Effective Risk Communications

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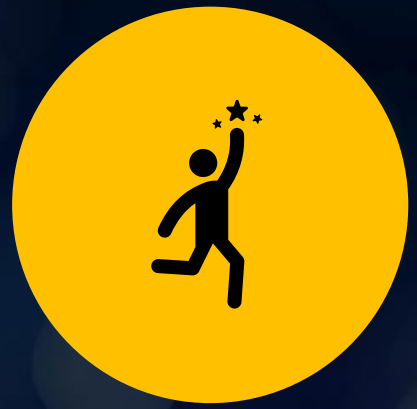
Today's Objectives

TOOLS & STRATEGIES

PLANNING



SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Interstate Technology & Regulatory Council June 2020

Risk Communication Toolkit for Environmental Issues and Concerns

1 Introduction

Risk communication is the process of informing people about potential hazards to their health, property, or community. It is a science-based approach for effective communication in situations of high stress, high concern, or controversy (USEPA 2019c). Risk communication is often seen as an effort that only happens after a crisis or emergency;

The information in this fact sheet is more fully described in the *ITRC Risk Communication Toolkit* (*Toolkit*) (https://rct-1.itrcweb.org).

Interstate Technology & Regulatory Council June 2020

- ITRC's online document includes:
  - An overview of risk communication
  - Outline of steps in developing a communication plan and stakeholder outreach activities
  - An overview of risk communication concepts
  - Case studies to facilitate risk communication plan development

Five Key Aspects of Risk Communication

Risk characteristics that influence level of acceptance

More Acceptable	Less Acceptable
Voluntary	Involuntary
Controlled by individual	Controlled by others
Clear benefits	Little or no clear benefit
Fairly distributed	Unfairly distributed
Natural	Human-made
Generated by a trusted source	Generated by an untrusted source
Familiar	Exotic
Affects adults	Affects children

Source: Adapted from USEPA 2007a

Releasing Information Effectively

- Act - don't wait
- Share what you do and don't know
- Share with affected public first before a general release
- Talk procedures
- Preliminary data
- Release in context

(Hance, Chess, and Sandman 1991)

Interacting with Communities

- Involve the public
- Use appropriate forums
- Communicate with many different audiences
- Acknowledge and deal with values and feelings expressed
- Respond personally
- Choose the right speakers

(Hance, Chess, and Sandman 1991)

Communication Plan Process Diagram

ITRC Risk Communication Resources

1. Risk Communication Toolkit fact sheet

2. Risk Communication video posted on ITRC's YouTube channel. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqOaPip-z5g&feature=youtu.be

Christine Haag

- Started with the Wisconsin DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment program in 2013 as the administrator of the Ready for Reuse loan and grant program (EPA RLF).
- In 2014 she became the Brownfields and Outreach Section Chief, and in 2018 she took the role of RR program director.
- Background prior to joining DNR includes executive director for a national trails organization, commercial real estate development project management, and co-founder and chocolatier for a successful confections company
- She has an M.S. in Urban and Regional Planning from UW – Madison and a B.S. in Anthropology.

WI Regulatory Framework

Cleanup laws and rules

- Wis. Stat. ch. 292
- Wis. Admin. Code chs. NR 700 – 799

Ch. NR 714

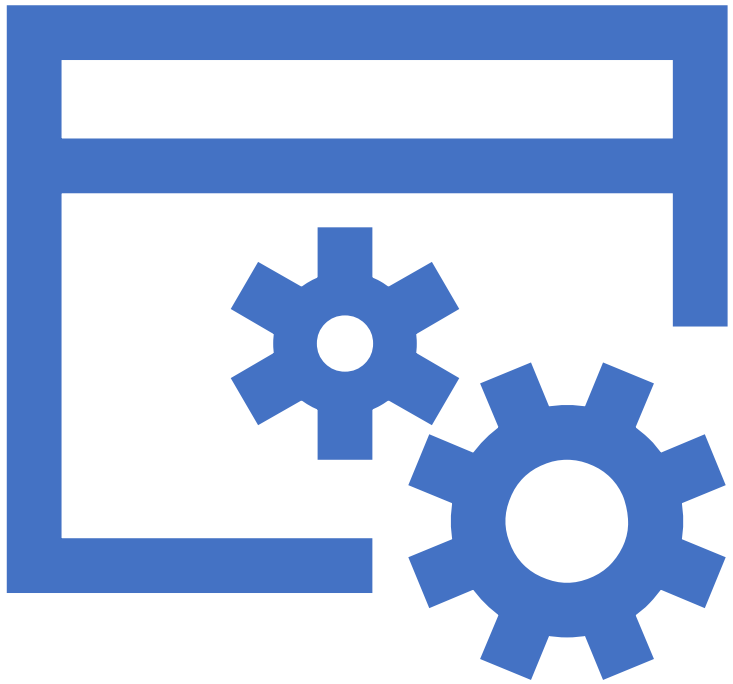
- Public Notification and Participation

Responsible Party

- Navigates the cleanup process following DNR rules (NR 700 - 799)
- Evaluates and implements public notification and participation needs
- Ch. NR 714

