

WI Land+Water: Applauds unanimous adoption of NR 151 revisions by the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board

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CONTACT: Elliot Meyer
Communications & Media Specialist
(608) 441-2677 ex. 8
elliott@wisconsinlandwater.org

MADISON – Wisconsin’s Natural Resources Board unanimously approved new rules today to increase groundwater protection across 15 counties in eastern Wisconsin. In a collective effort to cut down on manure and pathogens in drinking water, the revisions will place restrictions on manure spreading above the fractured limestone (karst) in the region. The Board heard riveting and uniformed support for increased groundwater protections from multiple organizations, including public and private-sector groups, as well as from individual landowners and citizens.

“I have never seen such full-throated support for environmental protections as I saw today from Wisconsin agriculture, including farmers, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, Wisconsin Pork Producers, and the Wisconsin Association of Professional Agriculture Consultants,” said Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director of Wisconsin Land+Water. VandenBrook provided comments to the Natural Resources Board in support of the rule revisions, which the Board adopted on a unanimous roll-call vote.

During the meeting, the Board questioned the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about how the new rules will be implemented. Mary Anne Lowndes, DNR Runoff Section Chief, responded that County Land Conservation staff would work

with farmers and landowners to adopt the new standards once they are promulgated, hopefully within a three to four month time frame. When asked if County Land Conservation offices had the resources to get the job done, in short, Mary Anne Lowndes definitively stated that the County Land Conservation Departments do not currently have adequate funding to implement the standards.

Following this testimony, the Natural Resources Board directed staff to outline a timeline for rule promulgation and implementation. The Board wanted to know when well owners in the targeted area might expect the protections to be in place. Specifically, a plan was requested for monitoring the rule's adoption by farmers and actual monitoring results of groundwater quality.

“This is a great first step, but all of agriculture will have to get behind these new standards and help the farmers affected by the rules to embrace them,” added Executive Director Jim Vandenbrook. “County Land Conservation staff and supervisors will be eager to work with their farmers to get the job done.”

Wisconsin Land+Water is a nonprofit organization that supports the local and statewide efforts of 450 Land Conservation Committee (LCC) supervisors and over 350 land conservation staff in 72 Land Conservation Departments (LCD) across Wisconsin. It is our mission to support the county LCCs and LCDs that help landowners and users meet their objectives, while protecting our common economic and environmental infrastructure - land and water resources.