

Sen. Cowles: Bills on clean water pass Senate

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after two bills he authored relating to clean water were passed by the State Senate during today's floor period.

The first bill, [2021 Senate Bill 664](#), uses \$5.6 million in authorized but unobligated Stewardship funding from a prior fiscal year to provide the funding necessary to complete all the remaining high and medium priority backlogged water infrastructure projects in our State Parks System, impacting 36 properties across 30 counties.

The legislation now heads to the Assembly where the companion to SB 664, Assembly Bill 693, awaits a hearing.

“Anyone who visits the Wisconsin State Park System knows that these are special and scenic places. But despite the enjoyment from some of our state's best opportunities for outdoor recreation, dilapidated infrastructure can create a lasting impression of our State Parks System that can be hard to break. Unfortunately, with hundreds, if not thousands of backlogged projects, there's far too many opportunities for these impressions to be made.

“Senate Bill 664 can help to prevent those impressions by replacing millions of dollars' worth of decades-old infrastructure that is at the highest risk of failure. By making these investments, we can improve visitor experiences, promote parks-based tourism which has positive economic impacts throughout our communities, and protect the health and safety of millions of State Park System visitors for

decades to come.”

The second bill, [2021 Senate Bill 678](#), makes a series of targeted changes to address nitrate leaching and runoff and water quality concerns from nitrates, ensuring that more farmers can receive assistance to implement new practices and that more low-income residents can receive assistance to address polluted wells. The legislation now heads to the Assembly where the companion to SB 678, Assembly Bill 728, awaits a committee vote.

“Clean waterbodies are as much a part of the foundation of our great state as agriculture. For decades, farmers have been a substantial part of efforts to maintain and improve water quality throughout the state. But with tight margins on many farms and constantly evolving knowledge about the best land practices to protect ground and surface water resources, Wisconsin’s rural residents and agricultural producers are asking for partners to grow their ongoing efforts and begin new initiatives that promote clean water.

“Senate Bill 678 helps farmers implement new land and water conservation strategies to store more nutrients in soil and prevent pollutant leaching and runoff, help rural low-income homeowners replace contaminated wells, and provide more opportunities for farmers to lead the solutions of tomorrow. No single approach can solve our water pollution problems, but concerted efforts such as these can make a noticeable impact for the state’s agricultural producers, rural residents, and those who enjoy recreating on Wisconsin waters.”