



KENTUCKY DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER

Veterans, Military Affairs, &
Public Protection Interim Joint
Committee

Date: July 30, 2025





KENTUCKY WATER FACTS

- ▶ More than 15,000 miles of streams are source waters for drinking water plants.
- ▶ Forty-five (45) major lakes.
- ▶ 4.1 million Kentuckians rely on surface water for their drinking water.
- ▶ Groundwater serves as an important drinking water and agricultural resource particular along the I-65 corridor and the Jackson Purchase.

Kentucky Water Systems

BY THE NUMBERS - 2023



428 PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS



263 WATER TREATMENT PLANTS
OPERATED



1.9 MILLION SERVICE CONNECTIONS



200 BILLION GALLONS OF WATER
TREATED



90,000 REGULATED
CONTAMINANT TESTS



Some values are rounded or approximate.



KENTUCKY RANKED HIGHEST FOR DRINKING WATER QUALITY BY JD POWER AND GREEN WELL HEALTH IN 2023

J.D. POWER

Automotive ▾

Financial Services ▾

Insurance ▾

All Industries ▾



ARTICLE/INSIGHT

As Americans Focus on Water Quality, These States Boast the Best

29 June 2023

Kentucky is crowned the state with the cleanest tap water

August 21, 2023

1,905 Views

According to a new report analyzing public water system violations, Kentucky has the cleanest tap water in the contiguous United States.
~Green Well Health (via Lane Report)



KENTUCKY DIVISION OF WATER PROGRAMS

The Kentucky Division of Water's mission is to protect and enhance the states water resources through the state's primacy to implement federal requirements through state law and assistance to water utilities and the public.

- From the top of the watershed to the intake and every step along the way.
 - Watershed/non-point source program,
 - Kentucky Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (KPDES) and 401 Water Quality Certification programs,
 - Ambient surface water and groundwater programs.
 - PFAS
 - Infrastructure reviews for water and wastewater.
 - The Division of Water meets the United States EPA's required inspection frequency each year. Thirty-eight (38) inspectors in 10 regional office complete field inspections for drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, agriculture, oil and gas, and coal. In addition, inspectors investigate all water complaints.