Wisc. DNR

- Oversees work of the responsible party
- Maintains the public record (database and GIS map)
- May supplement or intervene if necessary



Tools and Strategies

Rollout Plans

CONSISTENCY

NO SURPRISES

CAN BE TIME CONSUMING

WORTH IT!

EM Division High-Profile Communications Roll-Out Plan Template

Updated 3/30/20

A standardized template for a Communications Roll-Out Plan dealing with a high-profile topic

What's in the template

- Roll-out Details
- Identifying Key Personnel
- Identifying and Assigning Content Needs
- Action Plan – Steps to "Go-live"

Approvals Needed on Content and Action Plan

Point Person – "the Quarterback" • *Initiates roll-out plan document and post to roll-out library* • *Assembles team members as needed* • *Identifies and carries out/assigns early "courtesy calls"* • *Determines content needs, assigns work and ensures approvals by due date* • *Coordinates final approvals of Action Plan* • *Implements Action Plan to launch communication* • *Assigns follow-up assignments as needed*	Primary: Notify by: ☐ Text ☐ Call ☐ Email Phone:	Backup: Notify by: ☐ Text ☐ Call ☐ Email Phone:
Media Contact • *Handles press and media request*	Primary:	Backup:
Technical/Topic Expert Contact • *Point of contact for technical and/or site-specific data*	Primary:	Backup:
Internal Team Members *(if required)* *List key personnel required to collaborate and meet as a team to support the roll-out. Normally will have some assignment as part of roll-out, including approvals.*		
Ad Hoc Team Members *(if required)* *List key personnel who may be involved in technical content or communication products*		

Early Courtesy Calls

Who needs advance notification?	**Method**	**Assigned to:**	**Due by:** *Incl. time if necessary*	**Complete?**
Division Administrator	☐ Face to Face ☐ Call ☐ Email Contact info:	Program Director		☐
Secretary's Office		Division Administrator		☐
Legislative Liaisons		Program Director		☐
Governor's Office		Secretary's Office		☐

Identifying and Assigning Content Needs

Content/Resource *Examples: web content updates, talking points, news release…*	**Assigned to:**	**Attachments**	**Final draft complete?**
Group charter		Advisory Group Charter Member List Work Plan	☒
Talking Points		Talking Points	☒
Presentation		Presentation Slides	☐
Meeting Agenda		Program Update Agenda	☒
Web content: 1. New webpage 2. Archive Focus Group webpage		New Web Page for advisory group	☒
Email bulletins 1. Announce new advisory group 2. Meeting invitation 3. Meeting reminder		Draft bulletins	☒

Action Plan – Steps to "Go-live"

Action Plan Step *If needed, identify separate **phases or dates** to organize implementation*	**Method** *Only required for notification steps*	**Assigned to:**	**Due by:** *Incl. time if necessary*	**Complete*?**
Phase 1 – announce new group				
Sec. Office Call with members	phone		11:30 am 5/9/22	☒
Brief leadership team	During tech talk			☒
Meeting with staff	Skype meeting			☒
Meeting with members	Zoom			☒
Post program meeting information/agenda on public meetings page, training page				☒
invite to meeting				☒
reminder invite				☒
Hold program update meeting & announce new group				☒
Post new website				☒
Archive Technical Focus group web				☒
Phase 2 – commence new group				
Finalize charter and 2022				☐

