



Water Quantity in Wisconsin

Wisconsin water resources provide the cornerstone for much of Wisconsin's economic engine and quality of life. Lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands host a broad range of recreational, hunting and fishing opportunities. Groundwater provides drinking water for about 70 percent of all Wisconsinites, while the rest rely on surface waters for drinking water. Commercial, industrial and agricultural activities rely on water as part of their business operations.

Sierra Club's *Water Quantity in Wisconsin (May 2017)* white paper highlights the threats of overconsumption of water resources in Wisconsin.

- In 2015, WI used over 2.04 trillion gallons, roughly the volume of three Lake Winnebago
- Increasing concentrations of pollutants in drinking water due to groundwater over-pumping is putting thousands of Wisconsinites at risk
- Approximately 940,000 Wisconsinites get their drinking water from private wells that are vulnerable to both contamination and lowering of the water table
- Since 2000 there has been a six-fold increase in WI CAFO's, which often require multiple high-capacity wells that increase stress on our groundwater resources
- The sensitive Central Sands region is now home to over 3,000 high-capacity wells: in the 1950's there were less than 100
- The Little Plover River was listed in 2013 as one of America's 10 most endangered rivers
- 94,000 households in WI already have unsafe levels of nitrate in their drinking water

Water can and should be managed sustainably with consideration for all uses and users. Policy makers must act as stewards ensuring adequate water supply now and into the future for Wisconsin. There are many things that must be taken into account when making decisions about Wisconsin's current and future water supplies.

- Ensure water fairness by taking into account multiple uses and cumulative impacts of water withdrawals from both surface and groundwater resources.
- Expand protections for groundwater recharge areas. Recharge areas are critical to ensuring the long term viability of groundwater resources.
- Plan for climate change related water extremes including droughts and floods.
- Safeguard Drinking Water. Wisconsin must take steps to reinvigorate water quality protections for drinking water and the healthy ecosystems that provide it.