

2024* Water Quality Report

177,000 Constituents | 29% Rely on Private Wells for Drinking Water



PFAS Sources and Detects

There are 52 presumed PFAS sources, and 27% of state-tested wells had at least one of the chemicals in 2023.



Wetland Loss

More than 66,200 acres of wetlands are categorized as lost but potentially restorable.



Nitrate Exceedances

From 2022 to 2024, 12% of public and 12% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.



Drinking Water Quality Violations

No public water systems reported contaminant violations between 2022 and 2024.



Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites

Sixteen groundwater sites are listed as contaminated.



Impaired Surface Waters

Over 8% of total lake acres and 47% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.



Outstanding/Exceptional Surface Waters

Almost 4% of river and stream miles are classified as quality surface water.



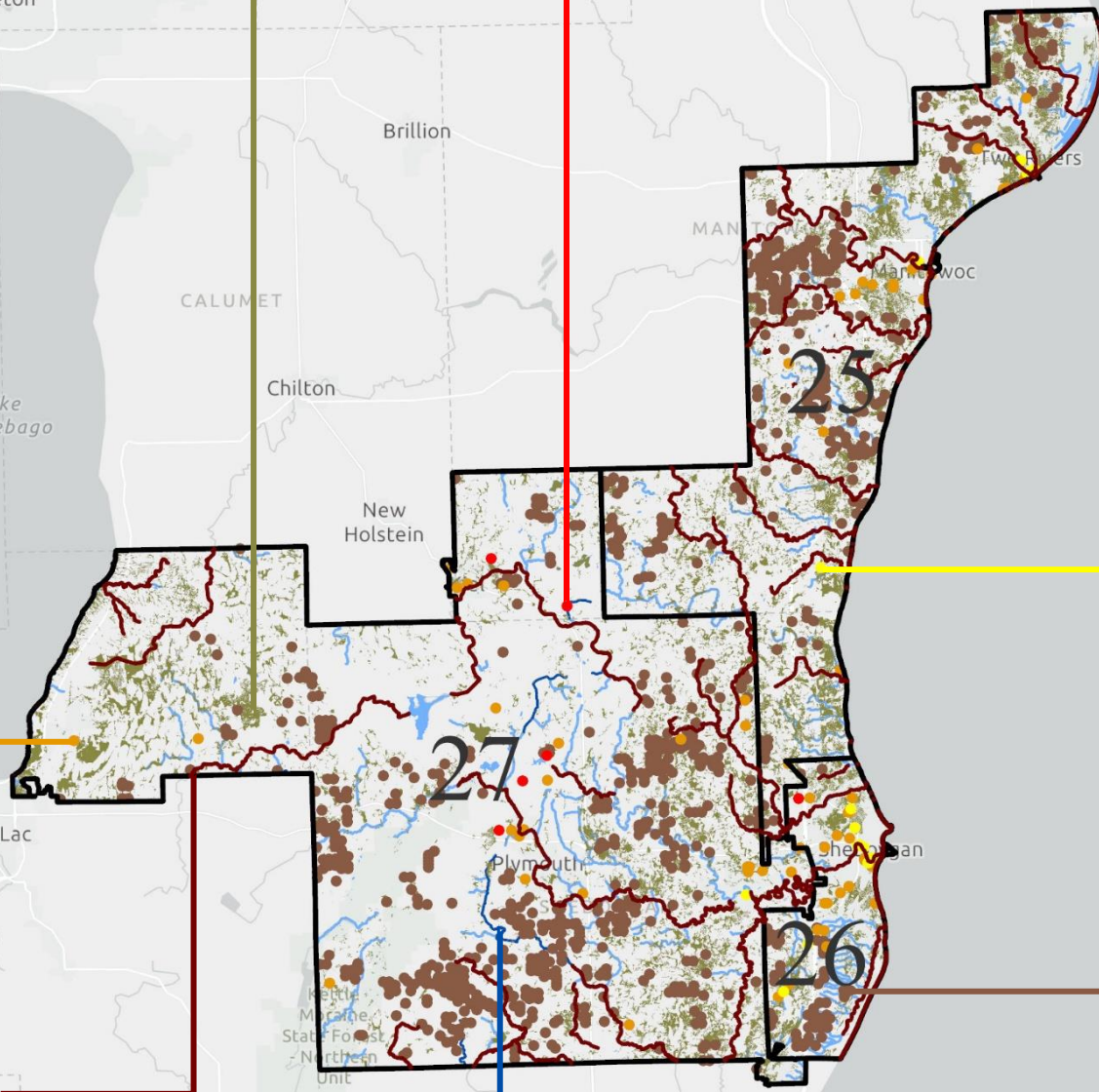
Neonicotinoid Detects

Between 2019 and 2023, no state-tested wells contained neonicotinoids.



Biosolids/Waste Landspreading Sites

Septage, municipal, and industrial wastes are applied to over 22,300 acres.

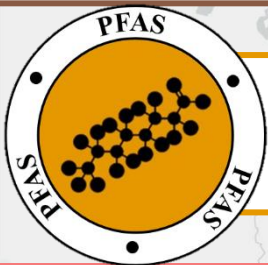




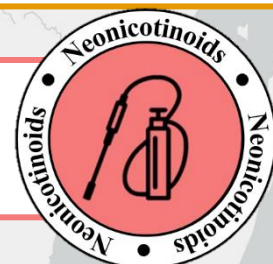
- **Two private and nine public* wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.**¹
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.



- **Current permit holders have applied approximately 310 million gallons of waste to over 1,300 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.



- **Four private and 14 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.**³
- The 52 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, no private nor monitoring wells sampled contained 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.



- **No federal drinking water violations occurred in public* water systems from 2022-2024.**⁶
- Common contaminants such as bacteria and metals often enter drinking water from agricultural and natural sources.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause gastrointestinal ailments and developmental issues, respectively.



- **Sixteen groundwater sites are contaminated with PFAS, PAHs, solvents, gasoline, heavy metals, and/or VOCs.**⁷
- These chemical mixtures enter water through industrial/military 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, 14% 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 410 acres and 290 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 25 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.



*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