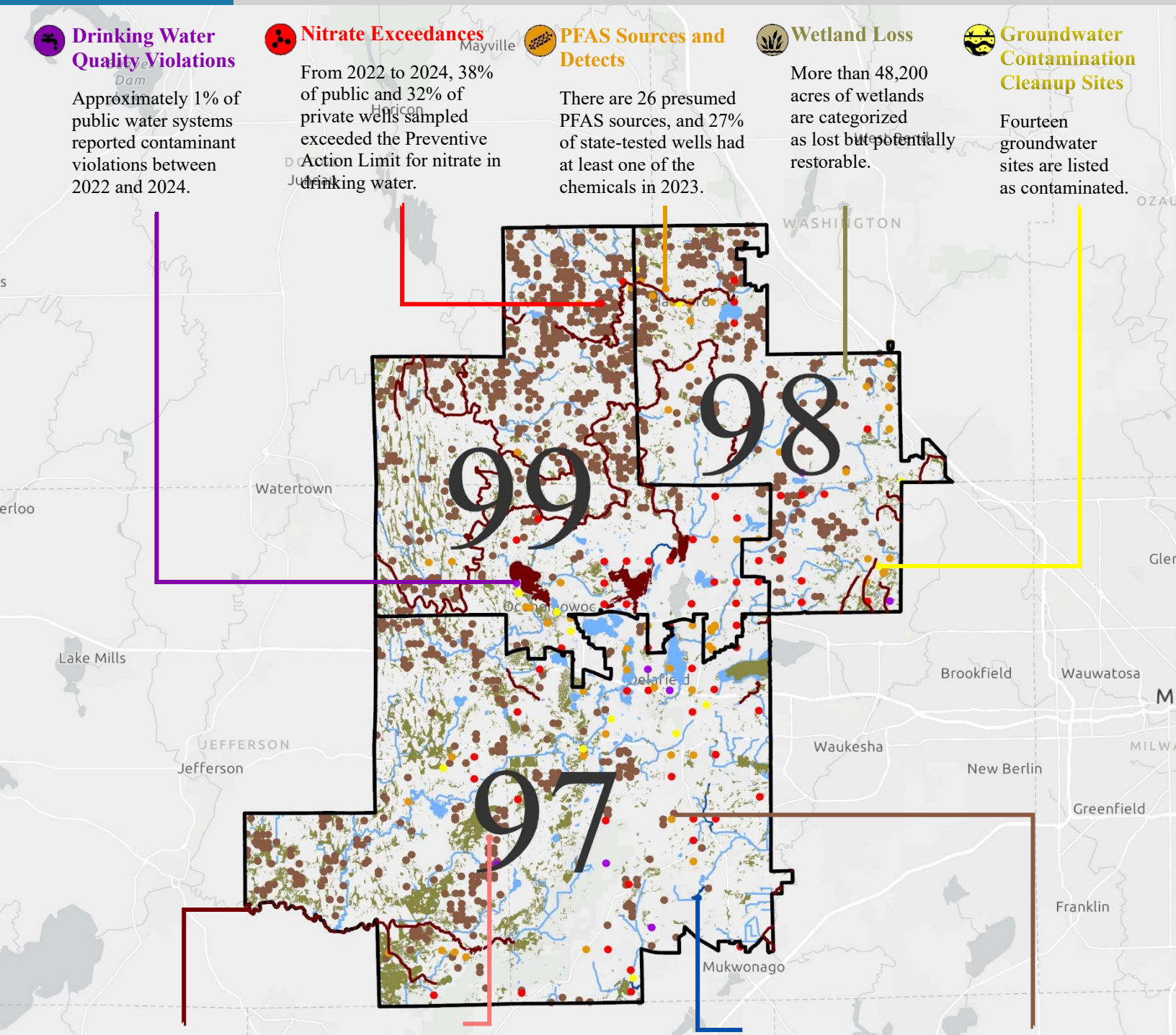
There are 26 presumed PFAS sources, and 27% of state-tested wells had at least one of the chemicals in 2023.

Wetland Loss

More than 48,200 acres of wetlands are categorized as lost but potentially restorable.

Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites

Fourteen groundwater sites are listed as contaminated.



Impaired Surface Waters

Over 26% of total lake acres and 30% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.

Neonicotinoid Detects

Between 2019 and 2023, 8.3% of state-tested wells contained one of three neonicotinoids.

Outstanding/ Exceptional Surface Waters

Over 1% of river and stream miles and <1% of lake acres are classified as quality surface water.

Biosolids/Waste Landspreading Sites

Septage, municipal, and industrial wastes are applied to over 22,600 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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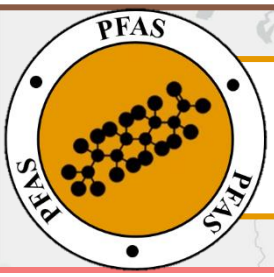
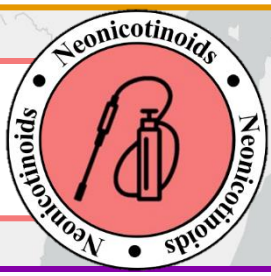
- **Twenty-six private and 81 public* wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.[1]**
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.

- **Current permit holders have applied approximately 220 million gallons of waste to over 1,650 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.



- **Five private and 37 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.[3]**
- The 26 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, one monitoring well 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, bacteria, lead, and DEHP violations occurred in eight public* water systems from 2022-2024.[6]**
- These contaminants often enter drinking water from natural sources and agricultural and industrial operations.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause cancer, gastrointestinal ailments, and developmental and reproductive issues.

- **Fourteen groundwater sites are contaminated with solvents, gasoline, heavy metals, PAHs, 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, 11% 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 6,000 acres and 145 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 six miles and 100 acres 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 and protection.
- As some drinking water is sourced from surface water, these are essential public health resources, too.

*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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