

Blue Jean Nation "Casualties mount in the water wars"

Written by Mike McCabe, Blue Jean Nation

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Wisconsin sits on the greatest natural resource left in the world, clean fresh water, but the lawmakers who currently control the Capitol allow a privileged few to take as much water as they want and pollute as much as they want, even if it makes us sick.

ALTOONA, WI - Water is the new oil. Plenty of old skirmishes — both political and military — broke out around the world over oil. Water will be the cause of more and more new ones.

Pressure to [divert water from the Great Lakes](#) is intensifying. The mighty Colorado River is being siphoned to irrigate cropland and supply thirsty cities from Denver to Phoenix to the point where it now [runs dry](#) at its end, no longer reaching the ocean at the Gulf of California as it did for millions of years.



Toxic tap water produced human tragedy and a white-hot media spotlight in [Flint, Michigan](#) . Far less attention has been paid to the fact that [excessive lead levels](#) are found in almost 2,000 water systems across America, including more than 80 communities in Wisconsin. Not many people know that the incidence of [lead poisoning of children](#) in Wisconsin is almost exactly the same as the rate found in Flint. Milwaukee's lead poisoning rate is nearly double Flint's.

Wisconsin is one of the most water-rich states in the nation. Yet the state's [groundwater is imperiled](#) . Lakes and streams are [drying up](#) because of an unchecked proliferation of high-capacity wells for massive animal feedlots and large-scale crop irrigation. Water quality protections have been stripped away due to [politicized resource management](#)

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, resulting in indiscriminate manure spreading by factory farming operations that produces [contaminated](#) drinking water in places like Kewaunee County.

It boggles the mind that lawmakers who currently control the Capitol are responding to all of this with efforts to further weaken water protections and [make it even easier](#) to get permission to drill high-capacity wells. And it's hard not to notice that the wealthy interests who want to do all the drilling have been showering large political donations on the [governor](#) and [state legislators](#).

Here we have a privileged few being allowed to take as much water as they want, even if it makes lakes and streams and neighbors' wells dry up. We have a politically connected few being allowed to pollute as much as they want, even if it makes others sick.

That our government is no longer adequately protecting everyone's right to clean drinking water is a telltale sign of how government has been captured by powerful interests. That politicians are allowing a few big industries to hog all the water or to poison it for others is a measure of how sick our democracy has become.

Oil and water don't mix, but they do have a lot in common. Both are precious natural resources and both have a way of bringing out the worst in us. Both inspire greed, and both can corrupt. As the water wars escalate, the question is whether greed will govern us or will we summon the wisdom and resolve to make sure what government does when it comes to water is done for the good of the whole of society.

— *Mike McCabe*