

July 2023



WestFAST News

682 East Vine Street / Suite 7 / Murray, UT 84107 / (801) 685-2555/ www.westernstateswater.org/westfast

Chair – Roger Gorke; Federal Liaison Officer – Madeline Franklin

Tap Water Study Detects PFAS “Forever Chemicals” Across the US

USGS estimates at least 45% of tap water could have one or more PFAS.

USGS 7/5/2023

At least 45% of the nation’s tap water is estimated to have one or more types of the chemicals known as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances, or PFAS, according to a new study by the U.S. Geological Survey. There are more than 12,000 types of PFAS, not all of which can be detected with current tests; the USGS study tested for the presence of 32 types.

[Read the study.](#)

This USGS research marks the first time anyone has tested for and compared PFAS in tap water from both private and government-regulated public water supplies on a broad scale throughout the country. Those data were used to model and estimate PFAS contamination nationwide. This USGS [study](#) can help members of the public to understand their risk of exposure and inform policy and management decisions regarding testing and treatment options for drinking water.

PFAS are a group of synthetic chemicals used in a wide variety of common applications, from the linings of fast-food boxes and non-stick cookware to fire-fighting foams and other purposes. High concentrations of some PFAS may lead to adverse health risks in people, according to the [U.S.](#)

[Environmental Protection Agency](#). Research is still ongoing to better understand the potential health effects of PFAS exposure over long periods of time. Because they break down very slowly, PFAS are commonly called “forever chemicals.” Their persistence in the environment and prevalence across the country make them a unique water-quality concern.



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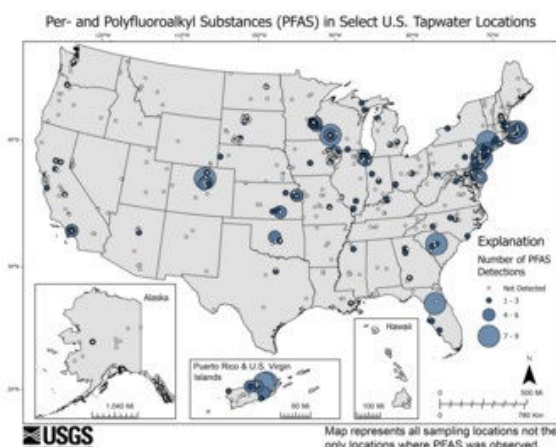
A USGS scientist wearing black gloves is collecting a sample of tap water from the kitchen sink using small plastic vials to test for PFAS.

"USGS scientists tested water collected directly from people's kitchen sinks across the nation, providing the most comprehensive study to date on PFAS in tap water from both private wells and public supplies," said USGS research hydrologist Kelly Smalling, the study's lead author. "The study estimates that at least one type of PFAS – of those that were monitored – could be present in nearly half of the tap water in the U.S. Furthermore, PFAS concentrations were similar between public supplies and private wells."

The EPA regulates public water supplies, and homeowners are responsible for the maintenance, testing and treatment of private water supplies. Those interested in testing and treating private wells should contact their local and state officials for guidance. Testing is the only way to confirm the presence of these contaminants in wells. For more information about PFAS regulations, visit the EPA's [website on addressing PFAS](#).

The study tested for 32 individual PFAS compounds using a method developed by the USGS National Water Quality Laboratory. The most frequently detected compounds in this study were PFBS, PFHxS and PFOA. The interim health advisories released by the EPA in 2022 for PFOS and PFOA were exceeded in every sample in which they were detected in this study.

Scientists collected tap water samples from 716 locations representing a range of low, medium, and high human-impacted areas. The low category includes protected lands; medium includes residential and rural areas with no known PFAS sources; and high includes urban areas and locations with reported PFAS sources such as industry or waste sites.



Sources/Usage: Public Domain. [Visit Media](#) to see details.

This USGS map shows the number of PFAS detected in tap water samples from select sites across the nation. The findings are based on a USGS study of samples taken between 2016 and 2021 from private and public supplies at 716 locations. The map does not represent the only locations in the U.S. with PFAS.

