

Clean Wisconsin: Needed protections from nitrate pollution clear first hurdle

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MADISON, WI — Clean Wisconsin applauds the Natural Resources Board for voting to start the process to develop new rules to reduce nitrate pollution from farm fields on Tuesday. This vote—the first major hurdle in creating new rules—was an important step for protecting rural drinking water across the state.

“We’re pleased the Natural Resources Board allowed the process for developing these important rules to move forward,” said Scott Laeser, Water Program Director at Clean Wisconsin. “With tens of thousands of Wisconsin residents struggling with nitrate pollution in their private wells, today’s vote showed the Natural Resources Board understands the severity of this issue and are willing to continue the process of developing these rules.”

Nitrate pollution in drinking water poses serious health risks. Blue baby syndrome and central nervous system birth defects are potentially fatal risks of exposure to nitrates for fetuses or young children. For adults, an increased risk of thyroid disease and colorectal cancer has been associated with high nitrate exposure. Clean Wisconsin has been a vocal advocate for actions to reduce nitrate pollution in vulnerable areas of the state.

Studies conducted by researchers at the University of Wisconsin and other

institutions have found that 90% of nitrate pollution in Wisconsin comes from agricultural sources, such as manure and commercial fertilizer.

“Nitrate pollution in rural drinking water is a an urgent public health concern, and we can’t delay our efforts to address this problem” said Laeser. “The vote today allows state officials to develop rules to reduce nitrate pollution in our wells and offers hope for a future where safe drinking water flows into homes that don’t have it today.”

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