

WNRB approves PFAS groundwater standards creation

By GILLIAN POMPLUN
Remediating a shortfall in oversight of drinking water quality, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) voted unanimously to approve the Scope Statement for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to develop standards for PFAS in groundwater. This action was taken at the board's meeting on December 14.

The board had previously approved standards for PFAS in municipal drinking water and surface waters that supply drinking water of 70 parts-per-trillion (ppt). The proposed standards had been co-developed by WDNR and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), with a recommended regulatory level of 20 ppt.

The 70 ppt standard was based on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) health advisory, which is not a regulatory standard. In June of 2022, EPA issued an updated health advisory for PFAS. The updated advisory levels, which are based on new science and consider lifetime exposure, indicate that some negative health effects may occur with concentrations of PFOA or PFOS in water that are near zero and below EPA's ability to detect.

In 'Statement of Scope for Board Order DG-17-22,' WDNR's James Zellmer, Acting Environmental Management Division Administrator, wrote "the objective of the proposed rule is to protect public health, given that groundwater is the primary source of drinking water throughout the state. PFAS breaks down very slowly and can accumulate in people. PFAS may cause reproductive effects such as decreased fertility and pregnancy-induced hypertension, developmental effects or delays in children including birth defects and low birth weight, increased risk of some cancers including prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers, decreased antibody response to vaccines, and increased cholesterol."

Public testimony
Prior to the board's vote, nine individuals provided testimony to the board in support of approval of the scope statement. Those included individuals representing the group SOH2O (representing citizens in Peshtigo and Marinette counties), Milwaukee Riverkeepers, Clean Wisconsin, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, and the Town of Campbell in LaCrosse County.

Tom Kilian, District 3 Alderman in the City of Wausau, where PFAS contamination of municipal water has been found, urged the board to approve the statement of scope.

"Most municipal water comes from groundwater, and we need to position the DNR to test, assess and take action," Kilian said. "Not to enact standards would be illogical, like monitoring speeders in a school zone without an enforceable speed limit."

John Robinson of Wisconsin's Greenfire also spoke in support of approval of the scope statement. He said the state must act because EPA will not enact enforceable standards for groundwater.

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Office closed Monday

Due to the Christmas holiday, the offices of the Independent-Scout newspaper will be closed on Monday, Dec. 26. We will be monitoring voicemail at 608-735-4413, and items for insertion into the newspaper can be sent to editor Charley Preusser at indnews@mwt.net, reporter Gillian Pomplun at indreporter@mwt.net, or office manager/ad sales Shary Sanders at indscout@mwt.net.



WHILE THE DOGS ENJOYED the snow last week and so did some people, others suffered through blackouts and bad roads. For better or worse, a rainstorm that changed to snow caused beauty and suffering. However, it may have been just the opening act of what is to come later this week.

Now named 'Elliot'

Powerful winter storm system is sweeping across the nation

By GILLIAN POMPLUN
Well, it seems we're going to have a real winter this year, complete with snow. The white stuff is something we've not seen that much of in the last few years, and this has contributed to drought conditions in parts of our area. Even though we have to get out the shovels and snowblowers, it's almost certainly a good thing for farmers worried about spring planting conditions.

Last week's snow and rain storms seemed like a never-ending event. No sooner did you get shoveled out, then there was MORE. The break in the middle, with warm temperatures and an inch of rain, added to the chaos and created a nasty crust of snow on the walk that only salt could attack.

But, we all woke up Friday morning to a winter wonderland. Wow! Every tree and fence was magically coated in a layer of fresh snow that had stuck to all the wet surfaces. For those who aren't fans of winter, even you have to admit that was beautiful.

Troubles to the north
It wasn't quite so beautiful for Crawford County's neighbors just to the north though. They got quite a bit more snow up there, and as of 6 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 15, about 900 Vernon Electric Co-op members were without power due to ice build up on trees and power lines.

It was definitely a moment to appreciate the snowplow drivers and linemen out battling the tough conditions to restore power and reopen safe travel conditions! As of 3:45 p.m. that afternoon, Vernon Electric had the power back on for all their members.

