

Impaired Waters List 2012

303(D) IMPAIRED WATERS SUMMARY 2012

WHAT IS THE INTEGRATED REPORT (IR)?

- Often referred to as the “Water Quality Report to Congress”
- A Clean Water Act requirement for States and Tribes to report out on the condition of waters
- Combines Clean Water Act Section 305 general water quality condition assessments with Section 303d, the Impaired Waters List
- Updated every even-numbered year

Determining the Health of our Waters:

Updates to Wisconsin’s Assessment Methodology



The Clean Water Act is implemented by the Department of Natural Resources to ensure that all waters maintain healthy aquatic communities and provide citizens opportunities for fishing and swimming. Department staff use *Wisconsin’s Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology* (WisCALM) to determine if waters are fishable and swimmable on a biennial basis.

For 2012, WisCALM updates include:

- New phosphorus assessment methodology for lakes, rivers and streams.
- An improved method for evaluating Wisconsin’s Great Lakes and inland Beaches.
- A new reporting category for waters when impairments are suspected to be caused by natural or uncontrollable sources.

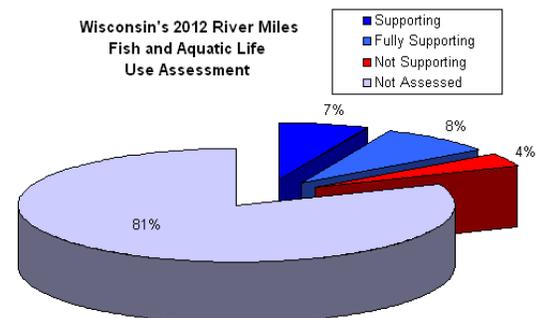
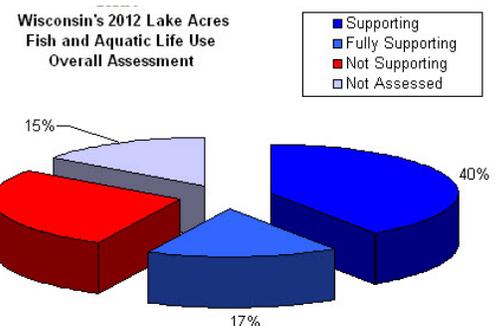
Assessing the Condition of our Lakes, Rivers and Streams

Systematic monitoring and assessment methods are used to make defensible decisions regarding surface water quality condition. Monitoring data that meet minimum data requirements are used to assess river, stream, or lake condition. Each waterbody is evaluated for several uses: fish and aquatic life, recreation, and public health and welfare (fish consumption).

For fish and aquatic life uses, the water is given a score based on it’s current condition, ranging from excellent to poor. Waters described as *excellent* and *good* are meeting the designated use; waters described as *fair* are considered meeting their designated uses, however may warrant additional monitoring in the future to assure the condition is not declining. Waters that are described as *poor* may be placed on Wisconsin’s Impaired Waters List. Decision rules are outlined in WisCALM to determine the impairment status.

Fish and Aquatic Life Assessments in WI

Top figure: Lakes, Bottom figure: Rivers (Draft 2012)



IMPORTANT DATES

- Impaired Waters List Public Comment Period: December 20, 2011 to February 20, 2012
- Public Information Webinar: Impaired Waters and Watershed Planning January 5th, 2011, 1:30 - 2:30 pm CST
- Submittal to US EPA: April 1, 2012

New Phosphorus Criteria & Assessment

In November 2010, water quality criteria for total phosphorus were promulgated. Criteria can be found in NR 102.06. Thresholds based on total phosphorus criteria, as well as frequency and duration of total phosphorus exceedances are outlined in Wisconsin's 2012 WisCALM document available on the Impaired Waters website (see below).

In addition to water quality criteria, biological indicators are assessed to confirm impairment. For example, high chlorophyll levels in lakes and "poor" fish or macroinvertebrate Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) scores for rivers and streams are used to confirm impairment. The Department proposes to add 40 waters to the list in 2012 due to high phosphorus levels that cause excessive algae or degrade the waters' aquatic community.



Harmful Blue Green Algae blooms are a result of excessive phosphorus loading to Wisconsin's waters.

Reviewing Public Data

Every two years, as part of the Integrated Report (IR), the Department solicits external water quality monitoring data from external agencies, academic institutions, and trained volunteers. If water quality monitoring data are received by the Department during this solicitation period, the information is evaluated for quality assurance and may be used to aid in assessing the health of Wisconsin's waters. For the 2012 IR, 10 different entities submitted data. Quality assured data were evaluated from the following groups:

- Alliance for the Great Lakes (Lake Michigan Beaches)
- Centerville Cares (Fischer Creek and Point Creek)
- Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (Milwaukee River and its urban tributaries)
- North Temperate Lakes Long Term Ecological Research Program (Madison area lakes)
- Silver Lake Management District (Big Silver Lake)
- Wisconsin Resources Protection Council (Stream C, tributary of Flambeau River)

A summary of the evaluated data for the 2012 IR can be found on the DNR's Impaired Waters website (see below).

2012 Highlights

The existing Impaired Waters List includes more than 700 rivers, streams and lakes. In 2012, updates include 32 *new* waters to the list. The primary pollutants are mercury, total phosphorus and total suspended solids. Three streams are being proposed for delisting because they have been successfully restored: German Valley Branch in Dane County and Eagle and Joos Valley Creeks in Buffalo County.

In addition, due to new beach listing methodology, 21 beaches are proposed to be removed and 5 beaches will be added to the list based on beach sample *E. coli* concentrations.

People interested in learning more about the health of Wisconsin's waters can watch an on-line webinar, January 5th, 2011. This will be recorded and available on the impaired waters website below.



Above photo: Brunsweler River Macroinvertebrate Sampling

Since 2002, the Bad River Watershed Association volunteers have collected 15-20 macroinvertebrate and chemistry samples each spring and fall to monitor water quality in the Bad River Watershed.

