

Rep. Shankland: Statement on Republican Groundwater Bill

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MADISON – Representative Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) released the following statement today in response to the introduction of Senate Bill 76, relating to high-capacity well withdrawals.

“Like the Republican groundwater bill last session, this bill appears to grant a permanent permit for water use to some high-capacity well owners at the expense of others’ water usage. This bill does not seem to allow the DNR to periodically review the impacts of high-capacity well withdrawals.

“I’m also very concerned by the study that the bill authors are proposing, which singles out navigable waters like lakes, rivers, and streams but completely ignores the impact of high-capacity well withdrawals on actual groundwater levels. While our lakes and streams are of grave concern, any private well owner whose well has run dry will tell you that there is much more at stake. It is the legislature’s duty to protect all waters of our state, not pick winners and losers.

“Due to an Attorney General opinion that was requested by Republican legislators, the DNR is no longer exercising its constitutional responsibility to fully protect our water resources. The DNR is failing to take into account the cumulative impact of water usage when permitting high-capacity wells, and this bill exacerbates the problem. Without granting the DNR the authority to consider cumulative impact and conduct period reviews, this bill does little to protect our precious water resources.”