

# Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger: Wisconsin bill tackles PFAS crisis

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Governor Evers and Wisconsin DNR Secretary Cole accompanied Senators David Hansen (Green Bay) and Mark Miller (Monona) to announce one of the most comprehensive bills in the nation to address contamination by per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

The Chemical Level Enforcement & Remediation (CLEAR) Act [LRB-2299-2](#) directs state regulators to establish acceptable levels and standards, monitoring requirements and response actions for PFAS chemicals that are determined by the Department of Health Services (DHS) to be harmful to human health for drinking water, groundwater, surface water, air, solid waste, beds of navigable waters and soil and sediment.

PFAS are a group of persistent man-made chemicals linked to health risks such as cancer, fertility issues for women and developmental issues in children. PFAS are currently not regulated in Wisconsin or by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“Without this bill, hazardous waste incinerators can burn PFAS without a permit, PFAS discharges to our rivers and streams will remain unregulated, farm fields and dairies will continue to be contaminated with PFAS in land-spread sludges, and public drinking water supplies will not be thoroughly tested for these highly toxic chemicals,” said Laura Olah, Executive Director of CSWAB. “And those most

vulnerable to harm will continue to be at risk – because there is no safe level of PFAS for infants.”

Industrial sites like the Tyco/Johnson Controls facilities in Marinette, Wisconsin are sources of PFAS groundwater contamination that has spread from these sites, threatening nearby fisheries and affecting residential wells. So far, at least 36 families have been exposed to PFAS in their drinking water. The highest concentration detected in a private well was 1900 ng/L, far above the EPA’s Health Advisory Level of 70 ng/L (parts per trillion).

The potential for other similar sites in Wisconsin is unknown as there has been no statewide inventory of likely sources of PFAS contamination such as paper mills, fire training areas, airports, manufacturing facilities and landfills.

Of the more than 11,000 public drinking water systems tested in Wisconsin, only 90 have been tested for PFAS. The one-time testing in 2013-2015 detected PFAS in La Crosse and Rhinelander public water system and low levels in the West Bend system.

Moreover, these wells were tested for only 6 PFAS analytes in a class of thousands of chemicals. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a large group of more than 5,000 man-made toxic chemicals used to make consumer products resistant to water, grease or stains.

Aqueous film-forming foams (AFFF) containing PFAS has been used by the Department of Defense for over 40 years for suppressing liquid fuel fires, fire-training exercises and other emergency fire response activities.

Concentrations of PFAS in groundwater at military sites like Fort McCoy, Volk Field, and General Mitchell exceed 100,000 parts per trillion. Heavy concentrations of hazardous PFAS chemicals have reached groundwater under the Truax Air National Guard base, contaminating downgradient City of Madison drinking water wells.

“We are grateful to Senators Hansen and Miller, Governor Evans, Representatives Taylor, Gruszynski and Sargent for their leadership, their responsiveness to this crisis, and for introducing this bill. We look forward to working together with them and all of our legislators who are committed to protecting the future of Wisconsin’s water,” Olah said.

[Wisconsin CLEAR Act LRB-2299-2 2019](#)

[Wisconsin Map 36 PFAS Compounds Threaten Groundwater CSWAB May 2019](#)