



Water Quality Association *of Wisconsin*

POSITION PAPER: WISCONSIN WATER QUALITY ISSUES

WQAW POSITION STATEMENT: The final barrier to ensuring clean drinking water is through water treatment systems either point of entry (POE) or point of use (POU). For most regulated and non-regulated contaminants, certified (state approved) water treatment devices can reduce these contaminants below the EPA guidelines.

Issue:

Wisconsin is facing a water quality crisis: lead in municipal systems, bacterial and chemical contamination in southwest Wisconsin, high nitrate levels throughout the sandy agriculture areas, radium in some wells and municipal systems, arsenic in the fox valley and throughout the state, and the emergence of perflourinated compounds or PFAS.

In response to the numerous water contamination concerns around the state, Governor Tony Evers declared 2019 the “Year of Clean Drinking Water” and has earmarked \$72 million in his state budget to water issues. Legislation has been introduced in the Assembly and Senate to allocate up to \$10 million toward Wisconsin’s Well Remediation Grant Program. And finally, a 15-member water quality task force has been created in the Legislature to make recommendations based on all options.

As the state Legislature looks to address Wisconsin’s water issues, we believe water treatment systems are integral to the safety of Wisconsinite’s drinking water and as a permanent solution to many of these water concerns.

Background/Talking Points:

- Final Barrier Treatment is water technology installed either at the point of use (POU) where water is consumed including: pour-through pitchers, countertop units, faucet-attached devices, under-the-sink filters, refrigerator filters and reverse osmosis technology units; or point of entry (POE) where water enters the home: ion exchange, carbon, filtration, or whole house reverse osmosis.
- Contaminants commonly found in Wisconsin include arsenic, copper, nitrate, lead, radium, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). According to the CDC, POU systems using technologies such as reverse-osmosis, ultra-filtration, distillation, ion exchange or carbon filters will treat the majority of these contaminants. In others, POE devices using similar technologies are needed.

- Municipal Water Systems treat water to drinking water quality as defined by the Federal Safe Water Drinking Act. However, despite central treatment certain contaminants may still be present including pharmaceuticals and pesticides. In addition, after central treatment there are additional points of contamination such as lead and copper corrosion, as well as cross connections with waste. Since only a small percentage of all municipal water is used for drinking purposes (less than 1%), and contaminants are localized to only some areas serviced by municipal systems, POU systems represent a far more focused alternative at a far more affordable cost.
- Forty percent of Wisconsin residents use private drinking wells that rely on groundwater which contains natural impurities and contaminants. In addition, groundwater can be affected by fertilizers and pesticides, household and industrial waste, and storm-water drains. Homeowners are responsible for the safety of their water and need to ensure testing is done annually.
- Wisconsin law requires all new wells to be tested and also after repairs or other changes to the well. Wisconsin DNR also recommends wells are tested annually. However, materials and recommendations from the Wisconsin DNR indicate that testing must be done by a certified laboratory with costs as much as \$300 per test.
- Wisconsin's Well Contamination Grant Program provides grants to landowners, with specific requirements and income thresholds, to construct or reconstruct contaminated wells or connect to an existing private or public water supply. The Well Contamination Grant Program will provide reimbursement for water treatment equipment, only if no other option is feasible. Oftentimes in these situations, the problem is the groundwater and a well is not a viable option. The only solution in these situations is water filtration products.
- The costs to construct or reconstruct a well can range from \$1,500 to \$12,000 and does not ensure safe drinking water. On the other hand, water treatment products range in cost and options and can be obtained through certified water treatment professionals and usually cost a fraction of the repairs or reconstruction costs.
- The WQAW is made up of professional manufacturers, suppliers, and dealers who all adhere to the WQA code of ethics. Simply stated, they are dedicated to promoting the highest principles of honesty, integrity, fair dealing and professionalism in the water quality improvement industry.
- WQAW members are dedicated to preserving the consuming public's right to quality water and provide will provide testing, recommendations and advise to any Wisconsinite looking for information. In addition, WQAW seeks to be a resource for legislators as they discuss water quality issues and to assist with constituent concerns if needed.