

Sen. Jacque: Freshwater protection legislation clears committee

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MADISON, WI... Legislation providing voluntary incentives and strategies for reducing the impacts of road salt on Wisconsin's lakes, streams and drinking water overwhelmingly passed an Assembly committee yesterday.

State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), co-author of the proposal with State Rep. Elijah Behnke, said there has been increasing concern for the growing impact of road salt accumulating in our precious freshwater, given how easily elevated salt levels can be toxic to a freshwater ecosystem.

"While many of us are trying hard to forget last winter, we still need to remember that more is not always better when it comes to the application of road salt," Sen. Jacque said. "This bill promotes training on best practices that help keep both our roads and our waters safe."

Sen. Jacque's proposal also provides a voluntary pathway to limited liability for de-icing applicators who attain certification through state-endorsed training, policies adopted by the state of New Hampshire in 2013, followed by Illinois and Colorado. Minnesota also has a state certification program and has proposed similar liability protections in recent legislative sessions.

"Snow removal and ice prevention impose significant costs to taxpayers and public safety," Sen. Jacque said. "Adopting best management practices is a great option to save money while protecting public safety and conserving our vital freshwater resource and drinking water for the entire Great Lakes Basin and our lakes, fisheries and tourism.

For example, Sen. Jacque said the City of De Pere has researched and invested in

brine for anti-icing and de-icing, including custom mixes for individual weather events, and has seen a 35% reduction to their annual salt budget. Also, anti-icing De Pere's primary roads before smaller events saves the City thousands in labor and fuel in avoided dispatching of salt trucks altogether.

"Business owners could also minimize their cumulative impact on the environment by hiring commercial applicators with current certification in de-icer training," Sen. Jacque said. "Implementing best practices and maintaining records of their work would give applicators limited liability from slip and fall lawsuits, as would the businesses that hire them."

Under Sen. Jacque's bill ([Assembly Bill 61](#)), the state would establish criteria for the training and maintain a list of acceptable trainings, as well as certified commercial applicators, without collecting any new state fees.

"This legislation was developed through extensive consultation with the DNR and Wisconsin Salt Wise, a coalition of organizations from across Wisconsin," Sen. Jacque said. "We all know our freshwater is a selling point for our communities, and we need to keep it that way."