



## SARAH GODLEWSKI'S PLAN TO MAKE WISCONSIN'S WATER SAFE

Wisconsinites deserve to have the peace of mind to know that what comes out of their tap is safe enough to drink, cook with, and bathe in. Everyone deserves safe, clean drinking water. Full stop.

Wisconsin is also a freshwater state, from the Great Lakes in the north and on the east to the Mississippi river along the west, and every lake, stream, and river in between, and these waterways must be protected. That's why Sarah has a plan to keep Wisconsin's drinking water safe and protect our waterways. It starts with getting lead and harmful chemicals out of our water and focuses on protecting our water supply so that it is safe for drinking, fish and wildlife, and recreation.

In the U.S. Senate, Sarah will fight for Wisconsinites and safeguard our drinking water. But she won't stop there, Sarah will work to hold the big corporations accountable that continue to violate their civic, legal, and moral duty to act as good citizens and neighbors.

Sarah's plan focuses on:

- Removing lead from our water
- Keeping PFAS and nitrates out of our water
- Protecting our Great Lakes
- Safeguarding our communities from erosion's harmful impacts

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### I. REMOVING LEAD FROM OUR WATER

**We must replace Wisconsin's lead laterals – and do so with more urgency.**

Lead exposure from water service lines, commonly referred to as lead laterals, is poisoning families and harming children's development throughout the state.

Cases of lead poisoning from lead laterals are densely concentrated in the [southeastern](#) portion of Wisconsin, where nearly 90% of the state's Black population lives. Milwaukee – where [40 percent](#) of the homes host lead laterals – continues to maintain a [higher blood lead level](#) allowance than the CDC's most recent guidance. Wisconsin has [double the national rate](#) for child lead poisoning and [more than 100 cities, towns and villages throughout the state](#) need their lead laterals replaced.

In 2018, 4.5% of Wisconsin's children under age 6 [were considered lead poisoned](#). Exposure to lead-infused water is particularly harmful for kids, risking damage to the developing brain and nervous system, as well as negative effects on behavior and intelligence.

While the bipartisan federal infrastructure law provides \$48 million to Wisconsin this year, it is estimated it will cost [\\$800 million](#) to replace all the lead pipes in Milwaukee alone. The infrastructure law provided a good start, but it's essential we do more – and fast. In the U.S. Senate, Sarah will work to **secure more federal funding to replace lead laterals** and ensure quick distribution of resources

Funding lead lateral replacement projects is only one part of the solution - we must also ensure that Wisconsin has the skilled labor available to tackle the replacement work. Sarah will make sure that state and local governments have access to a trained union workforce by **securing additional federal resources targeted at [workforce development](#)** for training prospective workers on the technical work required to safely and efficiently replace impacted service lines.

## II. KEEPING DANGEROUS CONTAMINANTS OUT OF OUR WATER

Communities big and small across Wisconsin are grappling with nitrate contamination of critical resources like groundwater and soil from farm runoff and leaking septic tanks, as well as the growing presence of toxic “forever chemicals” like PFAS, or per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. The federal government must move more quickly to provide resources and work with these communities to help them recover.

### Keeping PFAS at Bay

PFAS pollution in our water has wreaked havoc across Wisconsin – from Milwaukee to Madison, Eau Claire to Manitowoc, French Island, Wausau, Peshtigo, and everywhere in between. Farmers face an increasing risk of [lost revenue](#) because of PFAS contamination in crops and animal products.

Exposure to PFAS has been linked to a host of [serious health problems](#), ranging from liver and kidney issues, to cancer and tumors, to increased cholesterol levels and thyroid hormone disruption. When pregnant mothers are exposed to PFAS chemicals, their babies face [an increased risk of abnormal growth in utero](#), which can lead to low birth weight and later childhood problems.

In the Senate, Sarah will fight to **ban the future use of PFAS and similar chemicals** altogether to protect our water and wildlife. As a first step, Sarah will work on getting the PFAS Action Act of 2021 across the finish line in the Senate, so that **PFOA and PFOS are finally designated as hazardous substances** by the EPA and they **set a national drinking water standard** for PFOA and PFOS.

Sarah will work to ensure programs like the [EPA's Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds \(SRFs\)](#) receive the resources needed to invest in **drinking water and wastewater treatment infrastructure projects**, which are vital for Wisconsin to properly address both lead and PFAS contamination issues.

For too long, giant corporations like [Johnson Controls and its subsidiary Tyco](#) have gotten away with putting profits over public health, and Sarah is committed to ending their malfeasance. In the U.S. Senate, Sarah will press for reforms to ensure that **those responsible for PFAS contamination in our communities are made to pay for remediation efforts** and [individuals](#)

[who were significantly exposed are able to access regular monitoring](#) for potential harm – at no cost.

## **Supporting Tribal Efforts to Prevent PFAS Contamination of Fish and Wildlife**

Getting PFAS out of our water is a health issue as well as an environmental justice issue for our tribal communities because fish are often a critical subsistence food source. And as Valoree Gagnon, director of university-Indigenous partnerships at Michigan Technological University's Great Lakes Research Center, [observed](#), “when you're asked to lower fish consumption, you're not just losing meals, you're losing all those practices associated with fishing: sharing knowledge and passing that to future generations. It changes all kinds of social dynamics.”