Most of the exposure was observed near urban areas and potential PFAS sources. This included the Great Plains, Great Lakes, Eastern Seaboard, and Central/Southern California regions. The study's results are in line with previous research concluding that people in urban areas have a higher likelihood of PFAS exposure. USGS scientists estimate that the probability of PFAS not being observed in tap water is about 75% in rural areas and around 25% in urban areas.

Learn more about USGS research on PFAS by reading the USGS [strategy for the study of PFAS](#) and visiting the [PFAS Integrated Science Team's website](#). The new study builds upon previous research by the USGS and partners regarding human-derived contaminants, including PFAS, in [drinking water](#) and [PFAS in groundwater](#).

Department of the Interior Announces Nearly \$300 Million to Support and Expand Local Outdoor Recreation

DOI 7/21/23

The Department of the Interior announced the distribution of \$295,582,830 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) today to all 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. Recent changes to the LWCF Manual guide states to work more closely with Tribal Nations and clarify eligibility to ensure all federally recognized Tribes can take part in and support future public outdoor recreation and conservation projects. The funds from this year's distribution will be available until fiscal year 2025.

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund helps further President Biden's commitment to investing in America's lands and waters, expanding access to the outdoors, and safeguarding the environment," said Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. "These grants, matched primarily by state and local governments, will inspire collaborative

conservation and improves equitable access to the outdoors for all.”

Along with this year’s LWCF distribution, the National Park Service is releasing an update to the LWCF Manual that directs states to work more closely with Tribes and underserved communities during the development of their Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans, a requirement for eligibility to receive LWCF funds. It also prioritizes the creation of parks in underserved communities. While Tribes were already eligible to receive LWCF grants, the changes to the Manual are intended to clarify this availability and encourage Tribal governments to apply for these funds.

“All communities are deserving of local outdoor recreation,” said National Park Service Director Chuck Sams. “Through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the National Park Service is proud to help communities and local governments upgrade and create new outdoor spaces that are most beneficial and enriching to their community, so that everyone is able to take part in outdoor recreation close to home.”

Since its inception in 1965, LWCF has funded \$5.2 billion to support more than 45,000 projects in every county in the country. At no cost to taxpayers, LWCF which is administered by the National Park Service, supports increased public access to and protection for federal public lands and waters — including national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and recreation areas — and provides matching grants to Tribal, state, and local governments to support the acquisition and development of land for public parks and other outdoor recreation sites.

The allocation for each state and territory is determined through a formula set in the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and is largely population-based. States and territories further allocate these funds to local projects, usually through a competitive process. These investments help support the Biden-Harris administration’s [America the Beautiful](#) initiative by supporting locally led outdoor recreation and conservation projects to protect and enhance our nation’s public lands and waters.

June Marked by Record-Setting U.S. Heat Waves, Severe Weather

Nation struck with 12 separate billion-dollar disasters so far this year.

NOAA 7/11/23



Damage from an EF-1 tornado that struck just south of the city of Eufaula in Barbour County, Alabama, on June 14, 2023. This tornado was part of a severe weather outbreak that contributed to the U.S. seeing 12 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in the first six months of 2023. (Image credit: NOAA NWS Forecast Office, Birmingham, Alabama.)

June 2023 was record hot for some parts of the U.S., while other locations were roiled by severe weather and poor air quality, according to experts from NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information.

The year so far has also brought [12 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters](#) to the nation — including tornado outbreaks, extreme flooding, and a winter storm.

Below are more highlights from NOAA’s U.S. monthly climate report for June:

Climate by the numbers June 2023

The average June temperature across the contiguous U.S. was 69.0 degrees F (0.5 of a degree above average), ranking in the middle third of the 129-year climate record.

Temperatures were above average from the Pacific Northwest to the northern Plains, as well as in the southern Plains and the Florida Peninsula. North Dakota saw its third-warmest June on record, while Louisiana and Minnesota each had a top-10 warmest June on record. Meanwhile, West Virginia

and Virginia had their ninth- and 10th-coolest Junes on record, respectively.