KENTUCKY DIVISION OF WATER PROGRAMS

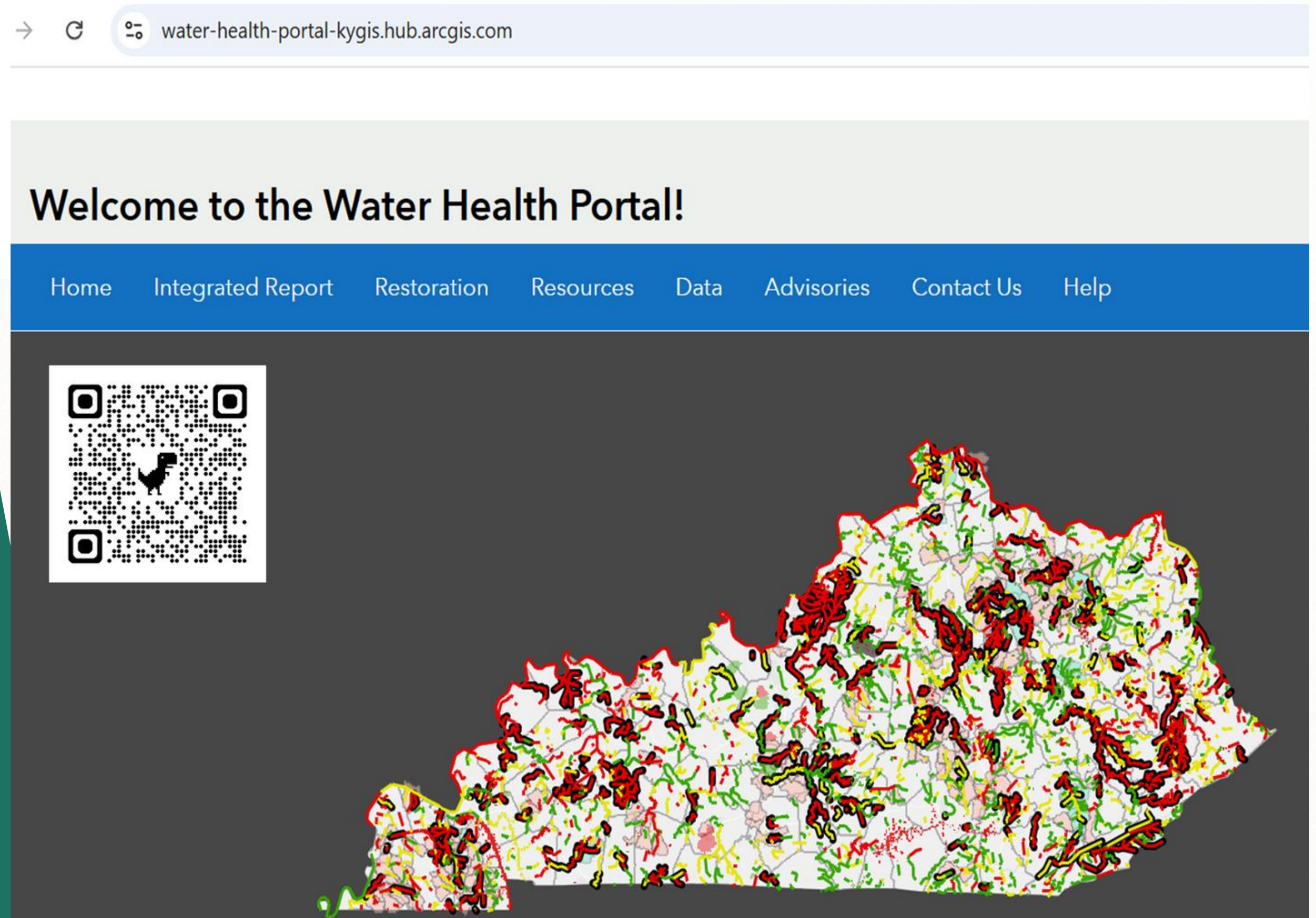
- The Division of Water provides regulatory oversight and assistance to more than 400 public drinking water systems.
- The Division of Water issues all discharge permits, including KPDES permits for sanitary wastewater under its federally delegated authority for the Clean Water Act.
 - There are >8,800 Kentucky Pollutant Elimination Discharge System (KPDES) permits, 698 active permits are for sanitary wastewater discharges.
- The Division of Water reviews all engineering plans for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure under its federally delegated authority for the Safe Drinking Water Act.

WATER PLANNING PROGRAMS/PRIORITIES/ APPROACHES

- Programs outlined above
- Publishing Information for public awareness
- Providing Information to support Kentucky Infrastructure Authority
- Implementing statewide PFAS strategy and assisting affected utilities
- Emphasizing Regionalization where it is achievable
- Maximizing water and wastewater operator training and opportunities
- The Cabinet Strategic Plan can be found at <https://osbd.ky.gov/strategic-plans/Pages/default.aspx>



