WI Land+Water’s mission:

To protect, conserve, and enhance Wisconsin’s natural resources by advocating for and supporting county conservation efforts, for current and future generations.
Outline

▪ Background statistics and trends

▪ Environmental impacts of livestock agriculture, shift toward Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)

▪ Opportunities going forward
Food, Land, and Water Report

- Wisconsin faces multiple challenges as it relates to water quality and agriculture.
- Water quality not the sole responsibility of agriculture, BUT agriculture has a critical role in influencing water quality.
- Consensus exists that we must do a better job on water quality, and we must invest in it.
Background statistics and trends – livestock agriculture in Wisconsin
Statistics

- “Dairy State”
- 8,000 dairies (312 CAFOs)
- 1.27 million dairy cows
- Produced 30.8 billion lbs milk in 2018
- Economic driver

Source: Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
Trends – multiple stressors on livestock agriculture

- Dairy farms in decline
- Milk production continues upward trend
- Milk prices down
- Greater public scrutiny

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Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Source: Farm Bureau Federation
Source: Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
Source: Chuck Wagner
Trends – “big get bigger, small go out”

- State herd size remains stable
- Dairy farms are getting bigger
- Losing farmland
- 1/3 of WI farmland owned by absentee landowners

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Source: Food, Land, and Water: Moving Forward
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Source: Food, Land, and Water: Moving Forward
Environmental impacts of livestock agriculture, shift toward CAFOs
Environmental Impacts – surface water pollution

- Soil phosphorus increasing
- Soil erosion rates increasing
- Excessive nutrient loading can fuel harmful algal blooms
- ...and cause “dead zones”

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Environmental Impacts – groundwater pollution

- Nitrogen fertilizer tonnage increasing
- Well contamination from nitrate – 90% from agriculture
- Surface water nitrate contamination also growing concern.
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Source: UW-Stevens Point Private Well Water Viewer
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Source: UW-Stevens Point Private Well Water Viewer
Source: https://wisconsindnr.shinyapps.io/riverwq/
Environmental impacts of industrial farms

- Loss of diverse crop rotations, increased row crops/runoff potential
- Less resilience to withstand extreme weather events
- Catastrophic potential of billions of gallons of manure
- Expiration date on the “social license” to operate

*Breach of Seas Branch Dam, Vernon Co, WI, Aug 2018*
Opportunities going forward
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▪ Status quo is not working for water quality, conservation, or agriculture—opportunity to find common ground

▪ Agricultural sector can lead the way in seeking transparent, verifiable, and marketable stewardship initiatives

▪ Shift the conversation from “yield,” to “profitability”
Opportunities going forward

▪ Push back on “get big or go out”

▪ Provide access to capital for diversification, farm transition and transfer, modernization, etc...not exclusively expansion.

▪ Incentivize resilience
Questions?
Matt Krueger, matt[at]wisconsinlandwater.org
www.wisconsinlandwater.org