

Dept. of Natural Resources: Response to PFAS contamination ongoing with Town of Stella and multiple state agencies

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Health Services (DHS) continue to work with the Town of Stella in Oneida County, where private wells have been impacted by per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

Since PFAS were first detected in a private well in the Town of Stella through a voluntary sampling program last year, the DNR and DHS have been working collaboratively to better understand the extent of contamination to protect public health. The DNR has offered private well sampling to over 110 full-time residences within 2.5 miles of the Town of Stella town hall and two summer camps. In total, the DNR has sampled 98 private wells and an additional 16 residents sampled independently and provided results to the DNR.

Based on PFAS levels observed in these private drinking water well sampling results, DHS, in cooperation with the DNR, has issued well-specific drinking water advisories for 47 residences due to elevated levels of PFAS.

The state is taking the following steps to assist residents with known PFAS contamination in their private drinking water supply and help them access safe water:

- **Voluntary Sampling Of Additional Private Water Supply Wells:** The DNR and DHS are evaluating available information – including existing private

sampling results – to help determine the need for additional sampling efforts and where potential sampling efforts may be most impactful. The DNR and DHS continue to utilize a public health-centered approach to address PFAS in the Town of Stella and are working with local, state and federal agencies to identify and mitigate exposure to contaminated drinking water for those at greatest risk.

- **Providing Bottled Water To Homes:** Year-round residents who sample their private drinking water and find levels of PFAS higher than health recommendations from DHS can receive bottled water delivered to their residence. More information about receiving alternative drinking water is available on the [PFAS Contamination in the Town of Stella webpage](#). Currently, 41 households are receiving bottled water.
- **Financial Assistance To Impacted Well Owners:** Private well owners who find their water is PFAS-impacted may be eligible to be reimbursed for costs to address the contamination through the [Well Compensation Grant Program](#).
- **Other Actions:** In June and July, the DNR collected water samples from 22 sites in lakes and rivers near the Town of Stella. These include the Moen chain of lakes, the north branch of the Pelican River and the Wisconsin River near Rhinelander. Fish were also collected from Fifth Lake and are currently at the lab for analysis. Results from these different sampling efforts will be shared as they become available and will inform additional sampling efforts. The DNR and DHS will continue to provide resources for individuals about ways in which they may reduce their exposure.

The DNR continues to explore possible contamination sources to help mitigate ongoing or future impacts in the region.

More information and resources are available on the [PFAS Contamination in the Town of Stella webpage](#). To be notified when new information is available, [subscribe](#) to receive updates through emails or text messages.

Additionally, the DNR and DHS are participating in a meeting with town leadership and residents tonight, Aug. 15, at the Town of Stella town hall to provide updates about the status of known PFAS contamination and ongoing work to protect public health. Staff will discuss possible long-term water solutions for households that are PFAS-impacted, and state resources community members may be eligible to receive to address it. After the formal meeting, staff will be available to answer questions.

About PFAS

[PFAS](#) (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a group of human-made chemicals used for decades in numerous products, including non-stick cookware, fast food wrappers, stain-resistant sprays and certain types of firefighting foam. These contaminants have made their way into the environment through accidental spills of PFAS-containing materials, discharges of PFAS-containing wastewater to treatment plants and certain types of firefighting foams.

PFAS do not break down in the environment and have been discovered at concentrations of concern in groundwater, surface water and drinking water. These chemicals are known to accumulate in the human body, posing several risks to human health, including certain cancers, liver damage and decreased fertility. Information about PFAS can also be found on the [DNR's PFAS webpage](#) and the [Wisconsin DHS website](#).