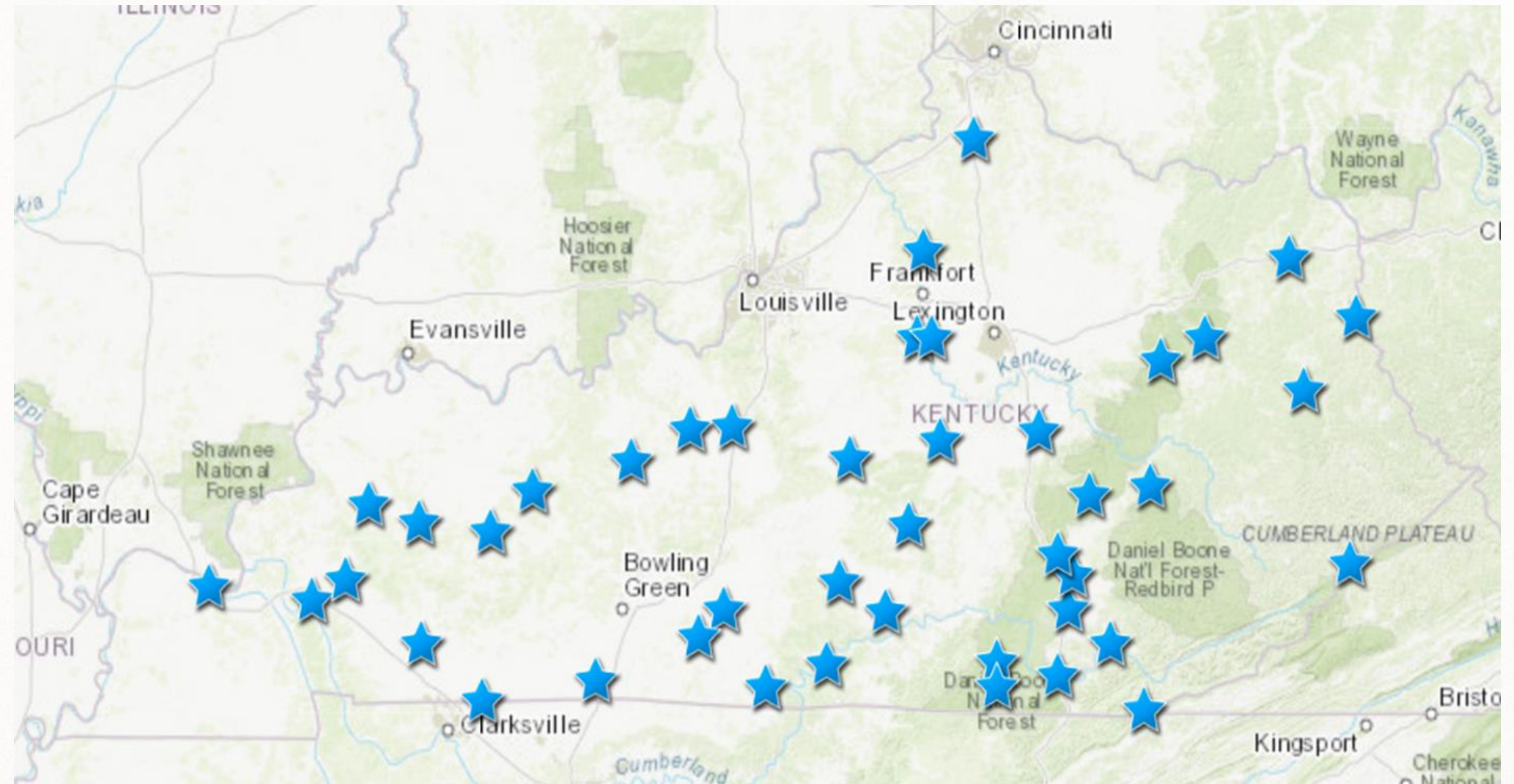
Kentuckians have access to all available data about the health of the rivers and streams throughout the state through the Kentucky Water Health Portal.



