

Sen. Jacque: Clean Water Bill Clears Senate

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Contact: Senator André Jacque
(608) 266-3512

Measure is third installment of Northeast Wisconsin lawmaker's clean water agenda

MADISON, WI... Bipartisan legislation expanding and eliminating backlogs in the grant program that helps cover the costs of repairing or replacing failing private wells for lower income households passed the State Senate 29-4 today, encouraging greater participation in addressing failing septic systems and strategies that protect our groundwater.

State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), author of the legislation, said the measure marks the third installment of his clean water agenda passed by the Senate so far this year.

“Wisconsin residents, employers and farmers want to protect our water because they know it’s the right thing to do, and that their livelihoods depend on it,” Sen. Jacque said. “State government needs to remove as many barriers as possible and promote these efforts.”

The Private On-site Wastewater Treatment System (POWTS, [Senate Bill 84](#))

This grant program, also referred to as the Wisconsin Fund, provides financial assistance to eligible owners of a principal residence and small commercial establishments by covering a portion of the cost of repairing or replacing failing POWTS. The program is designed to reimburse, on average, 60% of the cost of replacement or remediation, and has been used extensively throughout our state. The measure extends the sunset date of the grant program and provides additional

program support for processing the existing backlog of applications.

“Remediation or replacement often costs thousands of dollars, which presents a real burden for a low income household and leads to the continued existence of environmental threats,” Sen. Jacque said. The issue was frequently discussed last session throughout meetings of the legislative Clean Water Task Force of which Sen. Jacque was a member. “Throughout Northeast Wisconsin and the entire state, these failing septic systems are contaminating our groundwater, and this bill is a critical step toward cleaner water,” added Sen. Jacque.

The POWTS bill joins two other clean water initiatives authored by Sen. Jacque which passed the State Senate with unanimous voice votes earlier this session:

Environmental Compliance Audit Program ([“Enviro-Check,” Senate Bill 151](#))

Sen. Jacque said this common sense legislation removes disincentives associated with Wisconsin’s Environmental Compliance Audit Program compared to a similar program offered through the federal Environmental Protection Agency. It was formally requested and unanimously supported by the bi-partisan appointees of the Wisconsin Department of Natural (DNR) Resources Small Business Environmental Council (SBEC), with language suggested by the DNR.

“With different timelines, deadlines, and procedures to follow in order to use the Wisconsin audit program and one of EPA’s audit policies, companies may avoid using whichever program seems less advantageous,” Sen. Jacque said. “With more uniformity, the programs can be used simultaneously and offer greater advantage to employers to proactively investigate their processes and operational impact while protecting the environment.

Manure Composting ([Senate Bill 113](#))

Sen. Jacque said that, while composting is one of the more promising approaches for Wisconsin dairy farms to avoid excessive spreading and reduce runoff into our waters, current state requirements make organic products

of composting, for which there is a market demand, unsaleable in Wisconsin. The bill makes a number of reasonable changes to these requirements, thereby removing an obstacle to the economic viability of manure composting.

“Marketing manure can be a beneficial, low-risk way for livestock producers to

manage animal waste on their farms while incorporating a value-added product into their overall business plan,” Sen. Jacque said. “The opportunity to sell a waste product and recoup an economic benefit while protecting the environment is a win-win outcome this legislation will help to create.”