The Monroe County Sheriff's Department also reported dangerous roads and downed power lines. The Tomah Police Department reported that most side streets at one point had low-hanging power lines that would impede travel.

The USDA-NRCS Water and Climate Report said the storm cycle responsible for dumping mountain snow throughout the western U.S. the weekend before had continued to bring bouts of severe weather as it moved to the east. Impacts of the system included blizzards and heavy snow in the Plains and Midwest, and tornadoes in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

Now, it looks like we're lined up for another snowy and super-cold week just ahead of holiday travel. According to National Weather Service LaCrosse, we're projected to get two-to-four inches overnight on Wednesday, starting at about 1 p.m., another one-to-three inches on Thursday, another one-to-two inches Thursday night, with more snow and blowing snow into Friday.

Wind gusts on Friday are predicted at 25-29 miles-per-hour (mph), with gusts as high as 47 mph. Windy conditions will continue on Saturday, and temperatures will plunge into single-digit highs and below zero lows starting Thursday night. Potential power outages are a possibility with the heavy snow and high winds.

Hang onto your hats, keep your shovels and snowblowers handy, and don't forget to thank your snowplow driver who's out there battling the conditions to keep us all rolling and the linemen who may be called out to address any power outages!

According to weather.com, the impacts of the pre-Christmas storm will be as follows:

A major storm, named Winter Storm Elliott by The Weather Channel, could become a bomb cyclone over the Midwest later this week, and bring blizzard conditions to parts of the Great Lakes as well as high winds to the East Coast, snarling travel leading up to the holiday weekend.

Wednesday, Dec. 21
The storm will spread into the Plains as the powerful arctic cold front plunges southward. Snow could be heavy, accompanied by strong winds in parts of the central Plains and upper Midwest. Travel will become hazardous Wednesday night.

In the East, some light sleet, freezing rain or snow could develop at night from parts of western North Carolina to western Virginia and eastern West Virginia.

Thursday, Dec. 22
The storm will intensify in the Midwest with areas of heavy snow and rain changing quickly to snow as the arctic front races through. Strong winds will spread from the Plains to the Midwest and South.

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SNOW FOLLOWING RAIN painted everything white on Friday morning like this tractor in rural Soldiers Grove.

Holiday event marks

ADRC senior meal site moving to Gays Mills

By CHARLEY PREUSSER
The Aging & Disability Resource Center let more than 50 senior citizens get a sneak preview of what they have planned for 2023 in Gays Mills.

The senior meal site in the northern part of the county is switching from Desperados in Soldiers Grove to the Gays Mills Community Commerce Center, at 16381 State Highway 131.

The Crawford County ADRC hosted the holiday dinner at what will be the new meal site in Gays Mills on Wednesday, April 14.

The ham meal, with mashed potatoes and green beans and more, was cooked from scratch with fresh vegetables. The ADRC has contracted with a chef and rented a kitchen in Prairie du Chien, where all the meals will be cooked for both the Prairie du Chien and the Gays Mills sites.

The daily meals will be delivered to Kickapoo Culinary Center in the Community Commerce Center, where they will be served. Meals delivered to seniors in the northern part of the county will be loaded and delivered from that site.

The crowd of seniors at the Gays Mills event was in a good mood from the start, and a visit from Santa made everyone even happier.

Crawford County ADRC Director Roby Fuller spoke briefly to the group before the meal, explaining the changes and what the new plans at the meal site would include.

Everyone from Fuller to meal site hostess Elaine Hemmersbach seemed pretty excited about the changes to the program. The current program averages about 20 to 25 diners at the meal site, and another 25 home-delivered meals, which driver Lori Dalton will help pack up in Gays Mills and then deliver in the northern part of the county.

Fuller emphasized in her remarks that the strength of the program as envisioned, lies with the chef and the local vendor partnerships.

"We're cooking our own food," Fuller stated emphatically at one point.

For the holiday diners, it was all thumbs up. A survey focused on the night's meal showed lots of five-out-five ratings from the assembled seniors.

At one point, Fuller noted that while doing some research on the program, she learned the very first senior meal site in Crawford County was opened in Gays Mills in 1978.

Many of the planned improvements in the senior meals program were made possible by a grant from the State of Wisconsin, Fuller said.