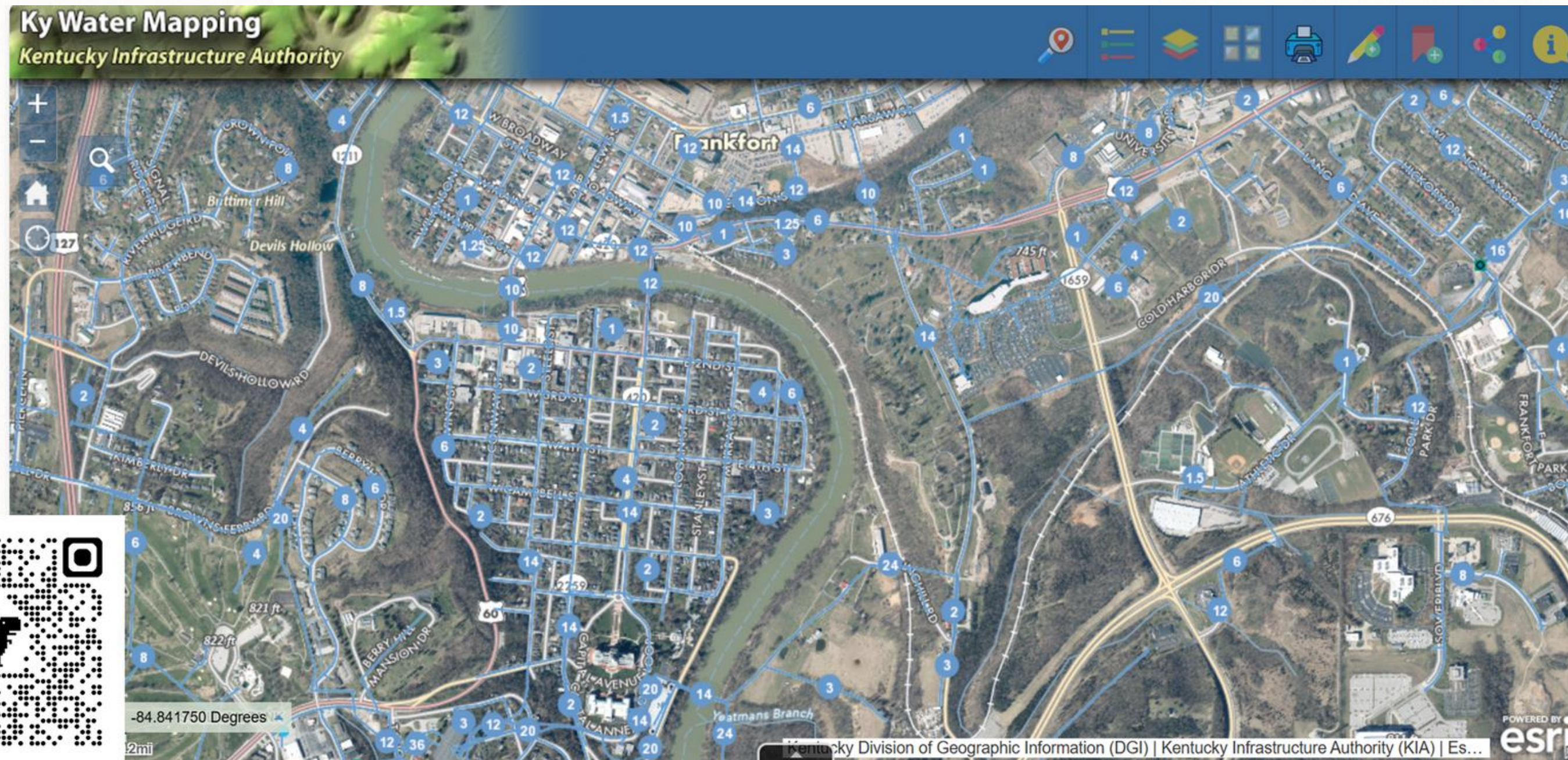
AREA WIDE OPTIMIZATION PROGRAM: VOLUNTARILY GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Higher quality water!

In 2024, 43 water systems received awards for voluntarily meeting higher than required standards for turbidity and disinfection byproducts through the Area Wide Optimization Program.



KENTUCKY INFRASTRUCTURE AUTHORITY'S WATER RESOURCES INFORMATION SYSTEM (WRIS)



Water and sewer lines are mapped in the KIA's WRIS online.

System data, including map data, is entered into GIS by Area Development Districts across the state.

Proposed and approved projects, budgets, and Timelines are available to the public.

