

Sen. Cowles: Applauds Green Bay's final lead lateral removal

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GREEN BAY- Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after attending a ceremony for Green Bay Water Utility's final lead lateral removal from the City's water infrastructure:

"Once upon a time, using lead water infrastructure wasn't only common practice, it was the recommended choice across the US. We now know better, but addressing decades-worth of lead infrastructure now poses large and costly challenges for communities throughout the state and country. When I received an invitation to attend the final lead lateral removal in Green Bay, I was elated to learn that Green Bay's nearly five-year-long mission to rid their City's water infrastructure of lead was coming to a close. Residents should be pleased with the continued efforts by their local officials to ensure that Green Bay is one of the first cities in the state to complete efforts that tackle the community health issue of lead-laden water.

"Not only did Green Bay Water complete the replacement of over 1,700 utility-owned and nearly 250 privately-owned lead laterals in a bold timeframe, but they exemplified the innovative thinking that's needed to rid other Wisconsin communities of lead water infrastructure. I was pleased to be a partner in their efforts by authoring legislation to give communities a tool to fund lead lateral replacement with utility dollars, known as the Leading on Lead Act (2017 Act 137), and return excess stadium tax collections to local governments in Brown County (2015 Act 114), some of which was used by Green Bay to replace private-side lead service lines.

“Today’s milestone should be a source of pride for all Green Bay residents, as cleaner drinking water today will lead to a healthier community tomorrow. I want to thank Nancy Quirk and her entire team at Green Bay Water, along with the Common Council, for making a lead water infrastructure-free Green Bay possible.”

The Leading on Lead Act provides an innovative funding mechanism to address the problem of lead-laden water by allowing municipal governments to pass an ordinance that asks the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin for the authority to use ratepayer dollars for a low or no-interest loan or an up to 50% grant for property owners to replace private lead service lines, also known as laterals. Green Bay is one of eight communities that have pursued the Leading on Lead Act to assist with funding their lead lateral replacement. The seven other communities that have been approved or are actively seeking approval for Leading on Lead Act plans include Fond du Lac, Kaukauna, Kenosha, Manitowoc, Menasha, Sheboygan, and Sun Prairie.