4
What isn’t changing

2
Benefits

1
Logic/Urgency

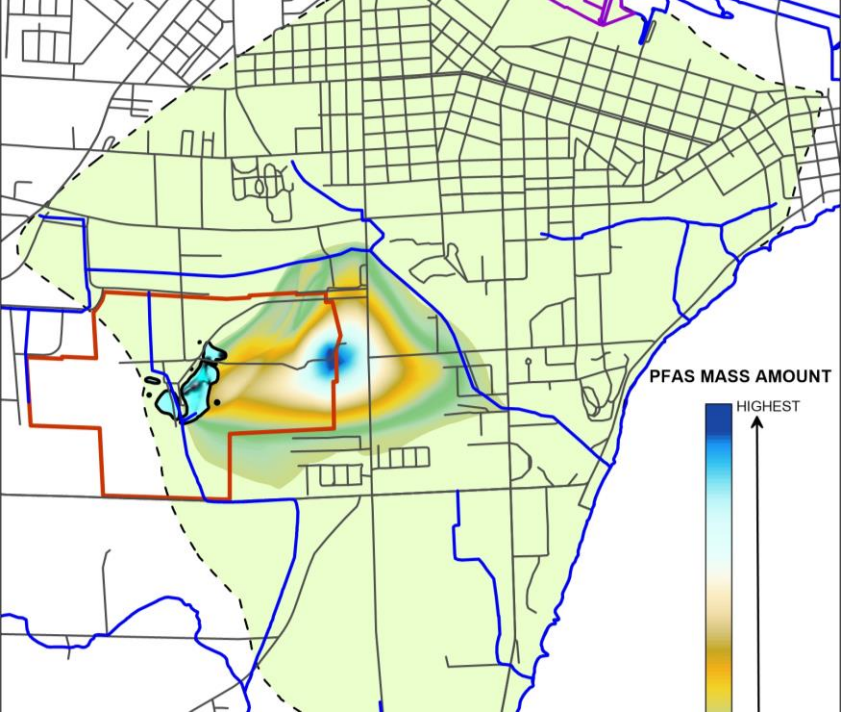
3
Concerns/Emotion

Case Studies & Lessons Learned

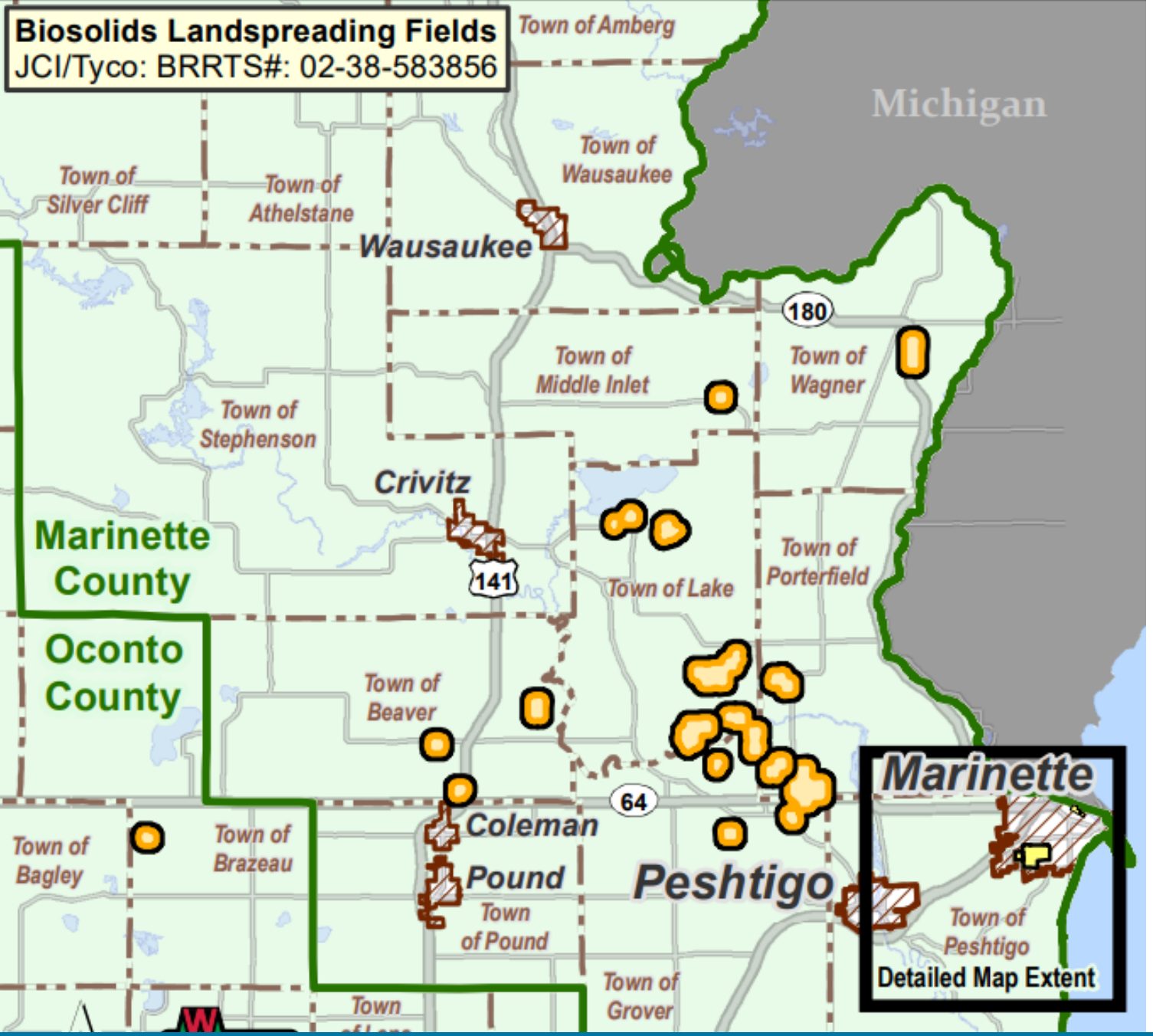
PFAS Contamination in Marinette/Peshtigo Area, Wisconsin

