



Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network

Wisconsin Environmental Health Network

DNR Livestock Waste Management Rules Show Progress

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MADISON, WI – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources [announced](#) that its revised rules on livestock waste and runoff management will go into effect on July 1, 2018. Citizens and environmental groups worked for many years to pressure the state Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to put public health first in its regulation of livestock waste management. This rule represents modest improvements to protect families' drinking water wells from contamination, but more needs to be done to protect drinking water.

"The drinking water quality crisis demands significant change in agricultural practices and groundwater protection," said Midwest Environmental Advocates staff attorney Sarah Geers. "We hope that DNR will work with local land and water departments to ensure that this rule is implemented as quickly and effectively as possible. This rule represents incremental change in the right direction, but more is needed."

Some of the most promising changes include:

- prohibition on mechanical applications of manure on fields that have less than two feet of soil over bedrock or groundwater;
- prohibition on mechanical applications of manure on frozen or snow-covered ground on fields with less than five feet of soil over bedrock; and
- requirement that manure applications leave a 250-foot setback from drinking water wells.

However, given the public health threat from drinking water contamination, we need DNR to do more. This rule applies to both large and small farmers, but we should be asking more of large, industrial concentrated animal feeding operations. We need them to do more in areas like Kewaunee County that are very vulnerable to groundwater pollution and that already have so many cows and too much manure.

Additionally, we are disappointed that DNR declined to apply these modest protections to other areas of the state, such as southwest Wisconsin and the central sands region, which are equally susceptible to groundwater contamination as the area covered by the rule. "DNR needs to comprehensively monitor water quality to measure for effectiveness of these rule changes and also study well contamination in central, southern and southwestern Wisconsin," said River Alliance of Wisconsin executive director Raj Shukla. "For DNR to delay action until widespread contamination causes another public health crisis is both unwise and irresponsible."

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest organization that uses the power of the law to support communities fighting for environmental accountability. Learn more about the Midwest Environmental



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Advocates on the web at midwestadvocates.org, like MEA on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/midwestadvocates) or follow @MidwestAdvocate on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/MidwestAdvocate).

About River Alliance of Wisconsin

Formed in 1993, River Alliance of Wisconsin is a statewide non-profit, non-partisan citizen advocacy organization that empowers people to protect and restore Wisconsin waters. The organization's membership includes more than 2,500 individuals and businesses and more than 80 local watershed groups - one of the largest memberships of statewide water groups in the country. For more information, visit: www.wisconsinrivers.org

Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to preserving the environment while maintaining the health and economic vitality of rural communities. For more information, visit: <https://sustainruralwisconsin.org/>

The Wisconsin Environmental Health Network is a group of healthcare professionals partnered with local environmental advocates, and conservationists working to inform healthcare professionals, the public, and policy makers about the effects of environmental toxins on public health. For more information, visit <https://www.wehnonline.org/>

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