

# 2022 WATER QUALITY LISTS

Every two years, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources publishes a list of waters considered impaired, as required by the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). Impaired waters are those that do not meet water quality standards and may not support fishing, swimming, recreating or public health and welfare.



- The Healthy Waters List increased by **142 waters**.
- Thirteen waterbodies are slated for delisting; a total of 22 listings will be removed, the majority are for phosphorus, degraded biology, and sediment.
- There were 33 waters added to the Restoration Waters List; a total of 38 listings, the majority for phosphorus.
- The Impaired Waters List grew by 85 waterbodies, the majority of which have new phosphorus or *E. coli* listings

## Comment Period

A public comment period on the 2022 draft Water Condition Lists is being held from August 16 to October 1, 2021.

## Stay in the loop

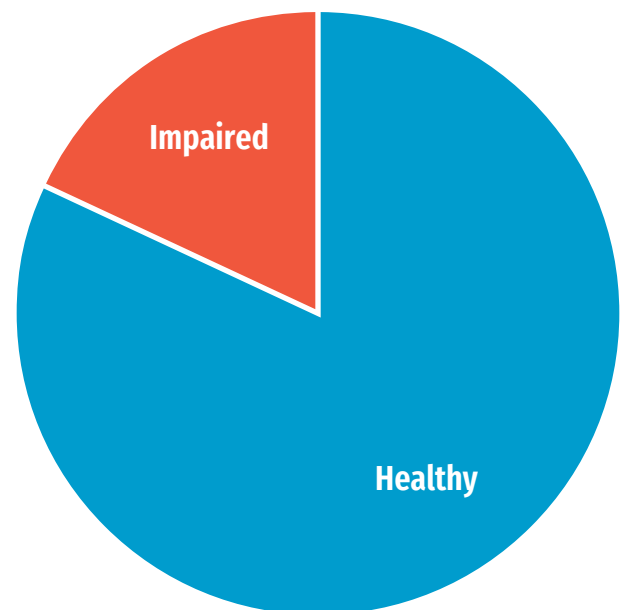
For more information regarding Wisconsin's Water Quality Lists visit: [dnr.wi.gov/topic/impairedwaters](https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/impairedwaters)

To receive future updates on Water Quality Lists, please subscribe to our mailing list.

Over 16,000 lakes and 85,000 miles of streams and rivers in Wisconsin are managed to ensure that their water quality condition meets state and federal standards. Water quality standards (WQS) are the foundation of Wisconsin's water quality management program and serve to define goals for a waterbody by designating its uses, setting criteria to protect those uses, and establishing provisions to protect water quality from pollutants.