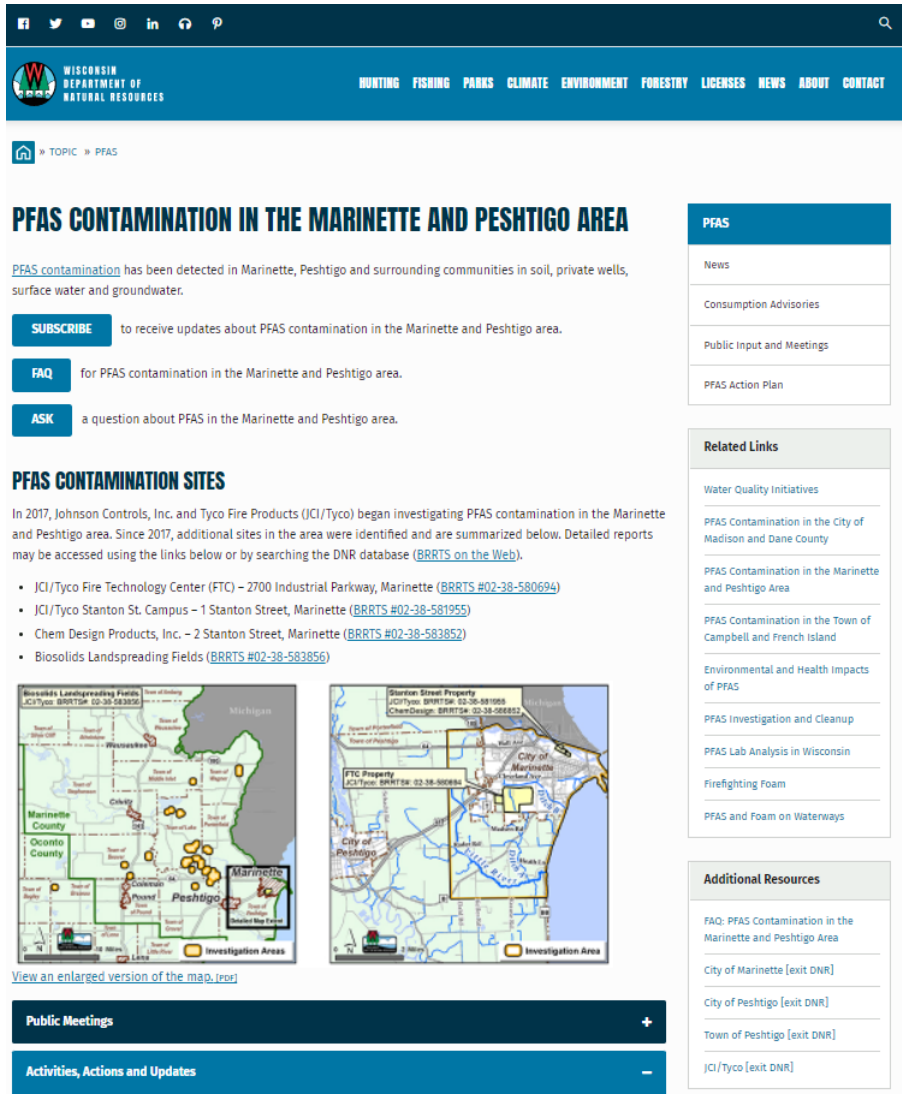
Reported to DNR January 2018

~10 square mile groundwater plume


PFAS MASS AMOUNT
HIGHEST

Biosolids Landspreading Fields
JCI/Tyco: BRRTS#: 02-38-583856





Listening Sessions → Webpage → Listserv

