

Rep. Spreitzer: Votes against wetlands rollback

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On Thursday, State Representative Mark Spreitzer voted against Assembly Bill 547, legislation that would roll back major provisions that protect Wisconsin's wetlands. AB 547, better known as the Wetlands Bill, would leave many of the state's wetlands at risk of being filled for development and destroyed. Despite efforts by Assembly Democrats, the bill passed 58 to 39 and now awaits action from the Wisconsin State Senate. Representative Spreitzer spoke on the Assembly floor to call attention to the Wetlands Bill and the adverse impact it could have on the area he represents.

"Assembly Republicans just voted to support a bill that deals a serious blow to Wisconsin wetlands protections," said Representative Spreitzer. "Its language leaves many concerns about just how much this bill could negatively affect the places we turn to for hunting, fishing, and countless other recreational activities."

Data from the National Wetlands Inventory suggests that AB 547 would leave approximately 300,000 acres of state wetlands on agricultural land at risk of being destroyed and put up to 100,000 acres of mapped, identified state wetlands in urban areas in a similar fate. More specifically, Clean Wisconsin indicates 397 acres of nonfederal urban wetlands in Rock County and 133 acres in Green County would suddenly be at risk of being filled and destroyed under AB 547. These numbers are based on known, mapped wetlands and suggest the total acreage of impacted wetlands is even higher.

Wisconsin's wetlands clean our water by filtering out harmful pollutants and help store water that can prevent communities from being flooded. In fact, the US

Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 1 acre of wetlands can store up to 1 to 1.5 million gallons of floodwaters—providing a vital buffer for communities that experience heavy rains.

Wetlands are an important part of Wisconsin's natural resources. Not only do they provide a habitat for a variety of species and waterfowl, but they offer a place to recreate and enjoy the outdoors. By allowing certain wetlands to be filled, many local ecosystems—along with hunting and fishing opportunities—could soon be destroyed.