

# Novak, Shankland confident water quality bills will pass Assembly

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Two legislators who led a bipartisan water quality task force say their proposed legislation will pass the Assembly but stopped short of promising the 13 bills will become law this session.

Reps. Todd Novak, R-Dodgeville, and Katrina Shankland, D-Stevens Point, while hopeful, suggested yesterday passage in the Senate remains uncertain. The two chaired the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality.

"These bills will hit the Assembly floor, and I have no doubt they'll pass," Novak said today at the Wisconsin Water Alliance's event in Madison.

Their fate in the Republican-run Senate? Unclear.

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"We've been talking to many senators who are not on the task force," Shankland said. "On my side, colleagues want to see more water strategies for prevention and investment, but these are a great start."

Novak believes the new revenue estimates might help the bills pass through the Senate by giving them more leverage.

"Senators are concerned with finances," said Novak, adding the bills' \$10 million price tag is modest compared to the possible half-billion surplus projected to be available.

Novak is hopeful that the Senate will work in his favor so that they can "start working on the bills for the next session."

Shankland says the task force has a long-term mission as well.

She noted that some ideas didn't make it into the task force report. One of the ideas she is promoting is a state clean water fund. The Stevens Point Dem recently proposed a separate measure to do that. The measure would start with a \$10 million GPR appropriation and a new committee.

Novak mentioned that a clean water fund might help the state deal with water quality issues long term.

"We're still working that out," said Novak when asked whether the water fund would be funded by a tax, a fee or an appropriation. He noted Minnesota has sales tax proceeds dedicated to a water fund, but stressed that was not something that would be embraced by Republicans.

"Using GPR is a model that Wisconsin could look at," added Shankland, noting that Ohio's Republican Legislature segregated part of its general purpose revenue for clean water.

"We could be taking GPR from somewhere to dedicate it to the clean water fund," Novak said. "I think both of us would have liked to come out with that in this package — it's just a very complex issue."

Shankland argued that existing federal funding is for cleanup and rapid response. A state clean water fund would be for proactive projects and preventative strategies.

Read the full task force report:

<http://www.waterqualitywi.com>

See WisconsinEye video:

<https://wiseye.org/2020/01/29/the-wisconsin-water-alliance--a-water-panel-on-wisconsin-water-issues/>