Email Inbox → Phone Line/Voicemail → Public Database

Press Releases → Media Interviews → One-on-one meetings

Meetings with Officials → Newspaper Ads → Bulk Mailings

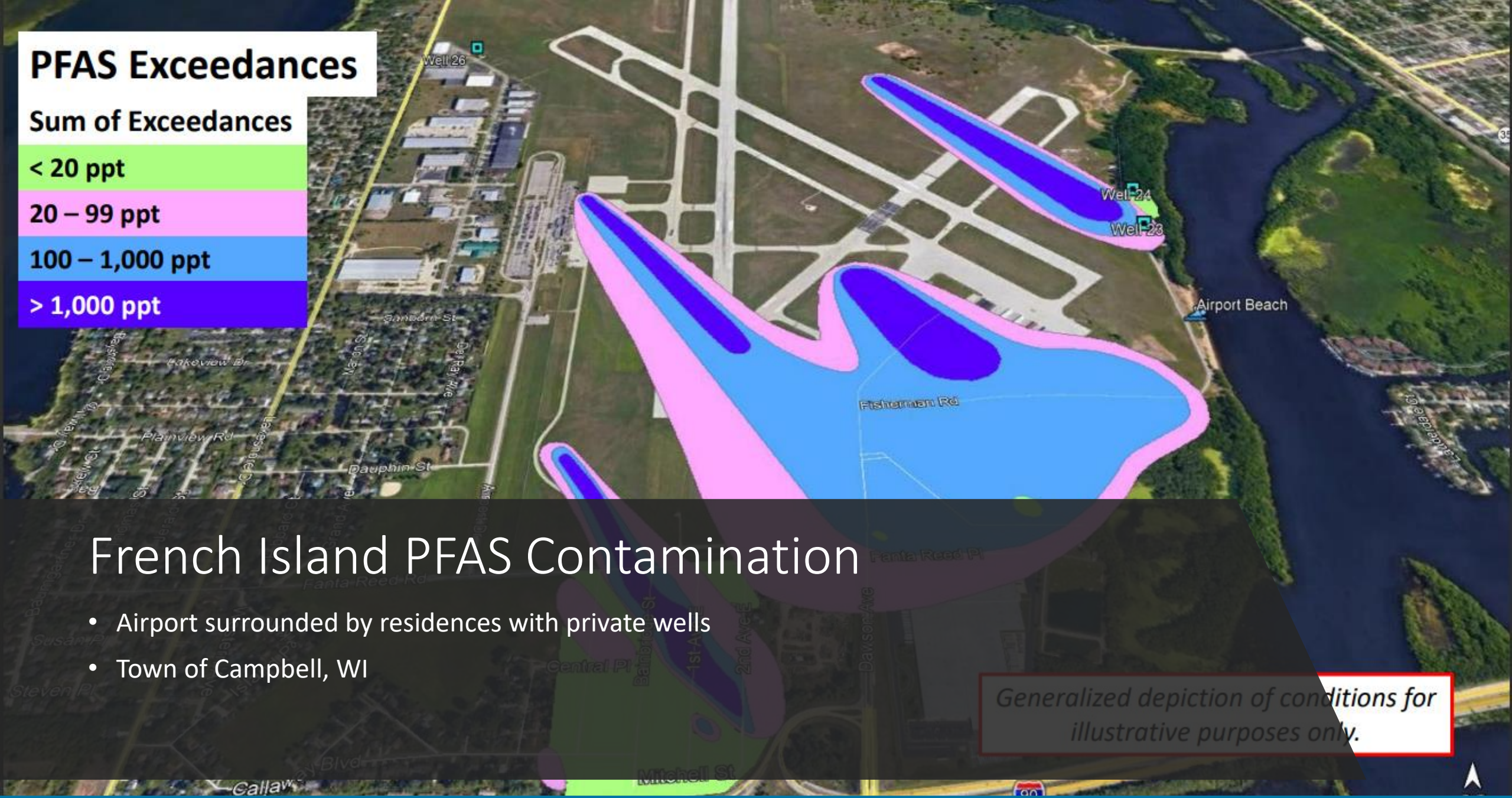
