

Milwaukee has to pull 65,000 lead pipes by 2037. Every Wisconsin utility is on a similar clock.

A federal lead-line mandate, PFAS settlements, a Great Lakes diversion, and a rate regulator that reaches municipal utilities — few states stack this many capital pressures on one plan. Invizion helps Wisconsin water utilities re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click, and defend every decision to the PSC and their boards.

65,000¹ Lead service lines Milwaukee Water Works must replace — its plan targets 2037.	575+² Drinking-water utilities the Wisconsin PSC regulates — including the rates of <i>municipal</i> systems, which is unusual.	\$8B³ Financial assistance provided to Wisconsin municipalities through the Environmental Improvement Fund since 1991.	\$204M⁴ Safe Drinking Water Loan Program funding across 94 projects in state fiscal year 2026.
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THE WISCONSIN LANDSCAPE

Four forces are moving your project list at once

None of these is theoretical, and none of them waits for your next budget cycle. Together they mean the capital plan you approved last year may already be the wrong plan.

COMPLIANCE — LEAD SERVICE LINES

A 65,000-line mandate on a hard federal clock

Milwaukee Water Works must replace roughly 65,000 lead service lines, and its Milwaukee Prioritization Program targets completion by 2037.¹ That deadline is not self-imposed: the 2024 EPA Lead and Copper Rule Improvements require most systems to identify and replace their lead pipes within about ten years.⁵ Milwaukee Water Works serves nearly 950,000 people across 16 communities in three counties, so the scale is enormous.⁶

Milwaukee has already replaced more than 13,000 lines and planned about 3,500 in 2025, with the pace set to grow each year.¹ The benchmark is Madison, which became the first major U.S. city to launch a full lead-replacement program and has swapped out more than 8,000 lines since 2000.⁷ State money is flowing to the work — Milwaukee alone drew \$50.5M from the SFY2026 lead program.⁸

CONTAMINATION — PFAS

Two of the country's worst PFAS sites are in Wisconsin

In April 2024 EPA set enforceable drinking-water limits of 4 parts per trillion for PFOA and PFOS, with initial monitoring due by 2027 and treatment in place by 2029.⁹ For Wisconsin that is not abstract. In the Marinette and Peshtigo area, decades of firefighting-foam training at the Johnson Controls/Tyco Fire Technology Center left groundwater above 100,000 ppt and pushed 78 of 173 sampled private wells past drinking-water guidelines; a 2026 settlement directs about \$10M into the state's PFAS trust fund.¹⁰

Around La Crosse, contamination tied to the airport reached the Town of Campbell on French Island, where 140 of 553 sampled wells exceeded state health standards.¹¹ Wherever PFAS turns up, the fix is capital — new wells, treatment, or connections — competing with everything else on the list.

SUPPLY — SOURCE SECURITY

The state that had to leave the Great Lakes basin to get clean water

Waukesha's deep aquifer carried radium above federal limits, so the city won approval in 2016 — the first from a community entirely outside the Great Lakes basin — to divert Lake Michigan water under the Great Lakes Compact, roughly 8 million gallons a day through about 35 miles of new pipeline, with typical bills projected to rise around 50% between 2023 and 2027¹² The switch to lake water was completed in October 2023¹³

Lake Michigan is the backbone for Milwaukee, Green Bay, Racine and Kenosha, but inland systems lean on groundwater that can carry radium, nitrate or PFAS. Where your next reliable source comes from is now a capital question, not just a resource one.

RENEWAL — AGING MAINS & RATES

Renewal and new mandates, on the same clock

Milwaukee alone maintains nearly 2,000 miles of water main and delivers over 250 million gallons a day; that pipe ages whether or not a mandate is pending⁶ Lead, PFAS and renewal don't take turns — they stack, and something on the list has to move.

The pressure is sharpened by oversight: the PSC reviews municipal as well as investor-owned rates, so every increase has to be justified² The funding is real — the Clean Water Fund Program alone carried roughly \$475M in requests across about 105 projects in SFY2026¹⁴ on top of the \$8B the Environmental Improvement Fund has provided since 1993³ — but absorbing it while staying defensible is the hard part.

WHO RUNS WISCONSIN'S WATER

An overwhelmingly municipal state, with regional authorities filling the gaps

Wisconsin water is delivered almost entirely by city and village utilities — hundreds of them — with wholesale authorities and a big regional sewerage district behind the scenes. Investor-owned water is a small share. What sets the state apart is that the PSC sets rates for the municipals too.

Municipal utilities

Rates reviewed by the PSC · capital approved by councils & boards

Milwaukee Water Works	~950,000 served in 16 communities · 250+ MGD · ~2,000 mi of mains
Madison Water Utility	250,000+ served · 23 deep wells · 64,839 connections
Green Bay Water Utility	Wisconsin's 3rd-largest supplier · Lake Michigan sources
Waukesha Water Utility	Switched to Lake Michigan water in 2023
Kenosha, Racine, Oshkosh, Eau Claire	Other large municipal systems

Regional authorities & wastewater

Wholesale providers, districts & the few investor-owned systems

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD)	Regional wastewater · ~1.1M people · 29 communities · 423 sq mi
Central Brown County Water Authority	Wholesale Lake Michigan supply to the Green Bay area
Sanitary & utility districts	Hundreds of small systems statewide
Investor-owned water utilities	A small share — nearly all community water is municipal

Unlike many states, Wisconsin has very little private water ownership; the PSC's rate jurisdiction over municipals is where the real oversight lives.

