

# PFAS IN WISCONSIN

JULY–  
DECEMBER  
2024



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CONTENTS

Overview / Executive Summary ..... 3

Federal Actions ..... 3

State Actions ..... 4

Site Specific Updates ..... 7

    Town of Stella Updates ..... 8

New Resources..... 10

## OVERVIEW / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continues to take a public health-centered approach to address PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) throughout Wisconsin.

During the second half of 2024, the DNR conducted efforts to increase understanding of how PFAS contamination impacts Wisconsin's land, air and water, as well as to support those who are impacted by PFAS. This work included sampling for PFAS in drinking water and surface water; providing temporary, emergency water to private well owners with PFAS levels in their wells above health recommendations; and working with public water systems towards implementation of and compliance with new federal standards.

The DNR continues to monitor legislative actions at the state and federal levels and collaborate with other states on learning opportunities to expand the understanding of PFAS and its impacts.

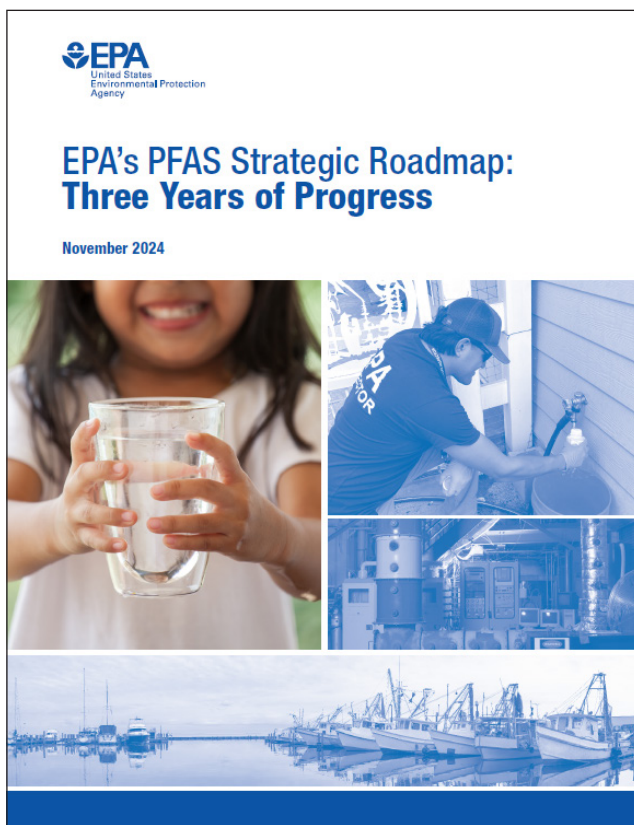
## FEDERAL ACTIONS

### U.S. EPA RELEASED THIRD ANNUAL PFAS STRATEGIC ROADMAP PROGRESS REPORT

In October, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its third annual [progress report](#) highlighting achievements made under its PFAS Strategic Roadmap. Highlights of this report include setting federal drinking water standards for some PFAS chemicals, significant infrastructure investments and designating PFOA and PFOS as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA).

### U.S. EPA RELEASED DRAFT HEALTH-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PFAS IN WATERBODIES

In December, the EPA released a draft [national recommended water quality criteria](#) for three types of PFAS compounds (PFOA, PFOS and PFBS) that would be protective of human health. These criteria were developed under the Clean Water Act but are not regulatory requirements and do not compel any action. Once final, these recommendations can be used by regulatory agencies to develop water quality criteria that help protect people from exposure to PFAS while consuming water, fish and shellfish.



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## UPDATES TO TSCA RELATED TO REVIEW OF NEW CHEMICALS

In December, the EPA [finalized amendments](#) to regulations related to the review of new chemicals under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). These changes ensure that new PFAS and persistent, bio accumulative and toxic chemicals with potential for human exposure are subject to a full safety review process before they are manufactured. This will eliminate low-volume exemptions or low-release and exposure exemptions for new PFAS.