What we learned

Methods Matter

- Mailers
- Large Meetings vs. Breakout Sessions

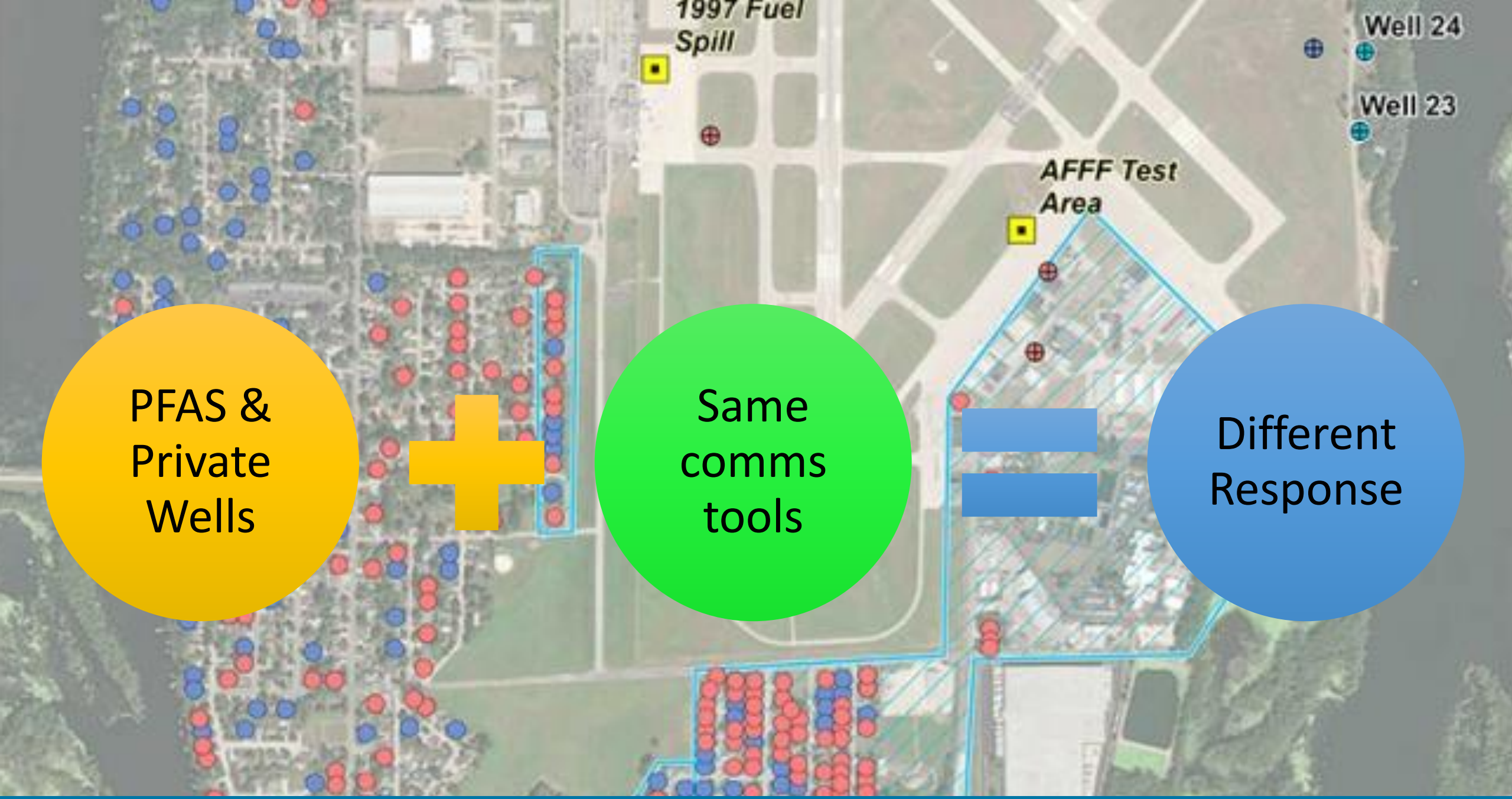
Trust takes time

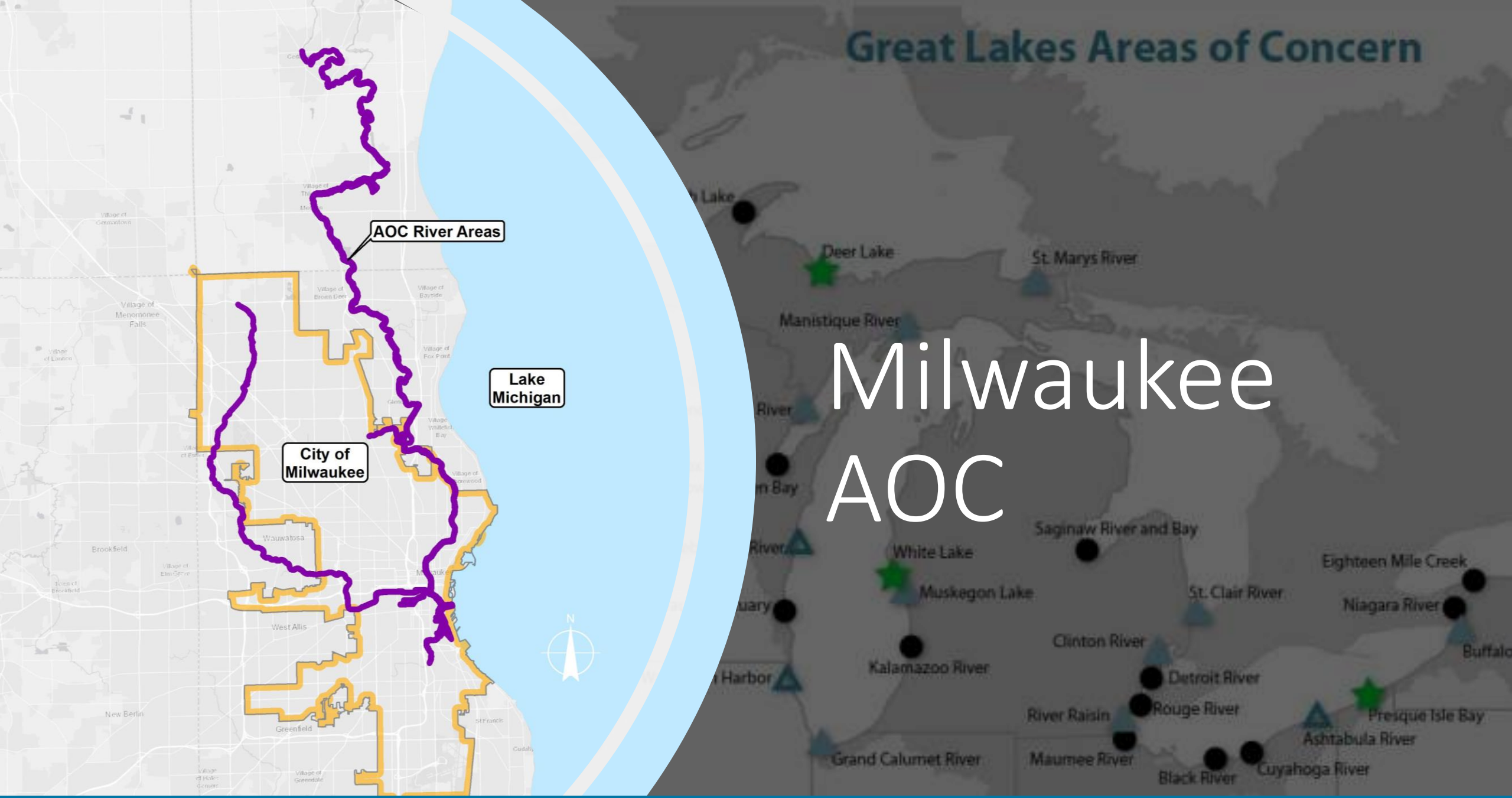
Internal Communication Matters!



