13
SENATE DISTRICT

2024* Water Quality Report

177,000 Constituents | 44% Rely on Private Wells for Drinking Water

PFAS Sources and Detects

There are 49 presumed PFAS sources, and 25% of state-tested wells had at least one of the chemicals in 2023.

Nitrate Exceedances

From 2022 to 2024, 66% of public and 28% of private wells sampled exceeded the Preventive Action Limit for nitrate in drinking water.

Drinking Water Quality Violations

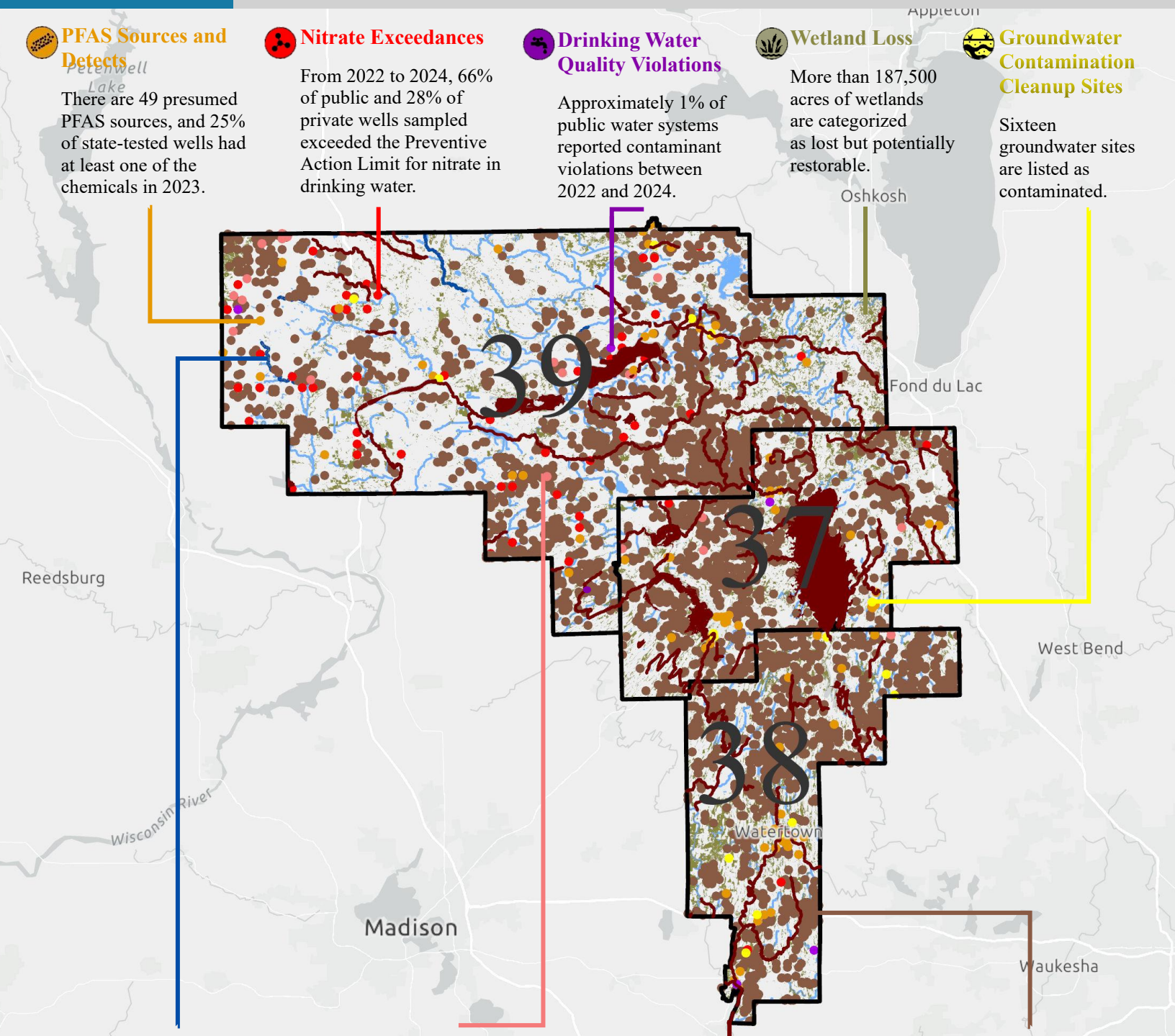
Approximately 1% of public water systems reported contaminant violations between 2022 and 2024.

Wetland Loss

More than 187,500 acres of wetlands are categorized as lost but potentially restorable.

Groundwater Contamination Cleanup Sites

Sixteen groundwater sites are listed as contaminated.



Outstanding/ Exceptional Surface Waters

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

Neonicotinoid Detects

Between 2019 and 2023, 12% of state-tested wells contained one of three neonicotinoids.

Impaired Surface Waters

Over 80% of total lake acres and 38% of river and stream miles are listed as impaired.

Biosolids/Waste Landspreading Sites

Septage, municipal, and industrial wastes are applied to over 136,000 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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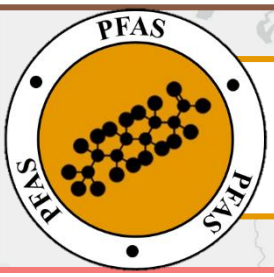
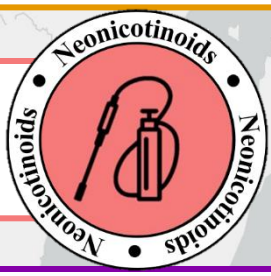
- **Ten private and 72 public wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.[1]**
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube defects.

- **Current permit holders have applied over 813 million gallons of waste to over 4,200 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.



- **Twelve private and 18 municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.[3]**
- The 49 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, 75 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.

- **Radium, lead, bacteria, and nitrate violations occurred in three public water systems from 2022-2024.[6]**
- These contaminants often enter drinking water from natural sources and agricultural operations.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause cancer, and developmental defects, gastrointestinal issues, and/or more.

- **Sixteen groundwater sites are contaminated with PFAS, 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, these pollutants pose cancer, organ damage, and/or other serious health risks.

- **Of the thousands of wetland acres lost, 13% 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 85,800 acres and 580 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 65 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 and protection.
- As some drinking water is sourced from surface water, these are essential public health resources, too.

[1]Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Groundwater Retrieval Network (GRN); [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 (DATCP) data request; [6]Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO); [7]WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS)

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