The program is centered in Prairie du Chien at the Sharing Spaces Kitchen. Not only does it have its own chef and part-time cook, the program also employs workers with disabilities from the Opportunity Center—that's another plus.

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NICHELLE LEWIS, Royal Bank Branch Manager in Gays Mills, explains changes at the bank from the new counter used by tellers in the more open concept created in the remodeling.

At Royal Bank

Open house features changes

By AMBROSIA WOJAHN
The Royal Bank in Gays Mills held a Holiday Open House on Friday, Dec. 16. The bank invited community members to visit and warm up with coffee, local hot apple cider, and holiday cookies.

The event has been going on for four to five years. This holiday season, though, some major changes to the Gays Mills branch of the Royal Bank were recognized.

Recently, the branch was completely remodeled and updated. When customers walk in, they are immediately greeted by bank employees at the newly added island-like counter in front.

The walls are coated with a clean, soothing beige tone. The entire space has been modified to create an inviting, open concept.

The addition of an ATM machine outside the bank was also made, giving customers an option when the bank itself is closed.

The bank has welcomed in several new employees, Kaylee Fawcett and Sue Ann Allan, to the local bank. Kaylee and Sue Ann join Martha Cody and Shannon Finnell on the Royal Bank team.

In September, Royal Bank also hired Nichelle Lewis as the new branch manager in Gays Mills.

With a warm smile, Lewis took time during the recent holiday open house to explain both the changes to the branch

bank and her transition into the Gays Mills community.

After growing up in Blue River and graduating from Riverdale High School, Lewis attended UW-Platteville for business administration with an emphasis on marketing and management. She began working in banking soon afterward.

Lewis has worked at larger banks in the past, both as a universal banker at BMO Harris in Dodgeville and at Community First in Fennimore as the branch manager, before coming to Gays Mills.

"I really enjoy Gays Mills and the small-town banking atmosphere... I could never leave it," Lewis said.

The banker explained that at smaller banks, the focus is truly on the on the community and the customers.

Customers are focus
"We get to concentrate on what really benefits the customers," Lewis said.

The goal of the holiday open house was to renew the strong bond the bank has with the community and let customers enjoy the remodeled building.

"I want to invite everyone to come, see the remodel, and meet our new people," Lewis said.

So far, the changes have been well-received both by employees and customers. The fresh start is meant to strengthen the relationship between Royal Bank and Gays Mills.

For PFAS remediation

Developing standards the beginning

PFAS from Page 1

NRB board member Frederick Prehn asked Robinson how the standard would be tested for enforcement, and whether the state would focus on finding the source of the contamination?

“Enacting an enforceable standard will stimulate intervention, evaluation, addressing the contamination at the source, and prompt clean up action, regulated under the spills law,” Robinson responded.

Prehn then asked if adopting a standard would give the state authority to mandate testing of private wells?

“No,” Robinson responded. “Under NR 716 (Site Investigations), DNR is required to determine the degree and extent of contamination, and to require the party responsible for the pollution to replace contaminated wells.”

Beth Neary of the Wisconsin Environmental Health Network was the last to provide testimony.

“PFAS are the DDT of our generation,” Neary said. “The health impacts of PFAS are particularly concerning for children, and we owe them adoption of a standard.”

Question and answer

NRB board member Bill Smith asked Zellmer what the benefit of having an enforceable standard would be for private well owners?

“Again, private well owners will not be compelled to test their water if a standard is adopted, but the standard will provide them with information about what levels

of PFAS in their water are safe to consume,” Zellmer replied. “Adopting the standard will also make them eligible for assistance through the Well Compensation Program.”

NRB board member Terry Hilgenberg asked Zellmer if WDNR would collaborate with EPA on all aspects of rule development and implementation?

“Yes, we are currently, and will be, in close collaboration with EPA,” Zellmer responded. “We are currently also working with DHS to develop plans for how to help private well owners.”

Zellmer went on to say that WDNR’s work with DHS involves plans to continue with the current modes of assistance, as well as in development of long-term solutions.

“Adopting a standard will allow us to take action regarding future discharges and remediation of past discharges,” Zellmer said.

NRB board member Frederick Prehn asked about what options there are for private well owners with contaminated water.

