



WATER QUALITY TASKFORCE HEARING

August 19, 2019 | Cheryl Nenn, Riverkeeper

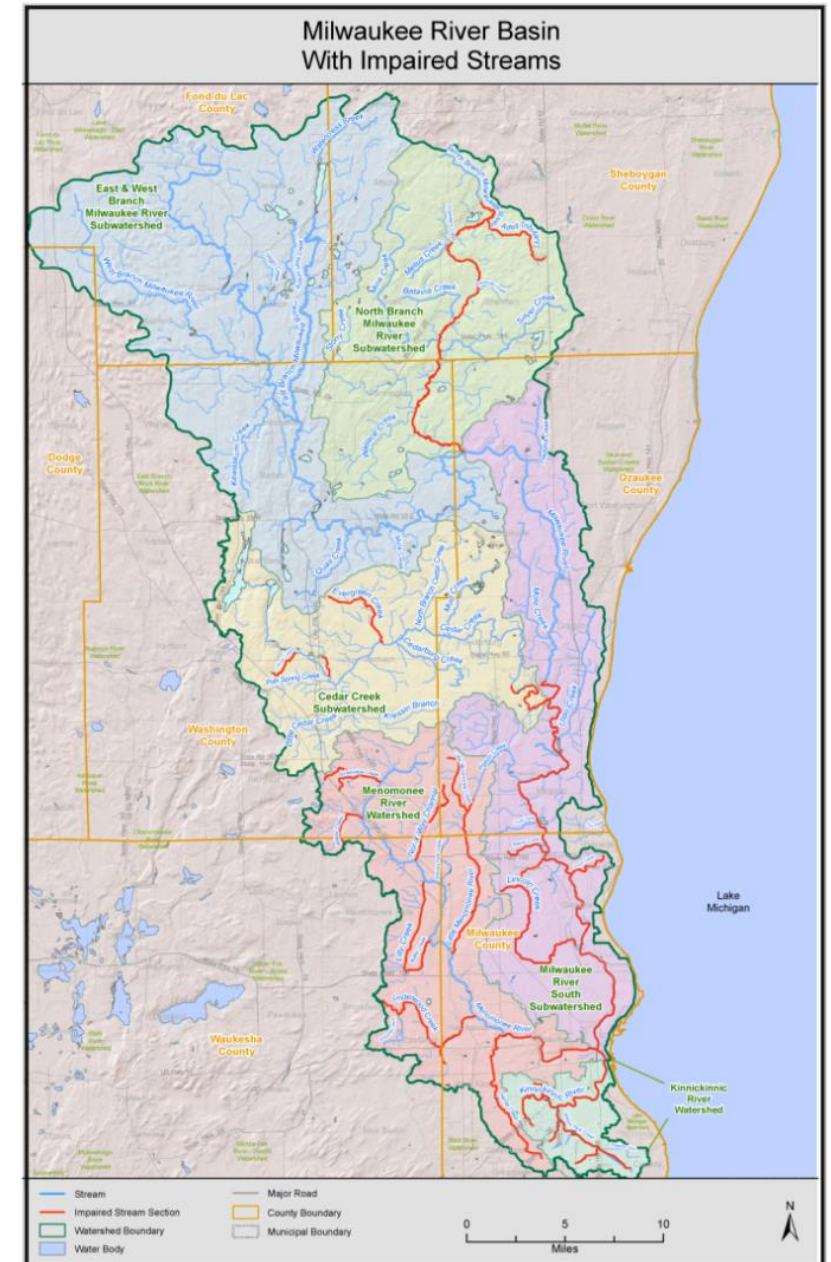


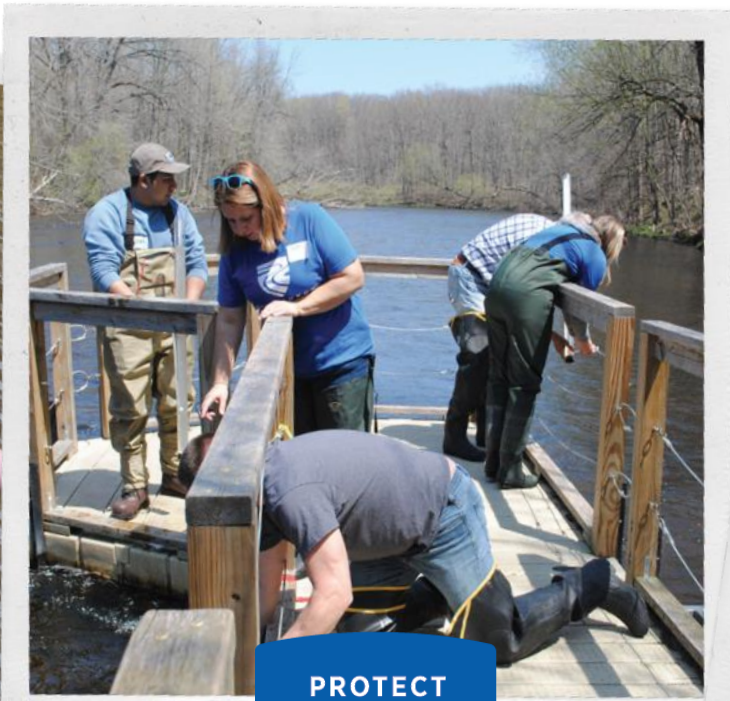
**MILWAUKEE
RIVERKEEPER®**

PROTECT | RESTORE | CONNECT | ADVOCATE



Milwaukee Riverkeeper works to protect, improve and advocate for water quality, riparian wildlife habitat, and sound land management in the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic River Watersheds.





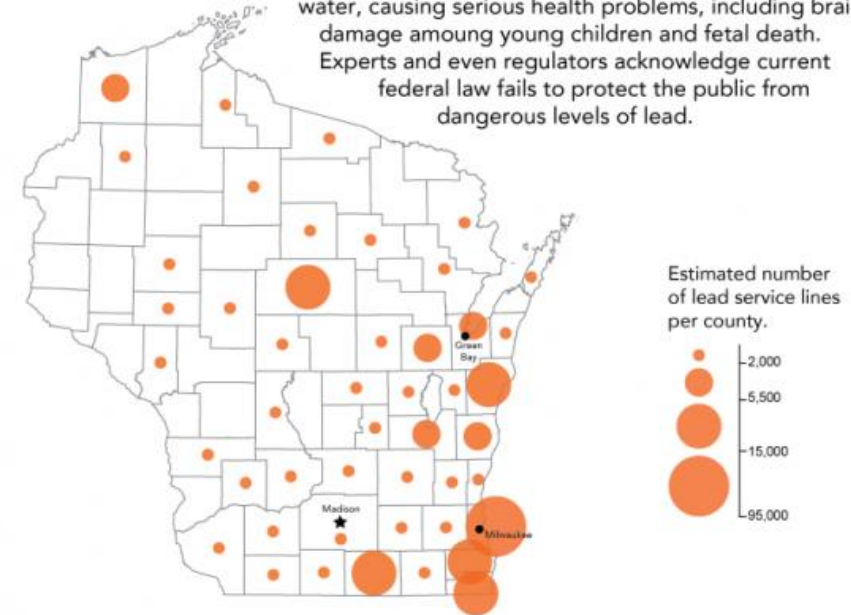
We envision a future in which people from all walks of life can enjoy the healthy waterways of the Milwaukee River Basin.

Funding and Innovative Solutions to Address Lead Crisis

- No safe amount of lead for infants and children (or adults).
- Lead is a statewide issue - it affects rural and urban communities.
- Milwaukee is severely impacted-70,000 lead laterals
- Support legislation and efforts to bond \$40M for lead service line replacement (LRB – 3764/1)
- Support legislation that provides tax credits for lead pipe abatement (LRB-0892/1)
- Support new legislation that would require lead-free certification for child care centers (LRB 1502).
- Support legislation that requires lead testing at schools (LRB 3539) and day care centers and summer camps (LRB 3566)

Dangerous lead pipes abundant in Wisconsin

Wisconsin has at least 176,000 so-called lead service lines carrying water to homes and businesses, according to a very limited EPA study. Such pipes can leach lead into drinking water, causing serious health problems, including brain damage among young children and fetal death. Experts and even regulators acknowledge current federal law fails to protect the public from dangerous levels of lead.



