

Gov. Evers: Announces additional water quality initiatives

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State Will Evaluate Water Safety in Southwest Wisconsin, Allocate \$2 Million for Well Compensation Grant Program

MADISON – Governor Tony Evers today announced two additional water quality initiatives that will expand upon the administration’s work to make 2019 the Year of Clean Drinking Water in Wisconsin.

The governor’s budget proposal will allocate \$2 million in funding for the Well Compensation Grant Program, an increase of \$1.6 million in investment in this critical program which provides funding to eligible landowners or renters to replace, reconstruct or treat contaminated private water supplies that serve a residence or provide water to livestock. The most contaminated wells will be prioritized to receive funding.

The program would also bring eligibility for the program in line with federal standards for unsafe contamination levels for arsenic and nitrates.

In addition, the governor’s proposal will provide a new economic hardship cost share option for families that make less than the median income. Under this option, the Department of Natural Resources would pay 100 percent of costs up to \$16,000, with the owner of the well only paying the \$250 deductible.

“Contaminated water poses harm to rural and urban residents, impacting public drinking water systems, private wells, schools, daycares, and businesses. A scientific approach is critical to first understand the breadth of Wisconsin’s water quality problem, and how it impacts different communities so that we can

successfully implement the best solutions,” said Gov. Evers. “I am committed to connecting the dots on this important issue as we make investments that will improve water quality for folks all over Wisconsin.”

The governor has also directed the Department of Natural Resources to spend \$75,000 in this biennium for the Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater and Geology study (SWIGG), a broad survey that will evaluate the safety of drinking water in Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette Counties.

The county land conservation departments from the three counties are funding a portion of the study which is being conducted by the UW Extension and researchers from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, the US Geological Survey, and the US Department of Agriculture. The first sample of tests from the study is already showing that 42 percent of 301 wells tested in the three counties did not meet standards for bacteria or nitrates.

Last year, a separate study in Wood and Juneau counties found 42 percent of the 104 wells tested exceeded the standard for nitrates. Because of these clear and well-documented issues, the governor chose to fund additional study work on wells to determine the extent of contamination throughout the state.