

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.



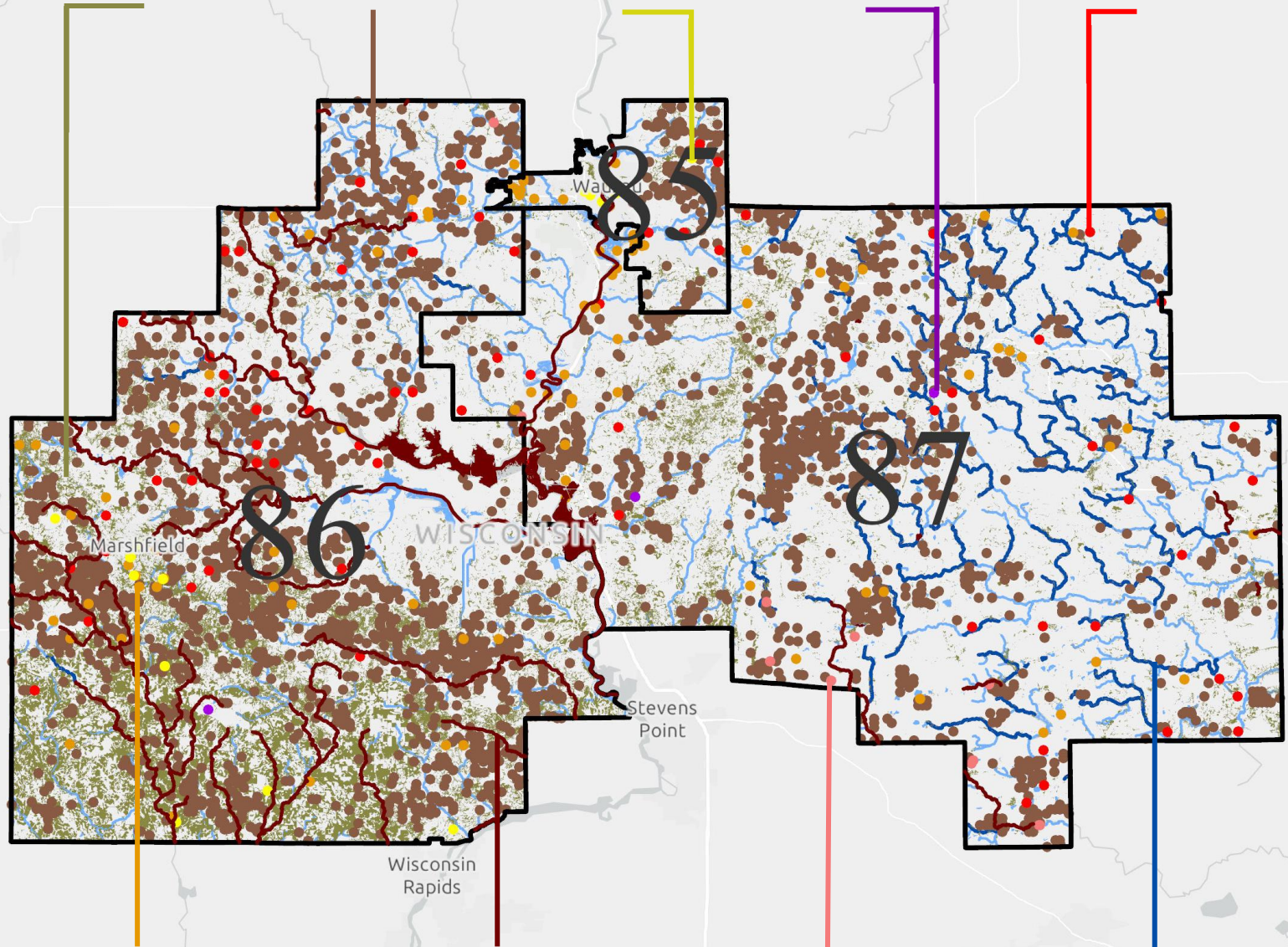
Drinking Water Quality Violations

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 8% of state-tested wells contained detectable levels of one of three neonicotinoids.



Outstanding/Exceptional Surface Waters

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

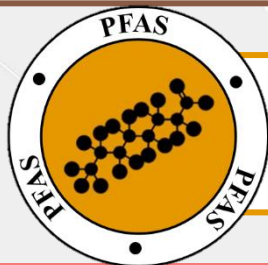




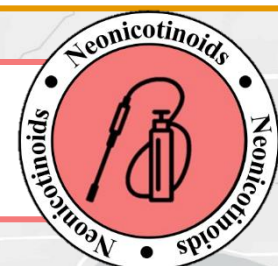
- **Over 100 public and seven private wells sampled exceeded the Preventative Action Limit from 2022-2024.**¹
- Elevated levels of nitrate are generally due to agricultural runoff and industrial discharges.
- Nitrate has been linked to blue baby syndrome, colon cancer, thyroid disease, and neural tube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



- **Current permit holders have applied over 741 million gallons of waste to 4,743 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.



- **More than half of private and municipal wells tested by the state had detectable levels of PFAS in 2023.**³
- The 39 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, 11 state-tested private and monitoring wells 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.



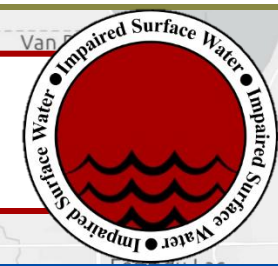
- **Radium, bacteria, and nitrate violations occurred in three public water systems from 2022-2024.**⁶
- These contaminants often enter drinking water from natural sources, agricultural operations, and septic systems.
- Sustained ingestion at high levels can cause tissue damage, stomach ailments, and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



- **Seventeen groundwater sites are contaminated with solvents, gasoline, and/or volatile organic compounds.**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, 13.5% of the total land 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.



- **Approximately 19,900 acres and 379 miles of surface waters are impaired under the Clean Water Act.**³
- 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.**³
- 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.



¹Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Groundwater Retrieval Network (GRN); ²WDNR data request; ³WDNR GIS Open Data Portal; ⁴Adapted from Salvatore et al. (2022); ⁵Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) data request; ⁶Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO); ⁷WDNR Bureau for Remediation and Redevelopment Tracking System (BRRTS)