In Wisconsin, there are [141](#) known and potential sources of PFAS water contamination within five miles of tribal lands. In 2021, the state was forced to issue a first-of-its-kind [advisory](#) for PFAS levels in Great Lakes fish that recommended eating no more than one meal of Lake Superior rainbow smelt per month, often caught by tribes and local anglers in the spring. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has issued additional [advisories](#) for brook and brown trout in Silver Creek in Monroe County, rock bass in the bay of Green Bay, among others.

Sarah supports the efforts of groups like the Tribal PFAS Working Group as they advise the EPA on tribal priorities for PFAS response. To help tribal communities, it's critical that the federal government **partner and consult with tribal governments** to provide the needed federal resources to assist tribes with **monitoring technology, testing, and PFAS disposal and remediation on tribal lands**.

Sarah also supports efforts to **streamline the procedural requirements for remediation approval between the tribes and federal government**, which could help reduce the long timelines for cleanup.

## **Reducing the Prevalence of Nitrates**

Nitrate is one of the most common groundwater contaminants in Wisconsin, with [as many as 300 public water systems](#) exceeding recommended nitrate standards. High nitrate levels in water [have been linked to](#) blue baby syndrome, birth defects, thyroid disease and colon cancer. [Wisconsin is among 10 states](#) where nitrate contamination is only getting worse.

To address nitrate runoff in our water, **Sarah will work to form a partnership between farmers and the federal government**. Sarah knows that farmers are great stewards of our land and it's important to meet with, learn from, and use their expertise in formulating solutions. She will work with key stakeholder groups to ensure manure spreading practices are safe for our water and don't detrimentally impact our farmers' efforts.

She will work with farmers to **establish attainable standards that would require farms to take steps to prevent nitrogen runoff** and target areas that lead to the most pollution, like manure spreading in areas with soils that are sensitive to groundwater contamination.

**Sarah will also work to create incentives for farmers who adopt conservation practices that reduce contaminations of our waterways and wells.** She knows we have to support farmers

with funding to cost-share in order to encourage proper implementation of the standards farmers should be following to preserve soil health and reduce pollution.

Finally, Sarah supports smart state and local efforts like the bill [recently signed into law in Wisconsin](#) to establish a pilot program that provides grants to farmers implementing new practices for nitrogen optimization, as well as a crop insurance premium rebate to farmers who plant cover crops, which are crops that are used to improve soil health and reduce infiltration and runoff.

### III. PROTECTING THE GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes are a key economic, environmental and recreational resource for all Wisconsinites. With more than 800 miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan and Lake Superior, Wisconsin boasts a \$9.4 billion annual recreational boating industry and supports more than \$7 billion in cargo shipping through our ports. It's critical for us to protect them for generations to come.

Sarah believes that to truly protect the Great Lakes, we must **create a federally funded Great Lakes Authority**. A Great Lakes Authority would help finance clean energy projects and infrastructure projects, restore and protect the Great Lakes, and promote economic development and job creation.

Protecting our Great Lakes also includes ensuring that Wisconsin water remains in Wisconsin. That means **fighting back against companies trying to take advantage of the water supply within Lake Superior's watershed** by [bottling](#) and profiting off of a protected local water supply.

Further, Sarah will support legislation, like the [Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act](#), to **provide resources for conservation, restoration, and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats in, and around, the Great Lakes**.

Sarah will also **seek to join Senator Tammy Baldwin on the bipartisan Senate Great Lakes Task Force** to advocate for the protection of the Great Lakes. She will also join Senator Baldwin as a strong advocate for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. A 2018 study found that every dollar spent by GLRI produced an additional \$3.35 of economic activity. Thanks to Senator Baldwin's efforts, **the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is funded through 2026, and Sarah will fight to continue that funding moving forward**.

### IV. SAFEGUARDING FROM EROSION'S HARMFUL IMPACTS

Between January 2013 and July 2020, the water levels of Lakes Michigan and Huron together have [swung](#) more than 6 feet. Erosion from high waters has shrunk beaches, damaged public lands, and required significant repairs and expenditures by homeowners.

Because of climate change, Wisconsin's Great Lakes communities expect to spend approximately [\\$245 million](#) over the next five years to repair coastal damage. Shoreline erosion — and how to afford to protect against damage from high water — challenges both the urban centers like Milwaukee and the small towns along the Great Lakes. It also presents an unsustainable liability for local governments.

Sarah knows we have to be more intentional about finding cost-effective ways to deal with shoreline erosion and damage from high water and intense storms.

That's why Sarah will work **to increase federal funding to provide necessary repairs and upgrades to address erosion damage and minimize the effects of future erosion**, in an effort to support homeowners and municipalities along the shoreline.

Sarah **will bring farmers to the table to establish best farming practices to protect the land from erosion and to prevent flooding**. She knows it is crucial for farmers to be involved so that we do not set any standards that will cost them their livelihoods or make it impossible for them to do their jobs.