

River Alliance of Wisconsin: Announces Eau Claire and La Crosse county voters will vote for “clean water now”

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Advisory referendum question will be on spring election ballots

WISCONSIN — Clean water advisory referendums will be added to voters' ballots in Eau Claire and La Crosse counties in the 2022 spring elections.

An advisory referendum question will give voters a chance to express their support for more action by local and state governments to protect drinking water, rivers, and lakes. The question will read: “Should the State of Wisconsin establish a right to clean water to protect human health, the environment, and the diverse cultural and natural heritage of Wisconsin?”

“La Crosse County has ongoing water quality issues, with PFAS and nitrates in drinking water as the most urgent,” said Pat Wilson, a longtime defender of La Crosse’s water and bluffs. “This is a timely opportunity to tell the state legislature that La Crosse County residents care about clean water and the state needs to take action to preserve this resource that Wisconsin is known for.”

Wisconsinites raised concerns about the urgency of protecting our water during the Speaker's Water Quality Task Force hearings in 2019, but the proposals from the task force fell short and the legislature has not taken meaningful or urgent action on task force recommendations.

“(The proposal) was passed unanimously by the Groundwater Advisory, Parks and Forest, and Administration Committees,” said Eau Claire County District 10 Supervisor Nancy Coffey. “Passing this county resolution will show elected officials and stakeholders that clean water must be addressed.”

“In addition to these opportunities for voters in La Crosse and Eau Claire to directly express their support for clean water, leaders in Vernon and Monroe counties are also writing resolutions about what they need to protect their water resources,” said River Alliance of Wisconsin Water Advocates Organizer Johnson Bridgwater.

In the spring 2021 elections, Clean Water Now questions had a strong, bipartisan success in central Wisconsin. Voters in Marquette County (73%), Portage County (77%) and Wood County (76%) approved referendums. It's clear that clean water is important to Wisconsinites, regardless of political party.