

Toxic PFAS Threat Grows

Written by Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Ryan Billingham

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/metallic-sulfide-mining-runoff-s5.jpg>



Despite mounting evidence linking PFAS to a range of negative health effects including cancer, liver damage, decreased fertility, and increased risk of asthma and thyroid disease, polluters try to minimize it.

MADISON – On Monday, the [city of Rhinelander shut down one of its municipal wells](#) after testing indicated the presence of perfluorinated compounds, commonly known as PFAS.

There is mounting evidence linking PFAS to a range of negative health effects including cancer, liver damage, decreased fertility, and increased risk of asthma and thyroid disease.

While the city has issued assurances the water is safe and that the well was only one of many that combine to service homes, residents are beginning to take notice and demand action.

Rhinelander is the latest of a growing number of communities across Wisconsin beset by this emerging pollutant, including Marinette, where Tyco Fire Products spread toxic sludge on more than 3,500 acres of farm fields between 1996 and 2017.

This week, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) asked 125 municipalities to begin

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voluntarily testing for PFAS. The announcement, along with bipartisan proposals to rid Wisconsin's drinking water of these chemicals, has whipped Wisconsin's big polluters into a frenzy of misdirection and half-truths.

Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, the state's largest business organization and one of the biggest spenders on outside electioneering activities and lobbying, issued an irresponsible, hyperbolic statement decrying common sense solutions – like testing and remediation – designed to protect people from PFAS.



In league with the so-called "Water Quality Coalition" – a front group made up of polluters and their enablers – WMC claims that practical steps aimed at protecting people from PFAS will "devastate Wisconsin's economy" and minimizes the science that links the chemicals to health problems.

Currently, there are no state or federal guidelines on PFAS in drinking water. The steps Wisconsin is taking to both prevent and protect people from toxic drinking water are similar to those other states have adopted, and are modern, sensible, and address this growing problem robustly. They will not destroy the state's economy – they will protect the state's people.

"Once these toxins are out in the world, they do not go away," said Kerry Schumann, executive director of Wisconsin Conservation Voters. "Polluters and the politicians who have enabled them for years are beginning to see yet more evidence that their actions have serious consequences. Unfortunately, it's their constituents who bear the cost."

Schumann urged legislators to support the DNR's effort to set new PFAS standards and [pass](#)

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[SB 302/AB 321](#)

to create a comprehensive framework to address this threat to public health.

[According to the U.S. EPA](#) , other health effects of PFAS include increased risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension, high cholesterol, liver damage, thyroid disease, asthma, fertility problems, cancer, and decreased responses to vaccines.

Rhinelanders sit in Sen. Tom Tiffany's district. Tiffany has relied heavily on campaign contributions from polluters. [WMC has paid Tiffany a total of \\$18,780.](#) In return, Tiffany has continually enabled the dirtiest industries in the state, and has openly advocated for policies that leave Wisconsinites vulnerable to toxic pollution.

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