



**Wisconsin  
Conservation  
Voters**

**Testimony on Adopting PFAS Standards for Drinking, Ground and Surface Water  
Peter Burress, Government Affairs Manager  
February 23, 2022**

My name is Peter Burress, and I am the Government Affairs Manager with Wisconsin Conservation Voters. We have offices in Madison, Milwaukee, and Green Bay, where we work with our network of over 40,000 members and supporters to engage voters to protect our environment. I appreciate the opportunity to share our support for the DNR's proposed rules to establish public health standards for PFOA and PFOS in drinking, ground, and surface water (DG-24-19, DG-15-19 and WY-23-19).

The PFAS threat to our communities is real and growing. On French Island, heavily contaminated wells have left residents living off of five-gallon water jugs provided by the state and the City of La Crosse.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of Eau Claire's wells have been shut down while the city is managing poisoned water by diluting it through manufactured lagoons.<sup>2</sup> In Peshtigo, Tyco Fire Products kept the community in the dark about PFAS contamination for four years,<sup>3</sup> and residents are just beginning to understand the health-related consequences of the company's inaction.<sup>4</sup> In Madison, Well 15 approaches its third anniversary of being shut down from PFAS contamination, while nearby residents face warnings against consuming more than one fish per month from Starkweather Creek.<sup>5</sup> Most recently, Wausau residents learned about contamination across every one of their city wells, and the city is racing to identify solutions.

The scariest part about all of this is that we don't know how widespread the exposure to these dangerous chemicals might be, because there are no state or federal standards for testing and cleaning up existing pollution. While our Michigan and Minnesotan neighbors continue to benefit from comprehensive testing and remediation, many Wisconsin communities are still left in the dark about the safety of their water. If we wait for federal standards, it will be close to 2030 before they arrive, and those standards will not protect our groundwater. Meanwhile, these proposed rules that would set standards for drinking, ground, and surface water are widely popular – only opposed by a small handful of special interest groups.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wpr.org/we-didnt-know-french-island-residents-struggle-lack-clear-solutions-pfas-contamination>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/wisconsin/2021/10/12/eau-claire-shuts-down-half-its-wells-pfas-contamination/6102075001/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/local/wisconsin/2019/02/04/tyco-waited-4-years-disclose-toxins-wisconsin-drinking-wells/2727670002/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2021/05/residents-of-wisconsin-region-struggle-with-aftereffects-of-dangerous-forever-chemicals/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2021/10/starkweather-creek-one-of-wisconsins-most-pfas-polluted-waterways/>

We owe it to every Wisconsinite to look this problem in the eye and begin to address it. Included with this testimony is a letter of support for these rules, signed by 462 of our members. As members of the Natural Resources Board, only you have the ability to set these standards for our state. Local governments on the front lines of this crisis cannot. The current Legislature will not. It is your responsibility to set policy that protects and enhances our natural resources, provides a healthy and sustainable environment, carries out the will of the public, and considers the health of future generations. Without your support for these rules, tens of thousands of Wisconsin families will continue to drink poisoned water for years to come. Please do your job and vote to protect the health of every Wisconsinite. Thank you for your time.

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*For more information, contact Peter Burress at [peter@conservationvoters.org](mailto:peter@conservationvoters.org) or 920-421-3601. Visit Wisconsin Conservation Voters at [www.conservationvoters.org](http://www.conservationvoters.org).*

## **Petition to Protect Our Water from Toxic PFAS Chemicals**

Every person has a right to safe drinking water. As Wisconsinites, from every corner of the state, we appreciate your efforts to protect our communities from PFAS by implementing administrative rules related to drinking water (Natural Resources Board Order Number DG-24-19), surface water (Natural Resources Board Order Number WY-23-19), and groundwater (Natural Resources Board Order Number DG-15-19) from PFAS.

PFAS are a class of highly toxic, human-made chemicals that for decades have been used for industrial applications and consumer products such as carpeting, waterproof clothing, upholstery, food packaging, firefighting foam, and various paper products. Commonly referred to as “forever chemicals,” PFAS do not break down over time. There is mounting evidence linking these chemicals to a wide variety of serious long-term health risks including:

- Increased cholesterol levels
- Decreased responsiveness to vaccines
- Increased risk of thyroid disease
- Decreased fertility
- Increased risk of high blood pressure in pregnant women
- Lower infant birth weights

PFAS are already presenting well-known public health risks in communities like Campbell, La Crosse, Eau Claire, Madison, Peshtigo, Marinette, and Rhinelander. The list of impacted communities continues to grow. Across the state, the DNR has already opened more than 80 PFAS-related investigations in over 35 communities.

Still, the truth is, we don't know how widespread the exposure to these dangerous chemicals might be. There are no state or federal requirements for testing and cleaning up existing pollution. Without immediate comprehensive public health-based action, PFAS will continue to poison our communities and threaten future generations. The Department of Natural Resources' proposed rules are central to tackling PFAS' threat to Wisconsin communities.

**We appreciate the Department's efforts, and urge you to do everything you can to ensure these rules are adopted.**

Karen Ackroff, Eagle  
Glory Adams, Eau Claire  
Mary Beth Adams, Whitefish Bay  
Cecile Adams, Muskego  
Daniel Agne, Rice Lake  
Joanne Allen, Black River Falls  
Eric Andersen, Kaukauna  
David Anderson, Osceola  
Edna Anderson, Beloit

Kimberly Anderson, Salem  
Lisa Anderson, Nelsonville  
Ray Anderson, Fitchburg  
Melissa Anglin, Verona  
Evan Arnold, Madison  
Joan Arnold, Rudolph  
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Mary Arthur, Milwaukee  
Gary Austin, Green Bay

Nancy Barbieri, Milwaukee  
Duane Barmore, Middleton  
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John Beck, Sturgeon Bay  
Andrew Becker, Eau Claire  
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Chris Casper, Stevens Point  
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Michael Steele, Middleton  
Anne Steinberg, Milwaukee  
Rick Stel, Markesan  
Marsha Stelzer, Rice Lake  
Cécile Stelzer-Johnson, Wisconsin Rapids  
Leslie Stewart, Pepin  
Patrick Stoffel, Mazomanie  
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Daniel Waite, Cedarburg  
Todd Walker, South Milwaukee  
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Carol Waser, Reedsburg  
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Renee Welter, Twin Lakes  
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