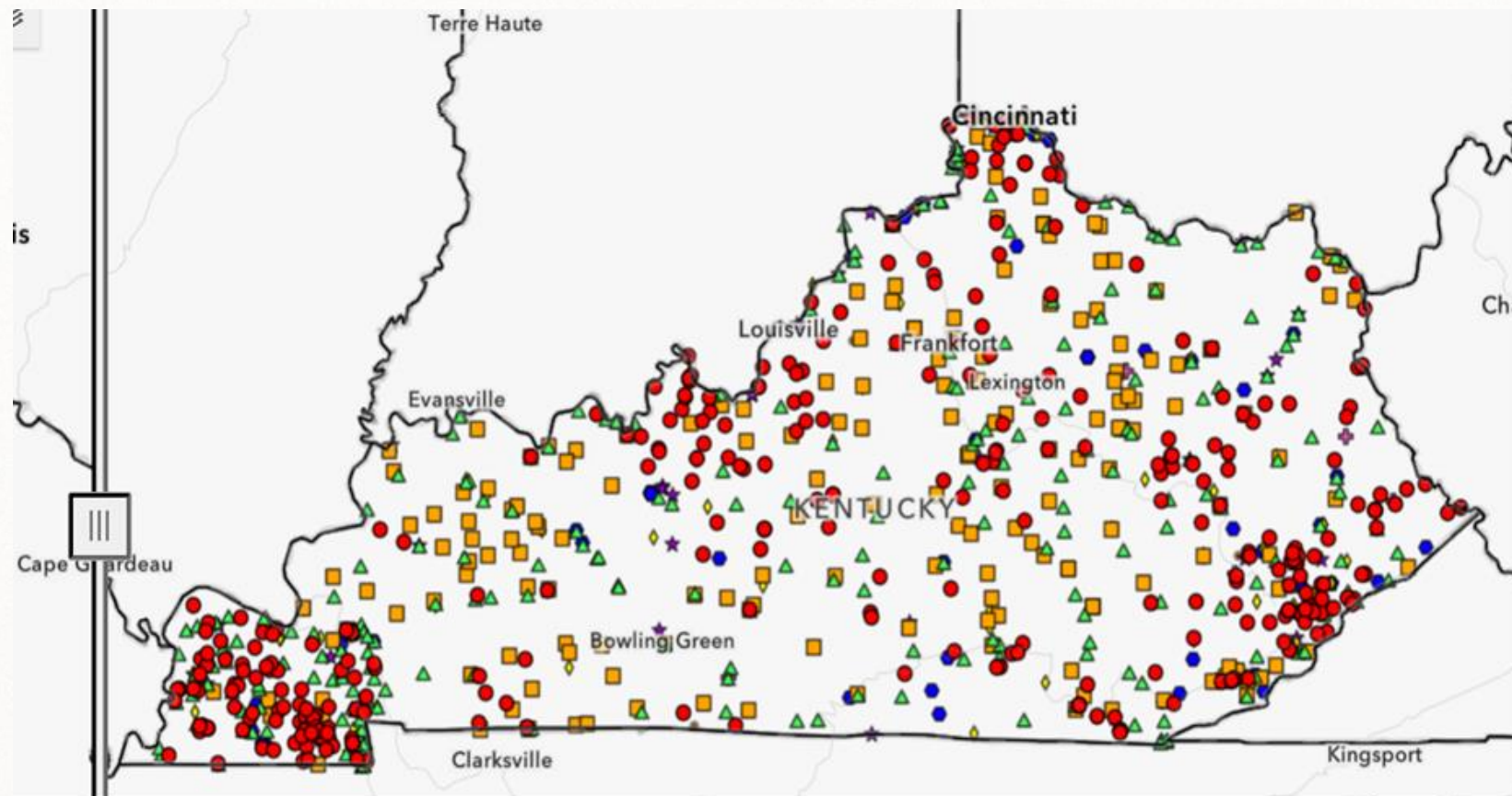
KENTUCKY LEADS THE NATION IN EFFECTIVE REGIONALIZATION

Regionalization:

- Regionalization for drinking water systems includes the consolidation/coordination of two or more water systems to improve planning, operation, and management.
 - This process can involve physical interconnection or administrative arrangements, such as cooperative purchasing and contract operations.
 - Regionalization aims to enhance the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of water systems, allowing them to operate more efficiently and meet compliance with regulations while maintaining affordability for users.
 - Regionalization may create more stable conditions for effective system operator opportunities and succession planning.



