



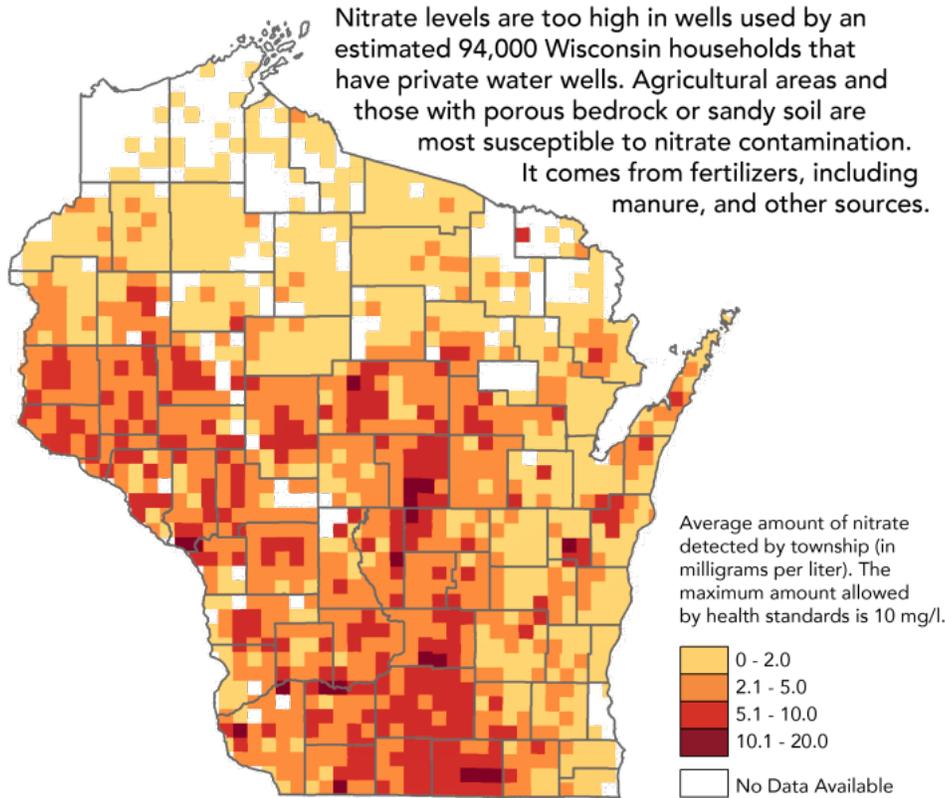
CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

ENSURING CLEAN WATER FOR ALL WISCONSINITES

The state of Wisconsin is abundant in water. It borders the Great Lakes, which contain 20% of the world's fresh surface water, and we have rich groundwater resources running below our feet. There is more than enough water available for drinking, recreation, wildlife, and business. However, growing concerns over the public health and ecological impacts of agricultural and industrial pollutants in our water mean we must reevaluate how we manage water resources in Wisconsin.

Agricultural runoff is a major cause of water pollution in this state. Wisconsin has over 1,500 impaired waterways, and between a quarter to half of private wells in Wisconsin do not meet safe drinking water standards due to excess bacteria or nitrates. Bacteria such as E. coli and Cryptosporidium can sicken humans and livestock, and nitrates are known to cause certain cancers, spontaneous abortions in cattle, and "blue baby syndrome" in infants. Excess nutrients in surface water cause toxic algae blooms which threaten humans and wildlife and destroy the tourism and recreation industries.

Nitrate in drinking water around Wisconsin



CREDIT: Katie Kowalsky/Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism

SOURCE: Well Water Quality Viewer, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's Center for Watershed Science and Education. Private Drinking Water Quality in Rural Wisconsin, Journal of Environmental Health, 2013.

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CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

WHAT CAN THE STATE DO?

FULLY FUND COUNTY CONSERVATION

County conservationists work directly with farmers to improve land management practices to protect water and other natural resources. WFU supports increasing funding for county conservation from \$9.4 million to \$12.4 million annually. The state should provide the baseline funding of \$75,000 per county and fund county conservation staffing grants at 100% of the first position, 70% of the second position, and 50% of the third position.

SUPPORT FOR GROUNDWATER RESEARCH, TESTING, MAPPING, AND EDUCATION

A coordinated system of statewide groundwater testing and mapping would give counties and residents a better understanding of the quality of their water and any future risk of contamination. WFU supports adding one position at the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey to conduct groundwater mapping. We also support grants for counties to study groundwater quality in private wells, assess the extent and type of contamination, and/or notify the public of the results. The results of these studies should be shared with the UW-Stevens Point Center for Watershed Science and Education so all citizens, stakeholders, and agencies can access the same data.

INCENTIVES FOR GRAZING AND COVER CROPS

Grazing livestock on perennial pasture is highly effective at retaining water in the soil, controlling erosion, and preventing agricultural runoff. It is also an effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategy. WFU supports creating a grazing program at DATCP aimed at increasing the number of acres of managed pasture. We also support state incentives for cover crops to maintain continuous cover on cropland.

EXPAND PRODUCER-LED WATERSHED PROGRAMS

The Producer-led Watershed program helps farmers share information and collaborate on solutions to protect local water resources. WFU supports funding for the producer-led watershed grant program of at least \$750,000/year. We further support expanding eligibility for lake protection grants to producer-led watershed groups.

IMPROVE WELL COMPENSATION PROGRAM

DNR's well compensation program helps households offset the cost of remediating contaminated wells. We support increasing funding for the well compensation program to \$1 million and raising the income cap from \$65,000 to \$100,000, with priority given to lower income households. We support removing the eligibility requirements that wells must be used for livestock and must be contaminated only with nitrates. A Well Compensation Grant Program Administrator position should be created at DNR.

INCREASE CAFO MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT

WFU supports increased DNR staffing, funding and authority for CAFO monitoring and oversight to make sure we are holding the farms that pose the greatest risk to our water accountable. We support increasing CAFO permitting fees to a level consistent with surrounding Midwest states. We further support updating the state Livestock Siting rule with increased setbacks to property lines, replacing the odor score calculator, requiring period inspections of all manure pits, and verifying that CAFO operators own or rent enough acres for spreading manure.

EXPAND NR-151 TO SENSITIVE AREAS OF THE STATE

WFU supports changes to NR-151 that restrict manure and other waste application rates and spreading of these materials on frozen soils in areas of the state deemed sensitive areas. These sensitive areas include places with shallow soil depth above Karst bedrock, areas with sandy soils, and areas where groundwater quality standards are not being met.

All Wisconsinites should be able to drink clean, safe water straight from their taps. For too long, we have been presented with a false choice between agriculture and clean water. Wisconsin Farmers Union believes that it is possible to have clean water, thriving family farms, and vibrant rural economies, and that farmers can be champions in this effort. All of us have an interest in ensuring our water is clean and safe for ourselves, our environment, and future generations.

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