“There is currently the option to filter water to remove PFAS, as well as bottled water,” Zellmer said. “We will learn more as we conduct more sampling about what range of options are available, and for past, current and future discharges of PFAS into the groundwater, we will be able to attempt to identify the responsible party and require them to invest in remediation.”

Prehn asked if currently available technologies would

allow PFAS to be removed from groundwater.

“If we can identify the source, we can require the responsible party to remove any hotspots,” Zellmer said. “Remediation requires treatment with activated carbon filters, well replacement through the Well Compensation Program, and supplying bottled water.”

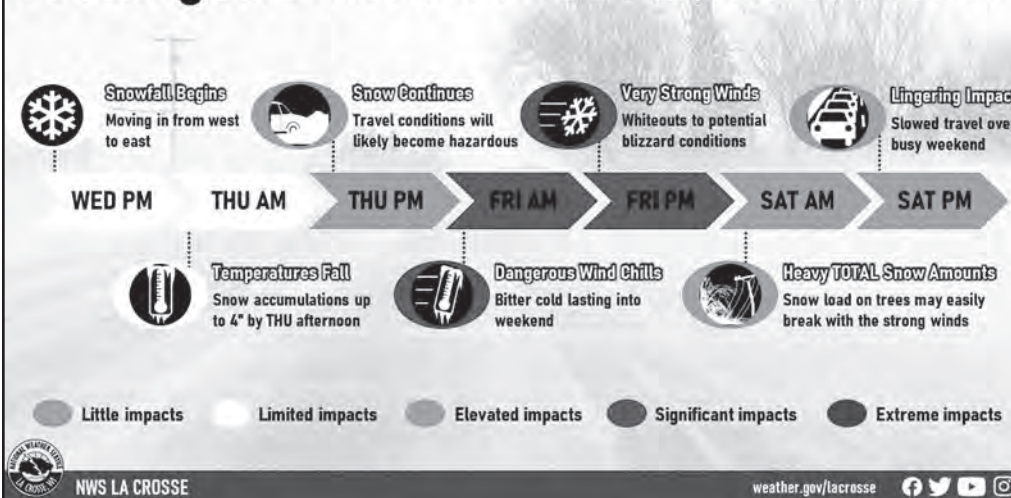
NRB board member Marcy West asked what the timeline on rule development would be, and what EPA’s timeline for updated health advisories is.

“EPA intends to produce a draft by the end of 2022, and finalize it in 2023,” Zellmer said. “This timeline aligns very well with WDNR’s timeline for rule development.”

NRB board chairman Gregory Kazmierski commented that all the people that had spoken in support of standards development had spoken about “protections” – I don’t see any protections in this – are we overselling what we can accomplish through standards development? Can we actually address legacy PFAS pollution?

“It is very challenging to remove legacy pollution from groundwater, and our options are to cut it off at the source and provide filtration or an alternative source of water such as connecting to municipal water or a neighboring well,” Zellmer explained. “Adopting the standard will allow WDNR to evaluate the extent of the problem, and the good news is that the science of remediation is evolving.”

Prolonged Period of Hazardous Weather



Pre-Christmas storm merits attention

STORM from Page 1

Expect dangerous travel conditions from the central Plains to the upper Mississippi Valley, with blizzard conditions in some areas.

In the interior Northeast, freezing rain, sleet and snow

Citizens asked to Badger the FCC

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC or Commission) is encouraging individuals to identify inaccuracies and challenge the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) draft of the national broadband map by January 13, 2023. Since unveiling the pre-production draft of the new broadband in November, the FCC has called on consumers, state, local and Tribal government entities, and other stakeholders can help verify the accuracy of the data.

The new map is the most granular and up-to-date federal map of where broadband is and is not available across the country. The FCC’s new broadband maps will be used to determine the allocation of Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) funds that Wisconsin will receive to build broadband infrastructure.

The new map is available at <https://broadbandmap.gov/>. Residents can type their address and check the map. If the information is inaccurate, residents can submit a challenge by filling out the Availability Challenge Form. Instructions are available at How to Submit an Availability Challenge on the FCC website.