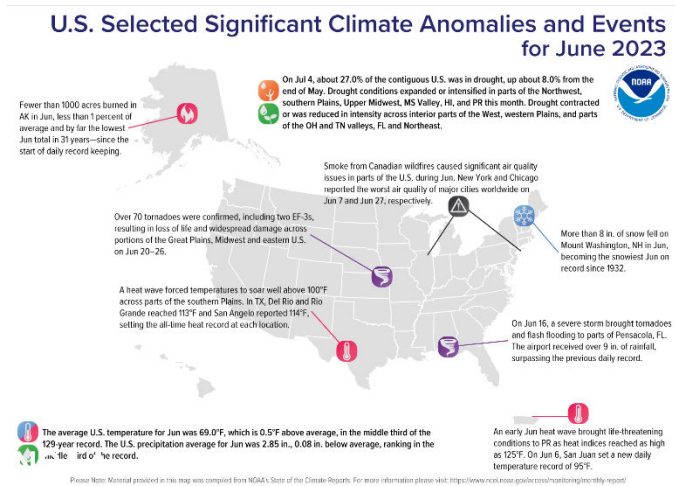
June precipitation across the U.S. was 2.85 inches — 0.08 of an inch below average — ranking in the middle third of the historical record.

Wisconsin and Michigan each had their fifth-driest June on record, while Illinois and Missouri both had a top-10 driest June. Wyoming saw its third-wettest June on record with Colorado and Maine having one of their top-10 wettest Junes.

Year to date (YTD, January through June 2023)

The YTD average temperature for the contiguous U.S. was 49.2 degrees F, (1.7 degrees above the 20th-century average), ranking as the 21st-warmest such YTD on record. Florida’s January–June period ranked as its warmest on record while Massachusetts had its second warmest. An additional 27 states had a top-10 warmest such YTD, while no state saw its top-10 coolest January–June.

The YTD precipitation total was 15.70 inches, 0.39 of an inch above average, which ranked in the middle-third of the record. Precipitation was above average from California to the Rockies and in parts of the southern Mississippi Valley, northern Great Lakes, Southeast and Northeast. Conversely, precipitation was below average across parts of the Northwest, northern and central Plains, Southwest, central Mississippi Valley, Mid-Atlantic and along parts of the Gulf Coast.



A map of the U.S. plotted with significant climate events that occurred during June 2023. Please see the story below as well as the full climate report highlights at <http://bit.ly/USClimate202306>. (Image credit: NOAA/NCEI)

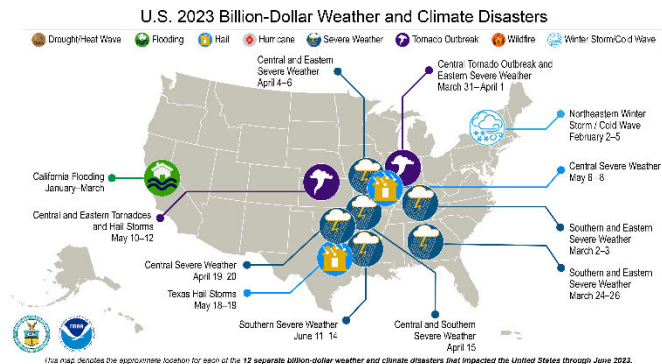
Billion-dollar disasters (January–June)

There were 12 individual billion-dollar weather and climate disasters across the U.S. during the first six months of 2023, including:

- One winter storm event.
- One flooding event.
- 10 severe weather events.

These events caused 100 direct and indirect fatalities and produced more than \$32.7 billion in damages, Consumer Price Index (CPI)-adjusted. This puts this year’s number of events and price tag in second place, behind the first six months of 2017 (14 disasters) and 2021 (\$42.5 billion), respectively.

Since 1980, when NOAA began tracking these events in the U.S., the nation has sustained 360 separate weather and climate disasters where overall damages/costs reached or exceeded \$1 billion (based on the CPI adjustment to 2023) per event. The total cost of these 360 events exceeds \$2.570 trillion.



This U.S. map is plotted with 12 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters that occurred in the first six months of 2023. For details, please visit ncdc.noaa.gov/billions. (Image credit: NOAA/NCEI)

Other notable highlights from this report

- **The heat was on:** A series of heat waves brought record-breaking temperatures to portions of the U.S. during June 2023.
 - An early June heat wave brought life-threatening conditions to Puerto Rico as heat index values reached as high as 125 degrees F. On June 6, San Juan set a new daily temperature record of 95 degrees F.

