

PFAS Private Well Sampling Project

Occurrence of PFAS in WI groundwater by sampling private water supply wells

What is the study ?

This study is being conducted to evaluate the occurrence of PFAS chemicals in Wisconsin groundwater. Over 95% of Wisconsin's communities and about 75% of Wisconsin residents rely on groundwater for their drinking water supply. PFAS have been detected in groundwater in some areas of the state, but the overall occurrence is not known. Residents with private wells throughout the state were contacted and selected for the study. Samples are being collected from their water supply wells and analyzed for PFAS and other water quality parameters, including some agricultural chemicals, human waste source indicators and inorganic substances. Homeowners whose wells are sampled will be notified of their results by mail this fall. All study sampling results will also be available through the DNR's Groundwater Retrieval Network database. This sampling project is being done **at no cost** to homeowners. Sampling costs are being funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

What are PFAS ?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a group of human-made chemicals that can form foams that are effective in firefighting and are also used to repel oil, stains, grease and water. They have been used for decades in numerous products, including some firefighting foams, stain-resistant carpets and fabrics, non-stick cookware, fast food packaging, clothing, personal care products and cosmetics.



What are the impacts of PFAS in drinking water ?

PFAS chemicals can be released from many of the products that contain them. Also known as “forever chemicals”, they do not break down in the environment. Through several possible processes, the chemicals may leak out of products and enter soil and groundwater. Once released into the environment, PFAS may move quickly into soil and groundwater, impacting drinking water resources. PFAS are now present in most of the earth's water, people, and animals. Scientists have determined that lower levels of PFAS in drinking water likely presents minimal risk to people, but that higher levels can be unsafe for human consumption.

What is being done ?

In order to address PFAS in Wisconsin waters, the Wisconsin PFAS Action Council (WisPAC) was created. In their PFAS Action Plan, this group recommended that Wisconsin specific PFAS research



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be conducted to increase understanding of PFAS in the environment. Recommended research includes sampling various environmental media, such as soil, sediment, surface water and groundwater, to gain a better understanding of the occurrence of PFAS in the environment and to potentially detect previously unidentified PFAS source areas so that they can be evaluated.

Who is involved in this project, and what are their roles ?

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  Provides funding and guidance for the project	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  Responsible for leading and coordinating study efforts	University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UW-SP)  Collects samples and water quality analysis	Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene (WSLH)  Analyzes samples for PFAS
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When will sampling be conducted ?

Study sampling is planned for this summer (June through August 2022).

How will DNR report the results ?

Residences whose wells are sampled will be notified of their results by mail. All study sampling results will also be available through the DNR's Groundwater Retrieval Network database. Results, but not the exact location of study wells or resident information, will also be included in a scientific publication.

What happens if there is PFAS in our water ?

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has recommended groundwater standards for human consumption for 18 PFAS compounds, as well as guidance for assessing mixtures of PFAS in drinking water through calculation of a Hazard Index. The DNR and DHS will use these recommendations, and established drinking water health advisory levels for other water quality parameters, to evaluate the samples taken for the study. Based on previous testing, we expect the majority of well tests will not indicate health-related concerns.



In the event sampling results indicate a potential health risk with your drinking water from PFAS, you will be offered resampling of your well to confirm a PFAS related health risk. In the event that PFAS or any other tested substance is detected in your water above a level of health risk concern, information and educational assistance will be provided to you so you can take any steps you choose to ensure a safe home drinking water supply. Please note that homeowners will not be required to take any additional steps based on study test results.

Questions ?

If you have questions about this sampling project please feel free to contact the DNR at: DNRDGPFGWStudy@wisconsin.gov

Learn more about PFAS on our website: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/PFAS>



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