The FCC recently published a National Broadband Map Outreach Toolkit with materials that are available for public use. The PSC’s Wisconsin Broadband Office is available to answer questions and share resources to assist in challenging the FCC map PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov.

early in the day will transition to rain in most areas by Thursday night, with the exception of northern New England and upstate New York. Rain is expected along the Interstate 95 corridor.

Friday and beyond

The storm will reach its peak intensity with high winds, heavy snow and potential blizzard conditions in parts of the Great Lakes, from Wisconsin and Illinois to parts of Michigan, Indiana and Ohio.

High winds are also expected over much of the East as far south as Georgia and the Carolinas.

By Saturday, the storm will move rather quickly into eastern Canada, but strong winds will likely linger in much of the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley. Those winds blowing over the Great Lakes could produce bands of heavy lake-effect snow that could last into Christmas Day in the eastern Great Lakes.

While the snow forecast has uncertainty, the wind forecast is more straightforward.

As mentioned earlier, winds will increase in the Plains beginning Wednesday night into Thursday, but the strongest winds from this storm are expected Friday into early Saturday in the Midwest and along the East Coast from New England to Georgia Friday.

These winds will be capable of downing tree limbs and knocking out power, particularly where they combine with heavy snow accumula-

tions weighing down trees and power lines in the Midwest and East. Plan ahead now for the potential for power outages in cold weather if you live in these areas.

Bomb Cyclone

We mentioned earlier that this winter storm could become a bomb cyclone.

As a rule of thumb, meteorologists refer to a strengthening low as ‘bombing out’ or undergoing bombogenesis if its minimum surface pressure drops by at least 24 millibars in 24 hours or less, though that criteria also depends on a storm’s latitude.

Meteorologists frequently discuss pressure in terms of millibars, rather than inches of mercury.

The reason this all matters beyond just a weather geeky statistic is the lower the pressure in a storm, the more intense it is. And the greater difference in pressure over an area, the stronger the winds.

Winter Storm Elliott has the potential to plunge to a pressure that could threaten December low-pressure records in the Great Lakes, according to data compiled by NOAA Weather Prediction Center meteorologist David Roth.

For now, the latest ensemble model forecasts do not bring Elliott’s low to the level of what is considered the all-time low-pressure record – the so-called ‘Cleveland Superbomb’ of late January 1978.

Nevertheless, this could be one of the heaviest snowstorms in years for some.

ADRC emphasizes

Scratch cooking focal point of meal program

MEALS from Page 1

“The other part that’s neat is using people from the Opportunity Center allows those individuals to learn kitchen skills,” the ADRC Director explained.

The key to the program now is scratch cooking, according to Fuller. There will be no instant mashed potatoes and no canned vegetables.

“We will source and use as much as we can locally,” Fuller said. “You may have to give us a little grace time at the beginning to get rolling, but we are starting in January.”

One meal of the month will be unique. Mike Valley, a local commercial fisherman, has pledged to donate enough Mississippi River catfish to

provide the meal sites with one meal every month.

Meals are available to anyone aged 60 or over for the suggested donation of \$4. Anyone participating must fill out an application once a year supplying some basic information. It is also necessary to make a reservation for a meal at least 24-hours in advance with the site hostess. That means calling 608-412-1082.

Meal sites are open Monday through Friday, at 11:30 a.m., with the exception of holidays.

While Fuller and others involved with the ADRC meal site are excited to see the program expand, they emphasized that Desperados in Soldiers Grove had always been a great partner and a fine meal site.

“We have nothing but great things to say about working with them,” Fuller said of Desperados. “Moving to the new meal site had nothing to do with our working relationship with them, which was excellent, or the quality of product being served. We’re moving because we’re changing the program. Desperados always does a great job.”

The first meal to be served at the Gays Mills Community Commerce Center is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023. The meal on opening day will be a chicken stir fry over brown rice, with peppers and onions, snap peas and broccoli, with a chocolate chip cookie and grapes.

See you there—and don’t forget to call at least 24 hours in advance to make your reservation.

Nature looks dead in winter because her life is gathered into her heart. She withers the plant down to the root that she may grow it up again fairer and stronger. She calls her family together within her inmost home to prepare them for being scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.

Hugh Macmillan, 1871

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