KENTUCKY LEADS THE NATION IN EFFECTIVE REGIONALIZATION



Water Systems

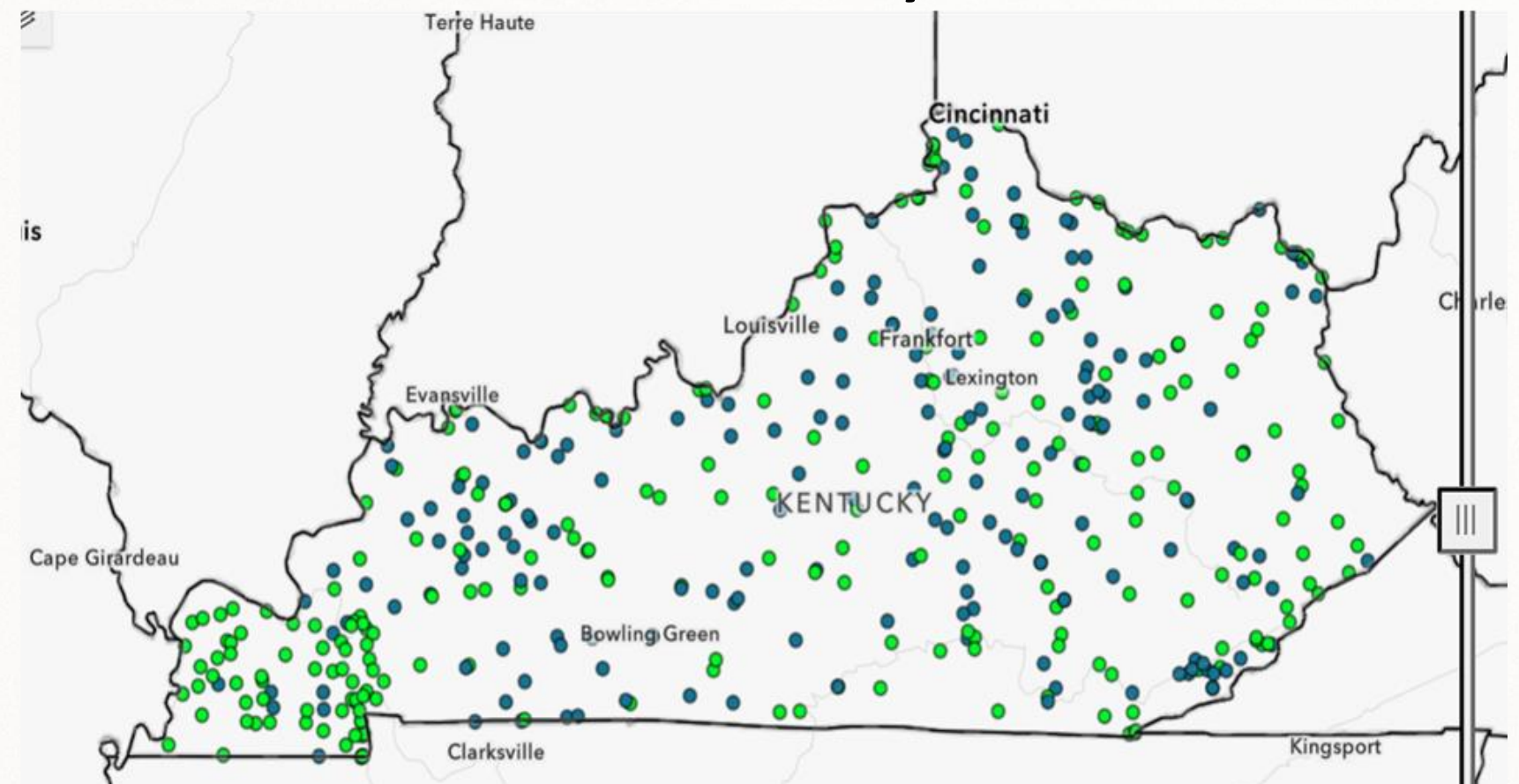
In 2000

950 Public Water Systems

Water Systems

In 2025

427 Public Water Systems



WATER/WASTEWATER OPERATOR TRAINING INFORMATION

- Work with certified training providers to increase training opportunities across the state.
- Provide certification testing to the state's over 5,000 certified operators (water and wastewater).
- Provide continuing education opportunities for license renewal.
- House Bill 40 (2024 General Assembly):
 - Merged drinking water and wastewater certification boards. (Streamlining)
 - Voluntary certification for supervisors
 - Shared services certification program
 - Recruitment and workforce development



DRINKING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS SURVEY AND CLEAN WATER NEEDS SURVEY



Kentucky's Total Need: $\$7,842,900,000 / 20 \text{ years} = \$392,145,000/\text{year}$

Kentucky's Total Need: $\$7,379,379,612 / 20 \text{ years} = \$368,968,980/\text{year}$

Funding:

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law – Additional funding to existing state revolving funds - temporary
- WWATERS - \$75M allocated for FY26, \$750M in applications
- Congressional Earmarks – reduce State Revolving Fund allocations

CHALLENGES

- Lack of Asset Management
 - Asset management planning extends the life of assets through maintenance and funds future replacement
- Aging Infrastructure
- Resiliency
- Aging Water Workforce
 - Due to low pay and high levels responsibility required, the profession is not growing.
- Natural Disasters
 - Tornadoes
 - Floods
 - Severe/Ice storms





DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: FUTURE NEEDS

- ▶ Regulations that protect source water, resulting in cleaner discharges and therefore cleaner drinking water.
- ▶ Water and wastewater infrastructure funding, especially in economically disadvantaged communities. Support continued funding to fix:..... water emergencies.

QUESTIONS?

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