**The majority of assessed waters are healthy.**

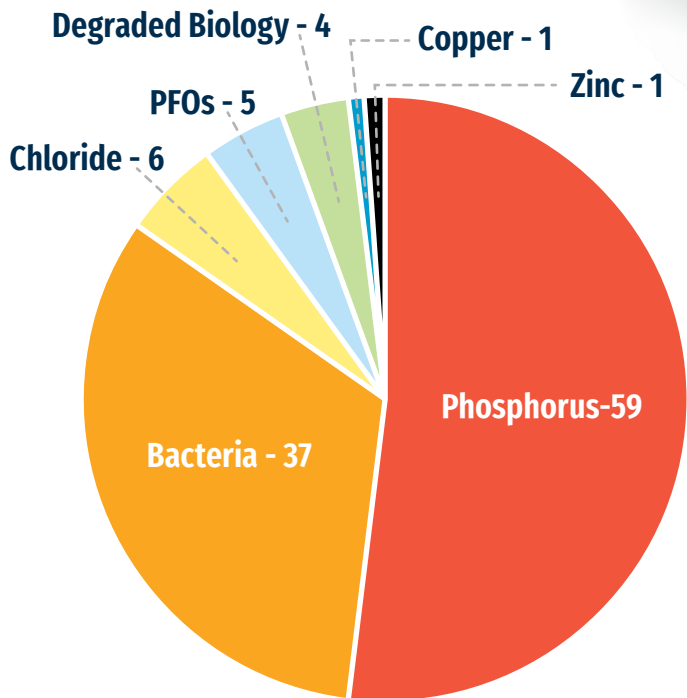
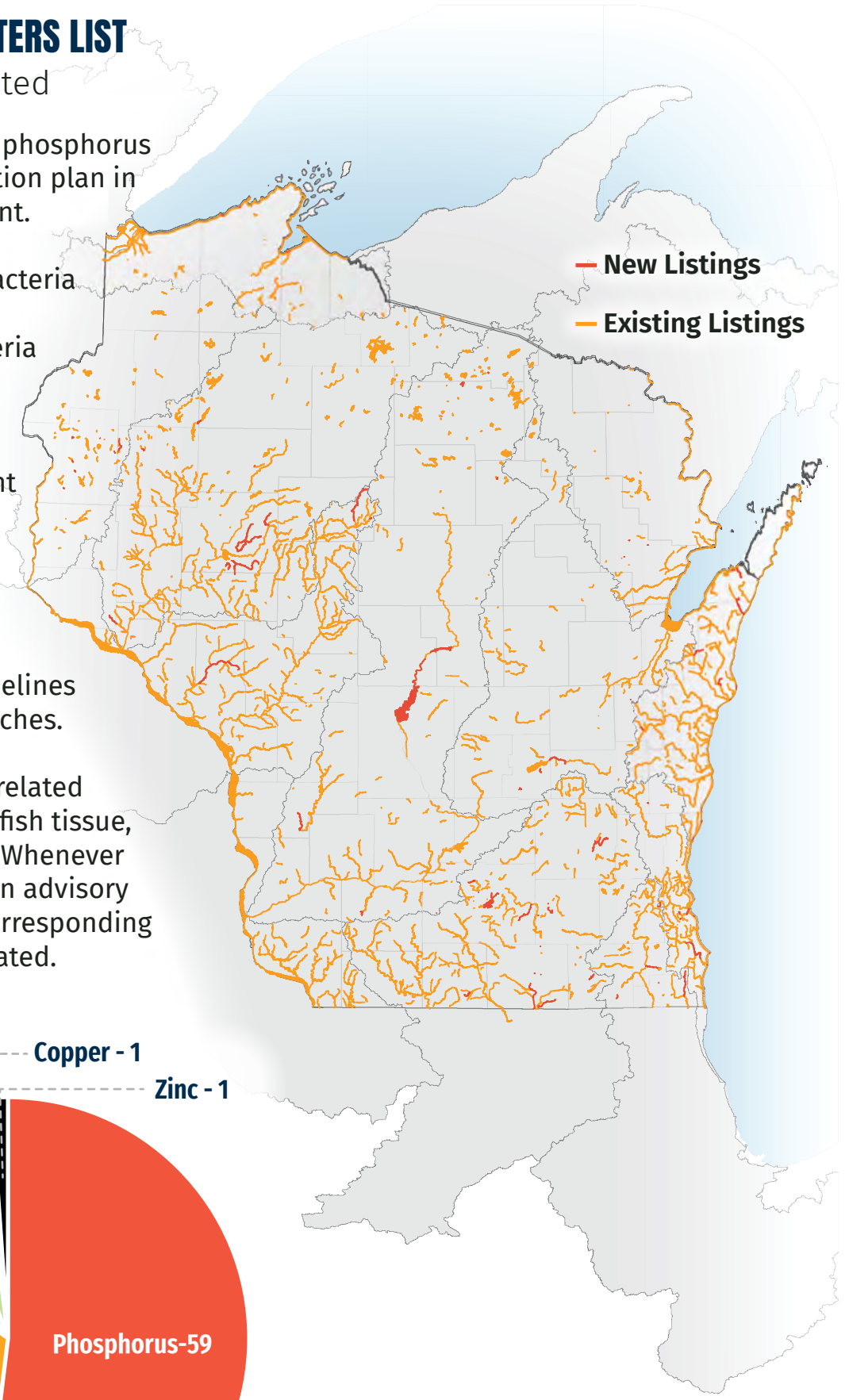


By assessing the condition of our surface waters we're taking care of our resources and protecting human health. Wisconsin is a state rich in water resources that are shared by over 5.5 million residents.

# MAP OF IMPAIRED WATERS LIST

New listings highlighted

- Nearly half of the new phosphorus listings have a restoration plan in place or in development.
- The majority of new bacteria (*E. coli*) listings are for beaches. The new criteria allow fewer bacteria spikes over the course of the summer, which led to more impairment listings. Local health departments post signs at beaches when there are unhealthy swimming conditions; follow these local guidelines when using public beaches.
- New PFOS listings are related specifically to PFOS in fish tissue, not the water column. Whenever a new fish consumption advisory is created there is a corresponding impairment listing created.



# MAP OF TMDL ADDITIONS

There are 38 listings, 11 new in the 2022 cycle and 27 from the 2020 cycle, proposed for addition to existing TMDLs. These listings will be added to the Milwaukee River Basin TMDL, Upper Fox-Wolf Basin TMDL, and Wisconsin River Basin TMDL. These listing additions do not change pollutant allocations within the TMDLs.



## A water is considered healthy when it supports:

- safe human recreation like swimming,
- healthy aquatic animal and plant communities, or
- safe fish consumption.

If any of these are not supported then the water is considered impaired.

Impaired water listings in Wisconsin have increased—but that's only half the story.

Since 2008, the number of impaired waters has increased from 738 to 1,465 in 2020. However, there are several reasons for that increase.