- A heat wave brought record heat to portions of the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes during early June. Daily temperature records were set in parts of Michigan, New York, and Vermont.
- A heat wave had temperatures soar well above 100 degrees F across parts of the southern Plains. On June 24, the temperature at Rio Grande Village, Texas, topped out at 119 degrees F — 1 degree below the all-time temperature record for the state.
- **Severe weather struck several locations:** A number of weather systems produced severe thunderstorms and tornadoes that impacted portions of the U.S. in June.
 - June 14-19: A tornado outbreak, including two EF-3 tornadoes, occurred across parts of the southern U.S. and Ohio Valley.
 - June 16: A severe storm brought tornadoes and flash flooding to parts of Pensacola, Florida. Pensacola International Airport received more than nine inches of rainfall, surpassing the previous daily record set in 1985.
 - June 20-26: More than 70 tornadoes were confirmed, including two EF-3 tornadoes, resulting in loss of life and widespread damage across portions of the Great Plains, Midwest, and eastern U.S.
- **Wildfires sent smoke southward:** thick smoke from Canadian wildfires created air quality issues for millions of people in portions of the Northeast and Great Lakes this June.
 - June 7: Around 100 million people across 16 states were under air quality alerts while New York City reported the worst air quality of major cities worldwide.
 - June 27: Wildfire smoke impacted a large portion of the Midwest, resulting in the city of Chicago having the worst air quality of major cities worldwide.

[More >](#) Access NOAA's latest climate report and download the images.

Upcoming Meetings and Webinars

[18th Biennial Indian Reserved Water Rights Symposium](#)

August 8-9, 2023, Virtual

[2023 Improving Sub-seasonal to Seasonal Precipitation Forecasting to Support Water Management Workshop](#)

August 15-17, 2023, in San Diego, CA

[Western States Water Council 2023 Fall Meetings](#)
September 12-14, 2023, in Anchorage AK

People

[DOI 7/19/23. Michael Brain Named Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science](#)

[USDA 7/11/23. Statement from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on the Confirmation of Xochitl Torres Small as Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)

Other Federal News

[DOI 7/6/23. Interior Department Launches Map to Track Historic Resources Funded by the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Nationwide](#)

[DOI 7/12/23. Biden-Harris Administration Announces \\$185 Million for Wildfire Mitigation and Resilience as Part of the Investing in America Agenda](#)

[DOI 7/19/23. Biden-Harris Administration Investing \\$120 Million to Support Tribes Dealing with the Impacts of the Climate Crisis](#)

[DOI 7/27/23. Biden-Harris Administration Investing \\$152 Million Through Investing in America Agenda to Expand Water Storage in the West](#)

DOJ 7/27/23. Readout of Department of Justice Federal/Tribal Regional Summit in Spokane, Washington

EPA 7/19/23. EPA Proposes to Streamline Requirements for States and Tribes, Strengthen Co-Regulator Partnerships to Protect Nation's Waters

FWS 7/20/23. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces Over \$5 Million Through Investing in America Agenda to Implement Recovery Actions for Four Groups of Endangered Species

FWS 7/24/23. Service Proposes Endangered Species Act Protection for Two Rio Grande Mussels

NASA 7/27/23. NASA Launches Beta Site; On-Demand Streaming, App Update Coming Soon

NRCS 7/20/23. USDA Seeks Proposals for Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

NOAA 7/13/23. July 2023 El Niño update: learning the steps

USACE 7/14/23. Research shows minerals can help mitigate PFAS in groundwater

USDA 7/7/23. USDA Forest Service Forms Northwest Forest Plan Federal Advisory Committee

USDA 7/7/23. Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Round of Investments in Wildfire Protection through Community Wildfire Defense Grants

USFS 7/31/23. Biden-Harris Administration to Invest Nearly \$11 Million in Wildland Fire Science Research and Knowledge Exchange, As Part of Investing in America agenda

The Western States Federal Agency Support Team (WestFAST) is a collaboration between 13 Federal agencies with water management responsibilities in the West. WestFAST was established to support the Western States Water Council (WSWC), and the Western Governors Association in coordinating Federal efforts regarding water resources.