

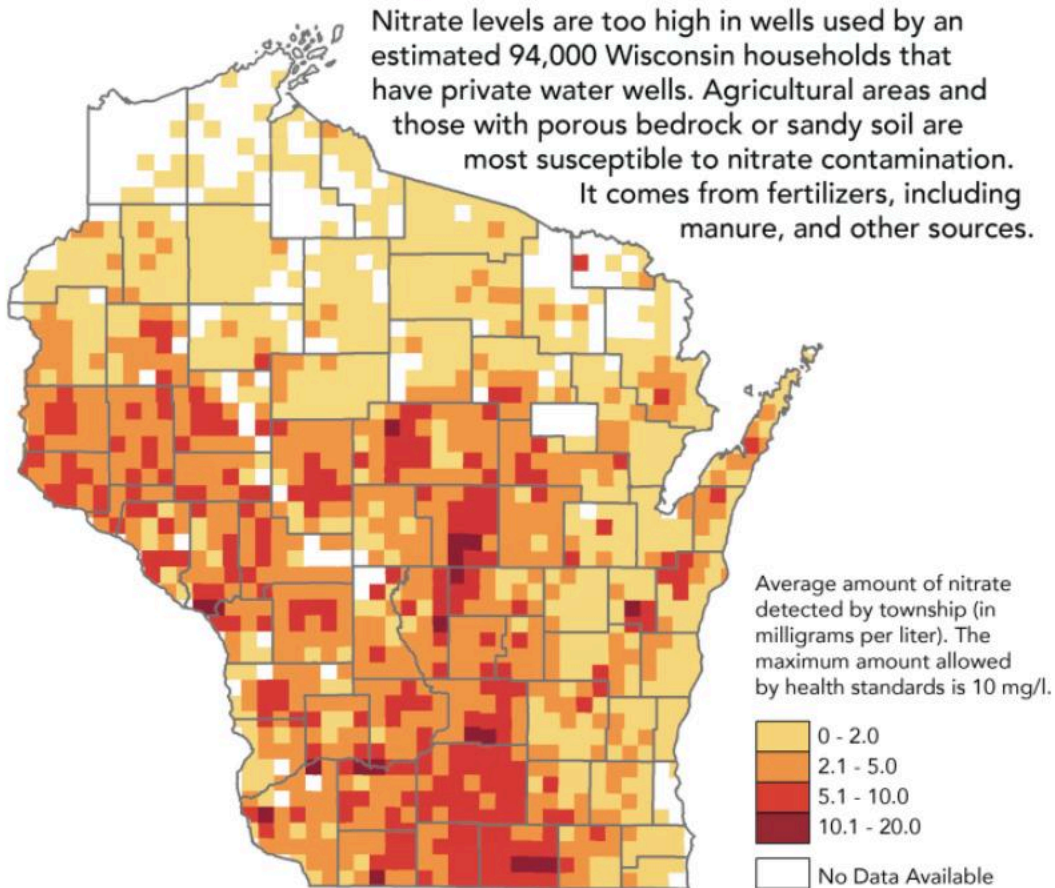


CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

ENSURING CLEAN WATER FOR WISCONSINITES

Nonpoint source pollution is a major cause of water pollution in Wisconsin. 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. Nitrates can cause certain cancers, spontaneous abortions in cattle, and “blue baby syndrome” in infants.

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.

In response to growing concerns over water quality in the state, Governor Evers declared 2019 the year of clean drinking water. Soon thereafter, Speaker Vos formed a Water Quality Task Force that charged 16 state legislators with exploring solutions to the state's water quality problems. The majority of recommendations from experts and the public related to addressing nonpoint source pollution from agriculture.

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CLEAN WATER FOR ALL: WHAT CAN THE STATE DO?

Provide Conservation Assistance to Farmers *Co-sponsor LRB-4717/1 and LRB-5276/1*

- Add a Grazing Coordinator position at DATCP and develop a state grazing plan. Grazing livestock on perennial pasture is highly effective at retaining water in the soil, controlling soil erosion, and preventing agricultural runoff from entering our groundwater.
- Incentivize cover crops by offering a \$5/acre rebate on crop insurance premiums. Cover crops maintain soil cover outside of the growing season and help reduce runoff.
- Increase funding for the producer-led watershed grant program by \$250,000/year. This program helps farmers share information and collaborate on solutions to protect local water resources.
- Extend eligibility for lake protection grants to producer-led watershed groups.

Increase Funding for County Conservation Staff *Co-sponsor LRB-3915/1 and LRB-5275/1*

- Increase program funding from the current level of \$9.4 million to \$12.4 million annually.
- Aim to 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. County conservation staff work directly with farmers to improve land management practices to protect water and other natural resources.

Support Groundwater Testing, Mapping, and Educational Outreach *Co-sponsor LRB-4716/1*

- Add one FTE position at the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey to conduct groundwater mapping activities. This would give counties and residents a better understanding of the quality of their water and any future risk of contamination.
- Provide grants for counties to study groundwater quality in private wells, assess the extent and type of groundwater contamination, and/or notify the public of the results of such studies.
- Provide funding for the Center for Watershed Science and Education at UW-Stevens Point to expand and maintain their groundwater database.
- Require county groundwater test results to be shared with the UW-Stevens Point Well Water Viewer so all citizens, stakeholders, and agencies can access the same data.

Create a Pilot Grant Program for Farmers to Reduce Nitrates *Co-sponsor LRB-4751 and LRB-5782*

- Create a nitrogen optimization pilot program at DATCP that would award grants to farmers and producer-led watershed councils for implementing projects that reduce nitrogen loading.

Improve Well Compensation Program *Co-sponsor LRB-5062/1*

- Increase funding by \$1 million to help more households offset the cost of well remediation.
- Create a Well Compensation Grant Program Administrator position at DNR
- Remove the eligibility requirements that wells must be used for livestock and must be contaminated only with nitrates.
- Prioritize grants for nitrate-contaminated wells based on the concentration of nitrates detected.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports amending this proposal to raise the income cap from \$65,000 to \$100,000, with priority given to lower income households.

Increase CAFO Monitoring and Oversight

- Increase DNR 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.
- Restore local control of livestock siting so counties with sensitive geology and groundwater have the authority to set more stringent livestock siting standards based on scientific findings of fact.

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.

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