

Water Challenges

Wisconsin's made good progress in cleaning up its lakes and rivers and protecting its groundwater and wetlands. But the work is not done. Some key challenges facing Wisconsin waters are:

- **Runoff**

Polluted runoff is the greatest remaining threat to Wisconsin waters. Forty-four percent of Wisconsin's river miles and 61 percent of our lake acreage no longer fully support fish and other aquatic life due to this degradation. Controlling runoff requires everyone's individual commitment at home, work and play. Learn more about runoff at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/nps/index.htm>.

- **Invasive Species**

More than 140 invasive aquatic plants, fish, invertebrates, algae and pathogens have entered the Great Lakes since the early 1800s. Many of them have been accidentally transported to inland lakes by boaters and are disrupting ecosystems, recreation and local economies. Learn more about invasives at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/invasives/>.

- **Mercury**

Mercury emissions, largely from the burning of fossil fuels, are contaminating Wisconsin waters and have triggered a statewide fish consumption advisory. Learn more about mercury in the environment at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/mercury/>.

- **Water Management**

Growing demand for groundwater is depleting aquifers in some areas, raising concerns about the potential impacts on public health and surface water resources. Learn more about Wisconsin groundwater quantity concerns in this report: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/gw/GW-QUANTITY.PDF>

- **Water Access and User conflicts**

Recreational user conflicts are a major issue as Wisconsin lakes get more developed and as the number of people, boats and other craft increase. Opposing viewpoints meet at the waterfront. Some want lakes to be a natural place of solitude, tranquillity and natural beauty; others see the water as a place to test limits, take a break from monotony and have fun with friends.

- **Shorelands and Wetlands**

Shoreland building increased 216 percent between 1965 and 1995 and continues today. Riparian and wetland habitats are dwindling as weekend cabins make way for year-round homes and shorelines are "cleaned up." Elimination of such habitat can harm water quality, fish and wildlife populations, and natural scenic beauty. Learn more about shoreland management at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/title.htm>.

- **Infrastructure and Staffing Needs**

Adequate funding and staffing at all levels of government are crucial to maintain Wisconsin's national leadership position in natural resource protection and the high quality of life Wisconsin residents and visitors expect. For example, implementing new rules to reduce polluted runoff from cities, construction sites, farms and roads will require a substantial commitment of public and private dollars. The cost to install runoff controls on existing farms is estimated to be \$57 million

annually over 10 years, and the rules can't be enforced against farmers unless the government has offered to pay at least 70 percent of their cost for installing the controls. The cost to state and local governments, individual landowners, and developers for installing runoff controls is expected to range from \$30 million annually in the rules' early stages to more than \$90 million per year in later stages.