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## STATE ACTIONS

### **DNR, PARTNERS AWARDED \$1 MILLION TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF WATER QUALITY, FISH CONSUMPTION AND RELATED HEALTH ISSUES IN CENTRAL WISCONSIN**

The Wisconsin DNR [received a \\$1 million grant](#) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to improve community understanding of water quality, fish consumption and related health issues for disproportionately impacted communities in central Wisconsin. Fish consumption advisories are important to communities that rely on subsistence fishing as a means to provide healthy, economical meal options. However, anglers are often not aware of the fish consumption advisories that help limit exposure to PFOS, among other chemicals.

The three-year project will focus on both urban and rural communities – including the agricultural community, Hmong and Hispanic communities and local tribal communities – in Marathon, Clark, Taylor, Lincoln, Langlade, Shawano, Portage and Wood counties. The DNR will sub-award the entirety of the grant funds to two partners based in central Wisconsin: HOLA, Inc. and the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service (WIPPS), a unit of the Universities of Wisconsin. Those partners will jointly coordinate the Hmong and Hispanic Communication Network (H2N) and Rural Resiliency Network (R2N) to conduct outreach and education on the ground level and facilitate increased private well-water testing in rural central Wisconsin, focusing on agricultural households and other groups most in need of assistance.

Individuals with the necessary information can protect their health by taking action regarding private well water quality and fish consumption practices.

UPDATE: The EPA issued a notice of termination on March 25, 2025, ceasing all activities under the grant.

### **STATE RULEMAKING**

In October, the DNR hosted a preliminary public hearing on a statement of scope for revisions to [ch. NR 809](#) related to drinking water standards for PFAS. The objective of the proposed rule is to amend ch. NR 809, Wis. Adm. Code, to establish drinking water standards, referred to as Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs), based on the new federal standards for certain PFAS. The specific compounds included in the proposed rule are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS) and hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid (HFPO-DA), also known as GenX.



## PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

The DNR accepted public feedback on the draft State Fiscal Year 2025 Clean Water Fund Program [Intended Use Plan](#). This annual plan identifies funds available through the Clean Water Fund Program state revolving loan program and their eligible uses. Municipalities can apply for funding through the Clean Water Fund Program for wastewater and stormwater infrastructure projects.

The DNR also accepted public feedback on [draft guidance](#) to assist facilities in drafting PFOS and PFOA minimization plans. Facilities with a Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permit and reasonable potential to exceed PFAS water quality standards are required to draft and implement a minimization plan. The draft PFOS and PFOA Minimization Plan Expectations guidance is intended to be a resource for facilities while they develop their minimization plans.

## WELL COMPENSATION GRANT FUND

The DNR continues to assist private well owners who face contamination, including PFAS, in their well water. In the second half of 2024, the DNR awarded \$22,458 from the [Well Compensation Grant Program](#) to one private well owner. In 2022, Gov. Evers temporarily expanded eligibility for well compensation grants using funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Demand for financial assistance through this expanded eligibility was high, and the approximately \$10 million of ARPA funding was exhausted in spring 2024, well before the grant closed.



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## FEDERAL FUNDING FOR EMERGING CONTAMINANTS

The DNR [awarded](#) nearly \$460,000 from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's [Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities \(EC-SDC\) grant program](#) during this time period. This grant program provides funds for other-than-municipal community and nonprofit non-transient, non-community water systems to address PFAS or manganese contamination. The types of projects funded by these grants include drilling new wells, connecting to existing public water systems or installing treatment to receive a safer water supply.

Other-than-municipal community systems are residential public water systems such as apartment complexes, subdivisions and mobile home parks. Non-transient, non-community systems are non-residential public water systems such as schools, daycare centers and businesses. These small public water systems have historically been ineligible to receive financial assistance through the DNR.

As of March 2025, the DNR expects to award over \$2.3 million through the EC-SDC grant program once all applications are processed. The second grant cycle for this program opened on Oct. 1, 2024, and applications will be accepted until June 30, 2025.

