

PFAS Overview – Town of Stella & Surrounding Areas

Background

- PFAS contamination identified in the Town of Stella, WI.
- DNR coordinating a separate meeting with Moen Lake homeowners.
- Expanded monitoring now includes multiple Oneida County townships.

DNR – Drinking Water & Groundwater (Mark P.)

- **Initial Sampling**
 - First sample: July 2022.
 - October 2022: 20 additional wells tested → 18 exceeded DHS recommendations.
- **Expanded Sampling**
 - 3-mile radius around Stella and part of Sunset Lake.
 - Ongoing effort with DNR & US EPA in **Crescent, Newbold, Pelican, Pine Lake, Sugar Camp** (similar land use).
 - Homeowners in expanded areas will receive letters from DNR.
- **Well Testing Results** (as of June 20, 2025)
 - 241 wells tested (in/outside Stella).
 - 88 above DHS guidelines (≥ 20 ppt).
 - Feb 19, 2025: Revised advisories → 14 additional wells.
 - Current status:
 - 85 wells: health advisories.
 - 39 wells: below DHS recommendations but still PFAS detected.
 - 114 wells: non-detects.
- **Key Notes**
 - Shallower wells show more risk due to PFAS characteristics.
- **Resources for Well Owners**
 - DNR Well Recommendations.
 - **Well Compensation Grant Program:**
 - 29 awards issued: 25 replacement wells, 4 treatment systems.
 - Treatment options: Reverse osmosis, Ion exchange, Granulated activated charcoal (most common in Stella).
 - 11 wells showed significant PFAS reduction, 3 required additional secondary treatment.

DNR – Waste Program (Fred Hegeman)

- PFAS linked to industrial sludge applied from paper mills.
- **Legacy contamination** – occurred before PFAS regulations/testing.
- Interim sludge management strategy developed for municipalities.
- Ongoing learning about facility emissions and PFAS sources.

EPA

- Determining site eligibility and responsible parties.
- In Fall 2025 and early 2026, will collect environmental samples in addition to those already collected.
- Formal designation determination expected by **2027**.
- Long process, can take years, not months

DNR – Remediation

- **Sept 26, 2025:** DNR issued 2 responsibility letters.
- Documentation available on **BRRTS website** (includes EPA site inspection report).
- Cleanup follows **NR 700 process** (practical remediation steps).
- **Landowners, farmers, and residents will NOT be pursued** for PFAS contamination.

DHS – Health & PFAS Overview

- **Health Effects:**
 - Elevated cholesterol.
 - Decreased birth weights.
 - Pregnancy high blood pressure.
 - Some compounds linked to liver damage, reduced vaccine immune response.
 - Some PFAS classified as carcinogens.
 - PFOA and PFOS are most studied.
- PFAS are synthetic – not naturally occurring.
- **Regulatory Actions**
 - Standards developed for 6 compounds (20 ppt PFOA/PFOS).
 - Updated health advisory levels → 4 ppt.
 - Hazard index approach explained.
 - Groundwater health guideline = 4 ppt.

Fish & Deer Advisories

- **Fish:** Moen Chain, Snowden Lake, Sunset Lake, Starks Creek.
- **Deer:** Do not eat deer liver; limit muscle meat to 1 meal/month within 5-mile radius.

Blood Testing (ATSDR Guidance)

- **Benefits:** Compares to national levels, recognition of possible effects, reassurance.
- **Limitations:** Cannot predict outcomes, expensive, different labs give different results.
- **DHS Position:** Not recommended at state level; best used in large studies.
- Tools:
 - **Blood Level Estimation Tool** (links groundwater → blood level estimates).
 - **Clinical Management Tool** for providers.

Reducing PFAS Exposure

- Garden: Avoid using contaminated water for produce.
- Recreate safely: Limit ingestion of water, not absorbed easily through skin.
- Home: Frequent cleaning/dusting.
- Diet: Limit fish/game from advisory areas.

UW–Madison (Amy) Research

- 10 years of PFAS biomonitoring in rural WI.
- Proposal to NIH for Stella-area study (pending funding).
- Study details:
 - Free PFAS blood and environmental testing (water, dust, air, produce, eggs).
 - Non-targeted PFAS also tested.
 - Testing repeated every 2 years.
 - Outcomes: PFAS effects on lipids/cholesterol (lipidomics).
 - Participants compensated, results confidential.

Community Q&A Highlights

- **Study Enrollment:** Sign-up at public meeting.
- **Lake Remediation:** No current methods proven; still developing.

- **Urinalysis in study?** Not included but possible future addition.
- **Blood Testing by Health Dept?** Not feasible; rely on research studies.
- **Who can join study?** All Stella + adjacent townships; whole households welcome.
- **Spreading Moratorium?** Not required by law currently.
- **Crop Testing (potatoes/cranberries)?** DATCP jurisdiction; limited bandwidth.
- **Moen Chain surface water:** Chosen due to groundwater flow direction.
- **Testing cost (private wells)?** ~\$350–\$400.
- **Root cause of Stella contamination?** Linked to Ahlstrom & Wausau Paper (responsible party letters issued).
- **PFAS in food chain?** Deer, fish, produce uptake confirmed; more studies needed.
- **Swimming risk?** Low (PFAS not absorbed through skin). Main concern: ingestion.
- **Future testing?** Depends on EPA funding; Stella + 5 townships included.
- **Funding:** \$125M state PFAS trust fund not yet released. Advocacy encouraged.
- **Long-term outlook:** Decades (similar to Superfund sites).
- **Fish Guidelines:** “Do not eat” level now at 40 ppb (down from 800 ppb historically).