Every capital dollar has to be defensible

Whether you answer to the Public Service Commission or your council, the question is the same: why this project, why now, why at this cost? Wisconsin's oversight reaches further than most.

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) — unusually, the PSC sets rates for *municipal* as well as investor-owned water utilities, regulating more than 575 drinking-water systems through conventional and simplified rate cases²

EPA Lead & Copper Rule Improvements (2024) — require most systems to replace lead service lines within about ten years; Milwaukee's program targets 2037⁵¹

Federal PFAS drinking-water standards (2024) — enforceable 4 ppt limits for PFOA and PFOS, with monitoring due by 2027 and treatment by 2029.⁹

Wisconsin DNR — holds Safe Drinking Water Act primacy and runs the state's PFAS response in Marinette, La Crosse and beyond¹⁰

A benchmark worth noting — Madison was the first major U.S. city to replace all its lead service lines, a decade-plus effort begun in 2000.
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The money is moving — can your plan absorb it?

Wisconsin utilities have more capital funding available than they've had in a generation. The constraint is no longer only dollars — it's readiness: which projects are shovel-ready, which qualify, and how the timing lines up with everything else on the list.

Safe Drinking Water Loan Program — about \$204M across 94 projects in SFY2026, including \$55.8M in principal forgiveness and \$17.8M in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law emerging-contaminant funding.⁴

Lead Service Line Replacement Program — \$159.9M in SFY2026 to 41 communities with \$81.3M in principal forgiveness; Milwaukee alone received \$50.5M.⁸

Clean Water Fund Program — roughly \$475M requested across about 105 projects in SFY2026, with \$54.3M in principal forgiveness¹⁴

Environmental Improvement Fund — Wisconsin's SRF umbrella has provided more than \$8B to municipalities since 1991³

Tyco/JCI PFAS settlement — a 2026 settlement directs about \$10M into the state's PFAS trust fund for Marinette-area drinking water¹⁰

WISCONSIN WATER, IN BRIEF

Questions Wisconsin utility leaders are asking

Short, sourced answers — the same facts we'll dig into on a call, in the context of your system.

Does the Wisconsin PSC really set my municipal water rates?

Yes — and that's what makes Wisconsin unusual. The Public Service Commission regulates more than 575 drinking-water utilities, and its rate jurisdiction covers municipal systems, not just investor-owned ones. Utilities file conventional or simplified rate cases, and capital spending has to be justified in that record.²

How fast does Milwaukee have to replace its lead pipes?

Milwaukee Water Works must replace roughly 65,000 lead service lines and targets 2037, driven by the 2024 EPA Lead and Copper Rule Improvements' roughly ten-year window. It has replaced more than 13,000 so far, planned about 3,500 in 2025, and drew \$50.5M from the SFY2026 state lead program.¹⁵⁸

Where are Wisconsin's biggest PFAS problems?

The Marinette and Peshtigo area, where firefighting-foam training at the Johnson Controls/Tyco Fire Technology Center drove groundwater above 100,000 ppt and contaminated dozens of wells, and the La Crosse area, where 140 of 553 sampled wells on French Island exceeded state standards. Federal limits of 4 ppt for PFOA and PFOS now apply statewide.¹⁰¹¹⁹

Why did Waukesha switch to Lake Michigan water?

Its deep aquifer carried radium above federal limits. In 2016 Waukesha became the first community entirely outside the Great Lakes basin approved to divert lake water under the Great Lakes Compact — about 8 million gallons a day through roughly 35 miles of pipeline — and completed the switch in October 2023. Typical bills were projected to rise about 50% between 2023 and 2027.¹²¹³

What state and federal funding is available for Wisconsin water projects?

In SFY2026 the Safe Drinking Water Loan Program carried about \$204M, the Lead Service Line Replacement Program \$159.9M, and the Clean Water Fund Program roughly \$475M in requests — on top of the more than \$8B the Environmental Improvement Fund has provided since 1991. Much of it comes with principal forgiveness for eligible communities.⁴⁸¹⁴³

How does Invizion help Wisconsin water utilities plan capital?

Invizion is scenario-based capital portfolio optimization for water utilities. It lets you model how a lead deadline, a PFAS finding, a source change, or a funding award reshuffles your whole project list, re-sequence the portfolio automatically against your constraints, and keep a defensible record of every trade-off for the PSC, your council, or ratepayers. The best next step is a short first meeting to look at it against your own program.

REFERENCES

Sources

Every figure in this briefing is tied to a primary or authoritative source.

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ABOUT INVIZION

Capital program optimization for utilities

Invizion is a purpose-built capital lifecycle management platform for water and wastewater utilities. It integrates budgeting, CIP, scenario analysis, and funding-source tracking in one system — so utilities can re-sequence a capital portfolio in a click and demonstrate audit-ready, defensible decisions to regulators, boards, and rating agencies.

See what a defensible Wisconsin capital plan looks like — book a 20-minute first meeting.

Book your first meeting →