



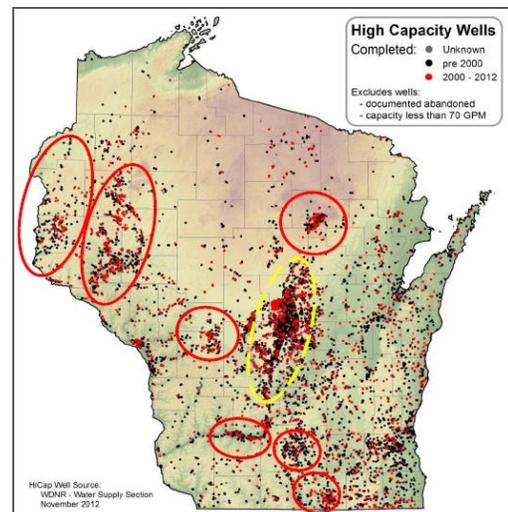
We need to find a balance to protect our waters

The Central Sands Water Action Coalition (CSWAC) is dedicated to finding ways to meet the needs of all water users, including agricultural, without any one or more users exploiting the rights of others. The waters of Wisconsin belong to all the people of the state, and not to any specific group or groups at the expense of others.

Waters of the State of Wisconsin are being pumped from the ground by agricultural, dairy and mining industries at a rate greater than the replenishment rate from natural sources. This behavior is in direct conflict with the Wisconsin Public Trust Doctrine, which declares that navigable waters flowing into the Mississippi and St Lawrence rivers shall be common water highways and forever free. This Public Trust Doctrine was adopted in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and embedded in Wisconsin's constitution in 1848. The constitution declares that the State is trustee of waters of the state and is required to care for, manage, improve and protect the waters for the benefit of all citizens.

For many decades the Wisconsin Public Trust Doctrine guided the fair use of water among residents, municipalities, family farmers, boaters, anglers, hunters and others, all of whom had an interest in conserving and protecting water resources for the benefit of all. In the 1960s, however, this fair use doctrine began to erode as small family farms were bought out and conjoined into large corporate farms, massive mega-dairies were established as confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), large swaths of land were deforested to provide additional farmland, and mining activities were expanded under the control of out-of-state corporations. In support of expanded agricultural and mining operations, high-capacity wells, each capable of delivering 100,000 gallons of water per day, have been, and continue to be, drilled across the state.

In the Central Sands area of central Wisconsin (Wood, Portage, Marathon, Adams, Marquette, Waupaca and Waushara counties), the number of high capacity wells has increased ten-fold (250 to 2500 wells) from 1960 to 2015. The authority of the state's Department of Natural Resources to exercise control over this expansion and its impact on the region's waters and residents has been diminished by the state's attorney general's opinion that the cumulative impact of wells is outside the jurisdiction of the department, and will be further diminished by the proposed transfer of the approval process for CAFOs from the Department of Natural Resources to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.



High capacity wells in Wisconsin as of 2012. The red circles denote “hot spots”. The yellow circle identifies the Central Sands Region.

Due to accelerated use of water by corporate farms and mega-dairies in the Central Sands region, a few lakes have disappeared and several others have experienced receding shorelines, streams such as the Little Plover River have periods of reduced or no flow, and many domestic wells have dried up. Examples of problems created by high capacity wells in the Central Sands region include the following:

Fred and Jan Koch live on Pine Lake in eastern Waushara County on a lot purchased by Jan's parents in 1949. A cabin was built on the lot the following year, which over time has been expanded into a small but comfortable home. Many of the cottages and homes on Pine Lake have a history similar to the Koch's. Unfortunately, the water level in the lake is now 4 feet below its level in the late 1980s, similar to decreases experienced in three nearby lakes. The Koch's informal analysis reveals a correlation between water levels in their lake and the number of high-capacity wells pumping water for agricultural use. Their analysis is validated by several scientific studies and models created between 1976 and 2016 that predict the effects of high-capacity wells on surface waters.

Monica and Dan Trudell live outside of Plainfield in Waushara County. In 2007 they noticed a drop in water pressure caused by their domestic well going dry, undoubtedly due to water extraction from several high-capacity wells in the vicinity. The Trudells were forced to drill a new well at a cost of \$7000. They were not the only persons affected - their next door neighbor also had to drill a new well, as did several other homeowners in the vicinity. Since there are 850,000 domestic wells in Wisconsin supplying drinking water to families, the cost to families would be substantial if a fraction of these wells dried up because of high-capacity pumping.



Huron Lake near Plainfield. Note where the trees and docks are showing where water levels used to be. This lake supports the cottages of visitors from out of the area who support the tourist economy and tax base.

CSWAC is one of several organizations formed to restore the guidance of the Wisconsin Public Trust Doctrine in the allocation of water use among competing interests. CSWAC is staking its opposition to proposed Senate Bill 76/Assembly Bill 105 which accords certain rights in perpetuity to owners of high-capacity wells, without adequate accountability and oversight and approval by any regulatory authority. Even driver's licenses must be reviewed and renewed periodically. Water pumping by high-capacity wells should receive no less oversight. These bills allow the current problems to continue rather than addressing the problems by finding a solution that balances the needs for all water users.

The Central Sands Water Action Coalition is a membership organization of 65 lake associations, lake districts, and conservation groups representing more than 32,000 members and their families. This statement is provided by CSWAC in recognition of National Groundwater Awareness Week.