Top five Wisconsin counties with lead service lines

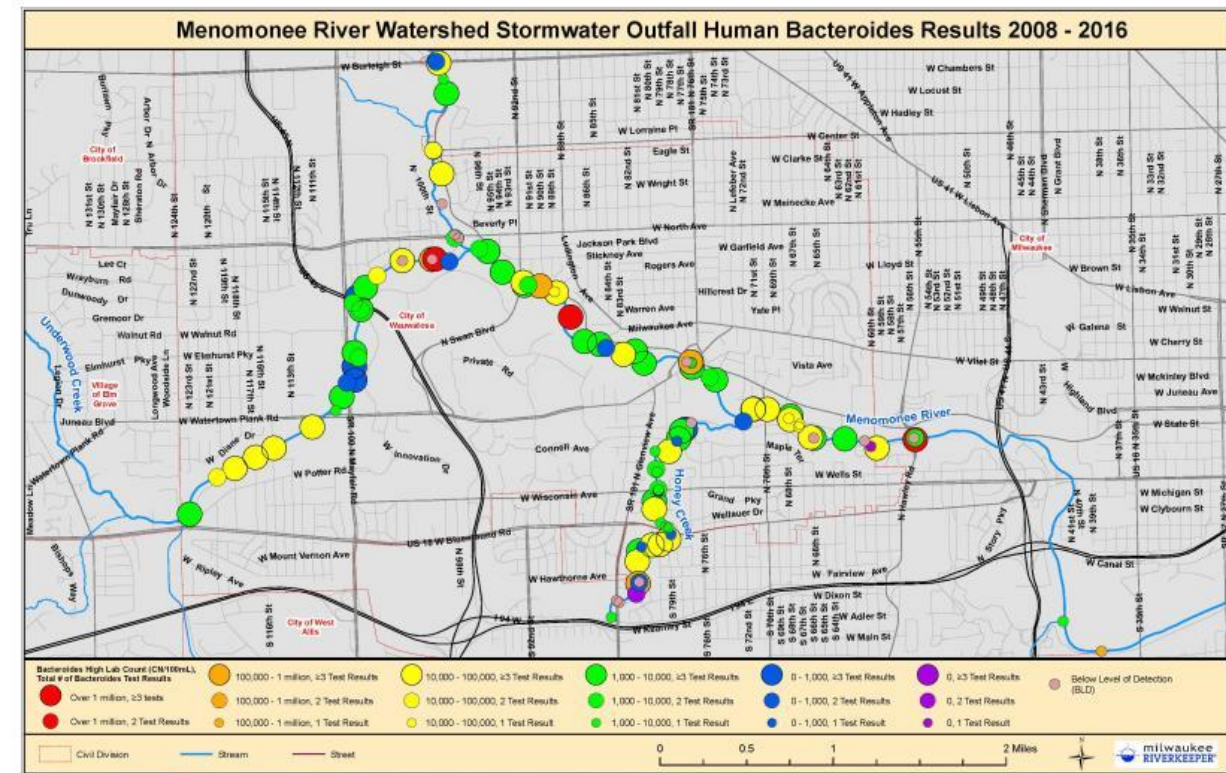


CREDIT: Reporting and data analysis, Silke Schmidt; map and chart, Katie Kowalsky, Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.

SOURCE: Miguel Del Toral, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Documentation of lead service lines in the other 25 counties could not be identified.

Innovative Financing for Water Infrastructure

- Much of our infrastructure is reaching the end of its useful life and failing—less than 1% replaced each year.
- Upgrades to grey infrastructure (e.g., sewage, stormwater pipes) and new funds/incentives for green infrastructure are needed to reduce sewage overflows, minimize flooding and protect water quality due to increasing frequency of severe storms.
- Other states—Ohio, Iowa, and Minnesota—have passed bills that have funded water projects using sales taxes, property taxes, and fees (e.g., water use, groundwater extraction, bottled water facilities).



Cleaning Up Contaminated Sediments and Leveraging Federal Funds

- The Milwaukee River Estuary Area of Concern (AOC) has been identified as priority by EPA for 2020-2024 in a Great Lakes Action Plan.
- Finished \$75M in projects to clean up KK and Milwaukee Rivers so far, but more work to be done.
- \$21M cut from State Budget to address AOCs. Need 35% State match for sediment (0% for restoration projects).
- **This is a generational opportunity** to improve water quality and fisheries, protect public health, and create economic development.
- State support is critical to success.



Funding and Better Policy Needed for Addressing Rural Groundwater Pollution and Runoff

- Need more resources to address rural well contamination and polluted runoff from manure spreading.
- Funding in budget and NR151 changes good first step. May need more tax credits tied to conservation practices and/or nitrogen fertilizer restrictions for certain fields or soils.
- Funding cuts to County Conservationists will impede progress—they are boots on the ground!
- WI is one of a few states that only requires farmers to implement best practices if cost share funds are provided. Need to reconsider this policy, while still providing incentives.
- Need to require minimum standards for conservation practices on farms.
- County staff need tools to require owners to fix, replace, or decommission failing septic tanks, especially if that tank is contaminating drinking water or surface water or a beach. Need to reconsider rules on building and overseeing these systems.



Improve Enforcement and Research

- According to Legislative Audit Bureau, there is a precipitous decline in enforcement of water quality violations in past decade.
- When laws are not enforced, people pay with polluted water, lower quality of life, and public health issues.
- One way to fund more positions is to increase permit fees (*e.g., CAFOs, groundwater users, bottled water providers, etc.*).
- PFAS found at Mitchell Airport—but likely in other areas of our watershed due to widespread sources. Additional research needed on amounts in fish and surface water, in addition to ongoing efforts to develop drinking water standards. **Must prioritize cleanup efforts!**
- Emerging contaminants are a concern. Funding needed to develop standards for groundwater and surface water contaminants. A task force or working group could help.