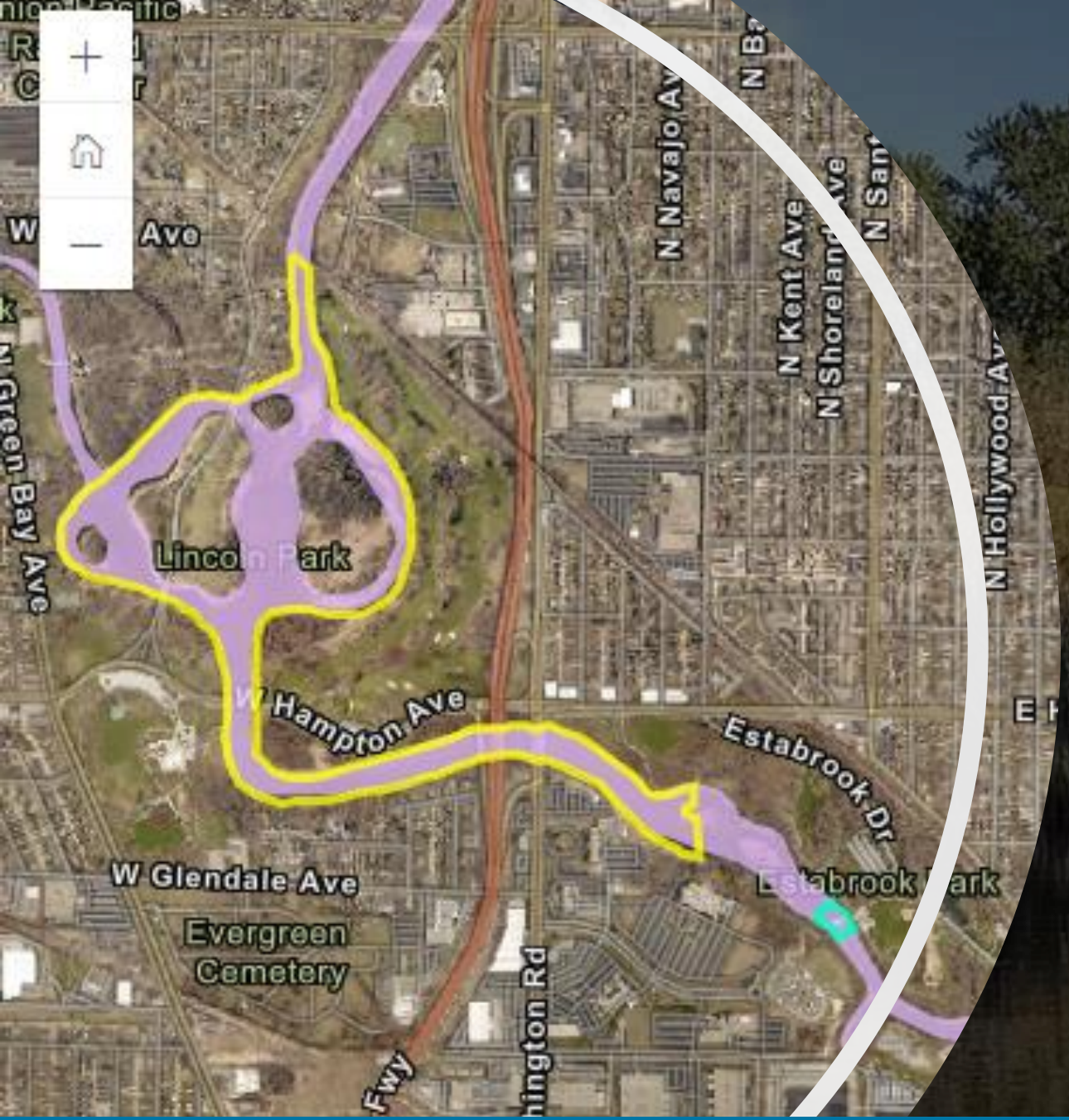
French Island PFAS Contamination

- Airport surrounded by residences with private wells
- Town of Campbell, WI


1997 Fuel Spill
Well 24
Well 23
AFFF Test Area
PFAS & Private Wells
Same comms tools
Different Response



Milwaukee AOC



Cleanup Actions

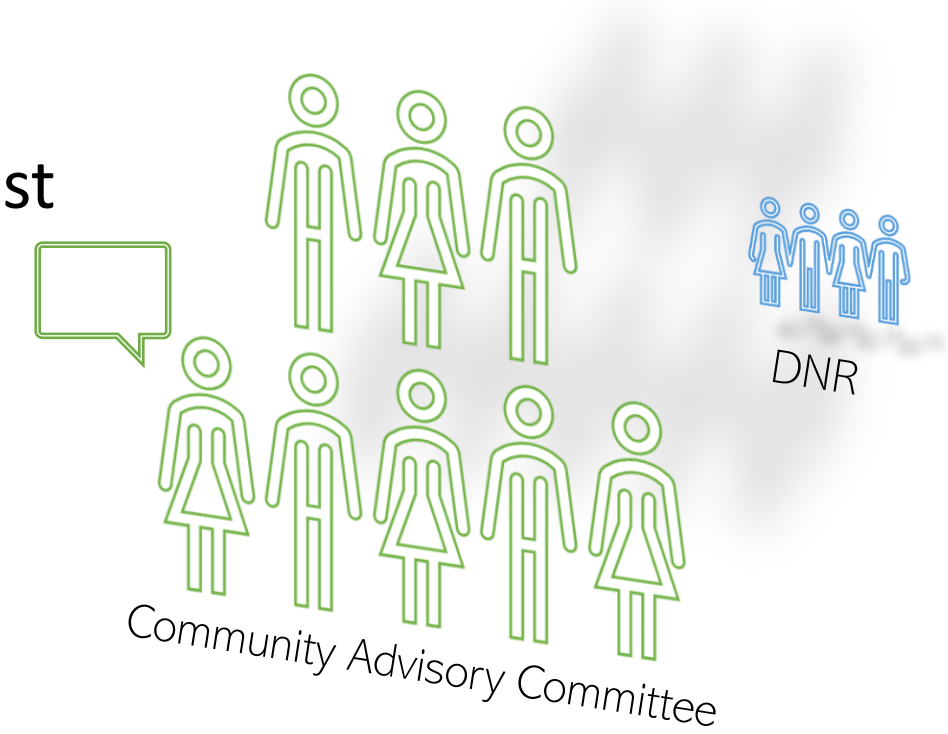
“DMMF”

- Dredged Material Management Facility
- Will it ever be built?
- “Landfill in the Lake?”

Waterway Restoration Partnership

Community Advisory Committee

- Charge is to ensure that community input is heard by decision makers
- Racial justice = environmental justice. Lead with this.
- Translate for all audiences
- Create community awareness and interest
- Build community voice



CONNECT WITH US

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"WILD WISCONSIN:
OFF THE RECORD"