



Who's Looking out for Our Natural Resources... and who's not
Release of Wisconsin's Environmental Scorecard 2003-2004
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Today we are releasing two Legislative Voting Scorecards - one on Conservation Votes and the second on Environmental Votes. These are collaborative projects involving representatives from the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, Clean Wisconsin Action Fund, and the Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter. Together, we collected and compiled information on votes on key issues in the Wisconsin Assembly, Senate, Joint Committee on Finance and the actions of the Governor.

The Conservation and Environmental Scorecards differ in only two ways. The Environmental Scorecard includes two additional polluter responsibility votes on which WLCV did not take a position. As a result, the Environmental Scorecard is based on 15 Assembly and 12 Senate votes. As a result of the additional votes, the summary analysis also differs between the two Scorecards.

For more than 25 years, at the end of each legislative session, Clean Wisconsin Action Fund has presented “The Clean 16” scorecard and awards to Wisconsin’s best environmental legislators. This year marks an increased level of coordination among our three organizations.

Wisconsin has special places in nature that we enjoy from childhood and throughout the rest of our lives. These natural areas belong to all of us, and we need to do more to protect them.

The public overwhelmingly supports existing environmental and public health protections and supports enforcement against bad actors that threaten the quality of our drinking water, pollute the air, and pollute our rivers and lakes. The public wants elected officials, corporations and individuals to take responsibility for their actions.

There is a clear disconnect between this broad, strong public support and the actions of the legislature.

- This Legislature reduced state agency resources (Motions 237 and 576) to inspect facilities and review permits and also approved SB246 to grant automatic permits to businesses when agency staff don't act within a short period of time.
- This Legislature has shown that either it lacks the political will to enforce these laws or that it is indifferent to minimizing preventable harm to natural resources or sending a clear message to scofflaws that they will be inspected.

Naming bills that weaken our clean air and water laws with such deceptive names as “job creation” and “regulatory streamlining,” ironically proves that legislators recognize this fundamental support for protecting the environment. They have to hide their clear intentions to undermine environmental and public health protections and reduce inspection and enforcement of existing laws.

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In this past session, one of the only, but very important environmental victories came about relatively quickly. In a rare bi-partisan effort, the legislature passed the Groundwater Quantity Protection Act which Governor Doyle signed into law. This law will prevent overuse of groundwater in our state. The Groundwater Quantity Protection Act represents an endangered species in Wisconsin --- good environmental policy.

Through special reports like the Environmental Scorecard, the Sierra Club and Clean Wisconsin Action Fund, working with conservation groups, will make public the record of elected officials on enforcing our laws and protecting our clean air and water and cherished special places.

We hope our members and the public will use this Environmental Scorecard to hold elected officials accountable and judge their commitment to the environmental issues. We urge the public to use the information in the scorecard to contact their legislators to thank them for their pro-environmental votes and to “call them on the carpet” for anti-environmental votes.

Our organizations’ believe that informed members and the public will participate in policy debates and hold decision makers accountable concerning clean air, clean water and our cherished recreational and wild lands. Wisconsin’s strong non-partisan conservation and environmental heritage can be revived. And the public will benefit from a clean environment for many generations to come.

Summary of WI’s Environmental Scorecard 2003-2004

- The average score in the Senate was only 38.18 percent in 2003-2004.
- The average score in the Assembly was only 40.15 percent in 2003-2004.
- Of the 33 members of Wisconsin’s Senate, only three^{1 2} voted to protect clean air, clean water and open spaces 100 percent of the time.
- Of the 99 members of Wisconsin’s Assembly, only eight³ voted to protect clean air, clean water and open spaces 100 percent of the time.
- In the Senate, 12⁴ members received scores over 75 percent.
- In the Assembly, 26⁵ members received scores over 75 percent.
- Only one member of the Senate and Assembly, Senator Robert Welch, voted against the environment every time and received a 0 percent on the scorecard.

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To view the Wisconsin’s Environmental Scorecard 2003-2004 on-line and to learn more about our organizations, please visit www.cwactionfund.org and <http://wisconsin.sierraclub.org>

¹ Senator Gary George was not counted in this score because he only voted on two scored votes while serving in office in 2003.

² Senators Carpenter, Chvala and Risser scored 100%.

³ Representatives Berceau, Black, Cullen, Krug, Miller, Pocan, Richards and Williams scored 100%.

⁴ Spencer Coggs served in both the Assembly and the Senate. He is scored only in the Senate. Senators Lassa and Plale also served in the Assembly where they voted pro-environment on one bill before moving to the Senate. They are scored only in the Senate.

⁵ Representatives Honadel, Molepski and Toles were elected during the session and are scored in the Assembly.