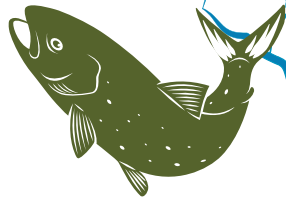
**More waters assessed:** Since 2008 the number of river and stream miles assessed has increased more than 80%. In addition to identifying impaired waters this has allowed for identification of healthy waters.

**Investigating problem areas:** DNR's surface water monitoring strategy includes monitoring focused on waters that DNR biologists or citizens suspect to be impaired in order to develop management plans for restoration.

**FACT:** many of Wisconsin's water resources can be protected from pollution. The amount of water on our landscape alone is remarkable: nearly **17,000 lakes, 650 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, about 86,000 stream and river miles** — enough to circle the planet more than three times, and **5.3 million acres** of remaining wetlands. Most waterbodies that have been monitored and assessed for Clean Water Act purposes are attaining water quality standards. Unfortunately, we often hear about the negative impacts to waterbodies. Problems like blue-green algae blooms, declining fish populations and a continued trend of lost wetlands need not be the norm.



**86,000** Miles of Streams



**17,000** Lakes



**5.3** Million Acres of Wetlands

**650** Miles of Great Lakes Shoreline

**Improving technology:** Automated assessment tools allow larger datasets to be assessed. These tools assess any waters, across the entire state, that have certain types of data.

**New or updated water quality criteria:** Water quality criteria allow us to identify waters that have existing water quality issues and begin restoration work. Criteria help protect human health and water quality.



# FAQS

**Q.** Does impaired mean polluted?

**A.** Yes, for specific pollutants.

**Q.** How are decisions made to list or delist?

**A.** Wisconsin's listing methodology (WisCALM)

**Who** – starts with assessment coordinator then disseminated to regional staff for review. These are then reviewed by the public, EPA, and partners including Tribes. The list is given final approval by the EPA.

**What** – evaluate all available and representative water quality data.

**When** – occurs every two years.

**Why** – Clean Water Act requirement (sections 303(d), 305(b), 314)

**Where** – all waters under state jurisdiction.

**Q.** What do impaired waters, restoration waters, delisted waters, and healthy waters mean?

**A. Impaired** – We're working on a cleanup plan, or we've sent a plan to EPA for Review

**Restoration** – we have a cleanup plan and EPA has approved it

**Healthy** – water passes all thresholds we've looked at so far

**Q.** What uses are considered or prioritized?

**A.** Uses considered = Aquatic Life, Recreation, Public Health & Welfare (including Fish Consumption), and Wildlife uses. Aquatic Life, Recreation, and Fish Consumption are the uses most often assessed.

**Q.** What is the difference between a restored water and a restoration water?

**A. Restored** – Category 2, healthy.

**(IN) restoration** – Category 4; has plan still impaired

**Q.** What is the difference between deletion and delisting?

**A. Deletion** – a listing is removed but other pollutants still present (ex Mendota PCB deletion).

**Delisting** – all pollutants remediated.

**Q.** How are Healthy Water thresholds determined?

**A.** Using the same thresholds as for Impaired Waters and additional general assessment metrics like fish, bugs, algae, plant, and Trophic State Index, which require fewer samples for a decision.

**Q.** Are there exceptions to statewide thresholds?

**A.** Yes, because sometimes waterbodies don't fit into the model used for threshold creation. These waters would require Site-Specific Criteria (SSC). For these we use, background and historical information, hydrology, and biological metrics. SSC cases are rare and the majority result in more restrictive criteria.

**Q.** What is a TMDL

**A.** Total Maximum Daily Load – how much of a pollutant can this water hold without a negative impact on the system? How much to we need to reduce that pollutant load?

**A.** Diet plan for a waterbody i.e.  
Sugar : Phosphorous

**Q.** Why does the impaired water list keep getting bigger?

**A.** New criteria – with a specific numeric value we are able to assess more waters for that pollutant.

**A.** Improving technology – with automation we can assess more waters.

**A.** Many projects focus on investigating problem areas.

# RAMIFICATIONS OF EACH IMPAIRMENT

Pollutant	Adult Health	Children's Health	Pet Health	Aquatic Life Health	Wildlife Health	Recreation/Economy
Algae	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Bacteria	☑	☑	☑		▲	☑
Chloride				☑	☑	
Aquatic Degraded Biology				☑	▲	
Habitat Alterations				☑	☑	☑
Metals	☑	☑	▲	☑	☑	▲
Oxygen Availability				☑	▲	
Phosphorus (Nutrients)				☑		
Sediment				☑	▲	
Temperature				☑		
Toxins	☑	☑	▲	☑	☑	▲
PFOS	☑	☑	▲	☑	☑	▲

☑ = main impact

▲ = possible impact (less likely than ☑)

