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For Immediate Release  
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**WCA Commends Bi-Partisan Work of Speaker's Task Force  
on Water Quality**  
*Report Puts Forth \$10 Million Investment*

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) is commending the bi-partisan work of the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality, which released its findings on January 8, 2020.

Representative Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville), who chaired the task force, and Representative Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point), who served as co-chair, held 14 hearings around the state on the issue of water quality, meeting with everyone from farmers to academics to sportsmen to conservationists to identify the critical issues.

"We commend the work of Representative Novak and Shankland, as well as all task force members, for their incredibly in-depth look into this very important topic," said WCA Executive Director Mark D. O'Connell. "They met with a wide array of stakeholders in every corner of Wisconsin. This truly was a bi-partisan effort and we look forward to continuing our work with the task force and the full legislature to put in place sensible and workable solutions."

The Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality was comprised of 16 members of both the Wisconsin State Assembly and Senate, which has crafted a package of bills to recommend to the full legislature. Their proposal puts forth a \$10 million investment in water quality. Highlights of the package impacting Wisconsin's 72 counties includes:

**Increased Funding for the County Conservation Staffing and Cost-Sharing Grant Program**

The 2019-21 Biennial Budget Act appropriated a total of \$9,439,100 in each year in the 2019-21 biennium for the program. Enactment of the bill draft will result in a total of \$12.4 million for county conservation staff in fiscal year 2020-21. This is an increase in base funding of \$2,960,900.

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**Groundwater Testing, Mapping, and Educational Outreach**

The bill draft directs the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to administer a grant program to provide two types of grants to counties:

- Grants of up to \$10,000 for countywide groundwater testing of private wells to assess groundwater quality. In addition, \$10,000 per county for the purpose of conducting countywide testing of privately owned wells to assess groundwater quality and to determine the extent and type of any contamination and studying geologic characteristics and well construction practices in the county, including depth to bedrock and well age, to determine any correlation between water quality, geology, and well construction.
- For counties that have already completed such a study, grants of up to \$2,500 to notify the public of the study results and notify affected well owners. Under the proposal, the DNR must seek to make a grant available to every county that applies.

**Wisconsin Fund for Septic Systems**

The task force recommends LRB-4304/1, which delays the sunset for the Wisconsin Fund program until June 30, 2023. Under current law, the sunset would take place on June 30, 2021.

The proposal would also require the Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) to prepare literature describing the eligibility for a residence to receive a grant and to distribute this literature to counties. Counties are then required to distribute the literature to recipients of public benefits.

The Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality members included Representatives Joel Kitchens, R-Sturgeon Bay; Mary Felzkowski, R-Irma; Rob Summerfield, R-Bloomer; Rob Brooks, R-Saukville; Scott Krug, R-Rome; Travis Tranel, R-Cuba City; Timothy Ramthun, R-Campbellsport; Tony Kurtz, R-Wonewoc; Staush Gruszynski, D-Green Bay; Sody Pope, D-Mt. Horeb; and Senators Pat Testin, R-Stevens Point; Rob Cowles, R-Green Bay; Andre Jacque, R-DePere; Mark Miller, D-Monona

For more information on the work of the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality, visit [waterqualitywi.com](http://waterqualitywi.com).

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