The DNR also awarded more than \$59.2 million to eight municipalities for construction projects to address PFAS contamination in municipal public water systems. Municipalities that received funding are Adams, Eau Claire, Madison, Prescott, Rib Mountain, Rothschild, Wausau and Weston.

Of the total amount awarded, nearly \$18.5 million of funding was from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in the form of principal forgiveness, which does not need to be repaid by the municipality. Additionally, \$6.7 million of funding was from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law's Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Grant Program. The remaining \$34 million was awarded as low-interest loans through the DNR's [Safe Drinking Water Loan Program \(SDWLP\)](#). SDWLP Emerging Contaminant funding is expected to be available to municipalities through at least SFY 2027.

## STATEWIDE SURFACE WATER SAMPLING

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The Bureau of Water Quality collected surface water samples to measure PFAS at several sites throughout Wisconsin. These sites include tributaries of the Wisconsin River in the Central Sands and watersheds around the municipalities of Merrill, Antigo and Town of Drammen in Eau Claire County.

Samples were also taken from four sites at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Trout Lake Research Station. The watersheds of Wilson

Park Creek and Oak Creek near Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport were also extensively sampled, as well as regular monitoring of Lake Monona and Starkweather Creek. Results are posted to the DNR's [PFAS Interactive Data Viewer](#) as they become available.

## WILDLIFE SAMPLING

The Wildlife Management program sampled waterfowl from the lower portion of the Bay of Green Bay. These samples are currently being analyzed at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene.

## SITE SPECIFIC UPDATES

### SUPPORT TO IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

The DNR provides significant financial support to communities impacted by PFAS. Between July and December, the DNR provided temporary emergency water to 1,642 residences in PFAS-impacted communities at a cost of \$329,723.96. Of those residences, 1,559 are in the Town of Campbell. Additionally, the DNR provided funding to assist public water systems in drilling 26 new wells to access different sources of water.

In addition to financial support, the DNR provides technical assistance to staff at public water systems, community officials in PFAS-impacted communities, businesses and private well drillers. The DNR's expertise helps these entities to best assist their constituents and customers as they work to reduce human exposure to PFAS through drinking water. For example, the DNR can help assess a situation's unique circumstances, such as the location's hydrology and water chemistry, and develop steps to minimize exposure that consider those circumstances.

An additional resource the DNR developed to assist communities is the [PFAS Pilot Study Guidance](#), which was released in July 2024.

This guidance helps community systems design their PFAS treatment systems by outlining the required documents for submitting plans and specifications. It also provides a list of options available to water systems to satisfy program requirements. Over the past three years, the DNR has reviewed 12 pilot studies to treat for PFAS and approved 11 permanent treatment proposals and 5 temporary treatment proposals submitted by public water systems.



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ISTOCK/BOB WESTON

### PFAS CONTAMINATION IN MARINETTE AND PESHTIGO

The DNR continued to review JCI/Tyco's actions to investigate and mitigate risks from PFAS contamination in the Marinette and Peshtigo areas. The [DNR responded](#) to JCI/Tyco's [Site Investigation Status Report](#), noting the need for additional investigation and areas where JCI/Tyco may need to take action to reduce contaminant migration.

One of JCI/Tyco's current remedial actions is a groundwater extraction and treatment system (GETS). The [DNR responded](#) to JCI/Tyco's [GETS Progress Report #3](#), and JCI/Tyco shared its [plans to expand the GETS](#) with the goal that this will further limit the migration of PFAS contamination in



the groundwater and surface water. JCI/Tyco also continues to install deep private drinking water wells to replace shallow wells in an area of the groundwater contaminant plume designated the Potable Wells Sampling Area (PSWA). As of December, JCI/Tyco had completed 84 deep wells and had agreements in place to install 25 additional wells in the PSWA.

## **PFAS CONTAMINATION IN THE TOWN OF CAMPBELL**

The Town of Campbell is continuing to work towards the development of a new public water system as a long-term solution to PFAS contamination in private wells. An island-wide advisory for private wells allows the DNR to provide temporary bottled water to 1,559 homes.

