

Sen. Cowles, Rep. Kitchens: Applaud signing of water quality clearinghouse contract

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MADISON– Wisconsin’s water quality will improve thanks to an improved coordination process between businesses and farmers. The new program is thanks to bipartisan legislation by Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) and Representative Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay). Now instead of spending millions of dollars to make a minuscule impact on water quality, companies can contract with local farmers to make a much bigger impact on water quality.

“Not all water pollution can be traced back to a single cause. The water quality credit program allows companies to work together with farmers to improve water quality. Our bill creates a third-party clearinghouse to help facilitate water quality trades,” Kitchens said, “With these new rules in place, these partnerships can concentrate on making our water safer.”

This week, the Department of Administration (DOA), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Resource Environmental Solutions, LLC (RES) signed a contract for RES to operate the water quality credit trading clearinghouse created by [2019 Wisconsin Act 151](#), authored by Senator Cowles and Representative Kitchens.

“I’m incredibly pleased to see that we now have signatures on the operator’s contact for the establishment of the nation’s first statewide water quality credit trading clearinghouse,” Cowles said. “While it’s taken a while to reach this point, Wisconsinites will soon be able to capitalize on the positive outcomes the clearinghouse will provide, including more economical wastewater permit compliance and cleaner water bodies.”

After one final administrative step, Wisconsin will launch the statewide water quality credit trading clearinghouse. Point-source dischargers (i.e. wastewater treatment plants, dairy, and food processing facilities, paper factories, etc.) may provide payment to the clearinghouse which flows to a nonpoint source (i.e. agricultural runoff, urban runoff, etc.) to reduce a greater amount of the same pollutant in the same watershed (at least 1.2 pounds removed for every 1.0 pound of permit flexibility).

When signed into law on March 3rd, 2020, Act 151 had the co-authorship or co-sponsorship of more than 50 legislators from both sides of the aisle, received no votes against the bill in either committee or on the Senate or Assembly floors, and had earned support from 35 different lobbying principals, including agricultural, business, municipal, and environmental stakeholders.