In July, the Town of Campbell completed drilling monitoring wells and then began working with experts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the United States Geological Survey and the Wisconsin Geological Survey to assess and characterize the Eau Claire shale formation that separates the shallow, PFAS-contaminated aquifer from the deeper Mt. Simon aquifer.

Additional research is modeling the movement of PFAS in the contaminated aquifer. [The Town of Campbell website](#) provides more information about ongoing efforts to address PFAS.



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## **PFAS CONTAMINATION IN DANE COUNTY**

The Dane County Regional Airport (DCRA) continues to work to understand and address PFAS at the airport. In September, the Wisconsin Air National Guard completed transitioning its firefighting trucks to PFAS-free foam. The Air National Guard provides firefighting services for DCRA. More information about PFAS and the airport is available on [DCRA's website](#).

## ***Town of Stella Updates***

### **PRIVATE WELL SAMPLING**

In the spring of 2024, the DNR expanded private well sampling efforts in the Town of Stella to include additional residences. Cost-free sampling is now available for all private drinking water wells within three miles of the Town of Stella town hall, including both seasonal and year-round wells. Eligible well owners in this area were sent a letter with information about how to sample their wells for PFAS. Eligible well owners who did not receive a letter about sampling their well can contact the DNR at [DNRPFASInquiries@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRPFASInquiries@wisconsin.gov).



As of Dec. 4, 2024, the DNR has received PFAS results for 225 private wells in the vicinity of the Town of Stella. Of the 225 wells sampled for PFAS:

- 71 private wells have reported concentrations of PFAS greater than DHS' recommended health guidelines.
- 54 private wells have reported detections for PFAS that are less than DHS' recommended health guidelines.
- 100 private wells have no reported detections for PFAS.

## **SURFACE WATER SAMPLING**

The Bureau of Water Quality sampled 23 new surface water sites near the Town of Stella in 2024. These sampling results have been combined with the results from 2023's sampling efforts to provide an expanded understanding of PFAS in surface waters around the Town of Stella. The results have been posted on the DNR's [PFAS Interactive Data Viewer](#).

## **FISH SAMPLING**

Fisheries Management staff collected fish from Snowden Lake for PFAS analysis. Sampling results will be shared once they become available.

## **DEER SAMPLING**

During the 2024 deer hunting season, the DNR accepted tissue samples from deer harvested within three miles of the Town of Stella. The Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene will analyze these samples for PFAS, and the findings will be shared with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to determine whether any consumption advisories are warranted.

## **FEDERAL COORDINATION AND SUPERFUND**

The DNR has been assisting the U.S. EPA with their [Superfund](#) Site Assessment-related activities near the Town of Stella.

In September, the DNR collected surface water, groundwater, soil and sediment samples for the Site Inspection (SI) portion of the EPA's Superfund Site Assessment. The EPA's final report with the findings of the site assessment is expected to be available by summer 2025. The DNR intends to formally request technical assistance from the EPA for a site-specific risk assessment based on the data collected. Specifically, the DNR will seek support with a risk assessment that evaluates all exposure pathways present as well as an ecological risk assessment.

The SI is one early step in the overall Superfund site listing process. Next steps include development of a Hazard Ranking System (HRS) score to determine if the site is eligible, based on the overall site risk, for listing on the National Priorities List (NPL). The final decision on whether the site qualifies for the NPL and will be added to the federal Superfund Remedial program will be made by the DNR and EPA. The entire process of listing a site takes several years.

## NEW RESOURCES

### WEBPAGE FOR PRIVATE WELL OWNERS

The DNR launched a webpage for private well owners and users with information about PFAS in private drinking water. The [PFAS Contamination in Private Wells](#) page is a starting point to learn about potential resources that may be available to address PFAS in private wells.



### PFAS IN PRIVATE WELLS

Learn about steps private well owners and users can take to reduce risk from PFAS.

[READ MORE](#)

