

August 12, 2020

NEWS RELEASE:
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information:
Contact: Senator Robert Cowles ~ (608) 266-0484

Cowles Applauds a Milestone for Northeast Wisconsin *Completion of Fox River PCB Cleanup Decades in the Making*

GREEN BAY— Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after joining United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler in Green Bay for the announcement of the completion of the PCB cleanup on the Fox River:

“I’ve seen first-hand how this milestone has been decades in the making. The impact of the completion of this cleanup may not be fully recognized now, but will certainly be felt by everyone in the region for years to come. The completion of the PCB cleanup, a 16-year, \$1 billion effort funded by the entities that contributed to the pollution, means cleaner waters and a healthier fishery, which will lead to a stronger community and an emerging economy.

“Long-time Green Bay area residents have become accustomed to the regular sights of dredging barges, the realization that you shouldn’t swim in or eat fish from the river, and the blighted views from the run-down and abandoned buildings that peppered the shoreline. Thanks to the efforts from EPA and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff during numerous administrations and the responsibility taken by those that contributed to the pollution, they have now successfully completed the largest PCB cleanup in the world. We’re already seeing signs of progress as the Fox River is now an asset, not a drawback, for our region.

“The Fox River and lower bay are increasingly a desired destination for tourism and fishing for those in the Midwest and beyond, businesses are choosing the shoreline for planned developments, and residents are seeing the waterways as the recreation hub that we once remember and have long since desired again. While we should take a moment to reflect on the progress that’s been made to bring us to this point, we must also prepare for the challenges ahead.

“Not only do we need to continue making progress on removing the remaining Beneficial Use Impairments and working towards the eventual delisting of the Area of Concern status, but we must address the high nutrient levels that degrade water quality and find ways to lessen the impacts of flooding events. I’ve proudly authored efforts to find innovative solutions to these problems, but no single policy can address either of these complex issues entirely.

“While there will always be new challenges, as a community we have shown how collaborative problem solving can lead to amazing outcomes. Water quality is not defined in ‘terms’ or ‘appointments’, or by

'administrations', as degradation or rehabilitation does not take place in two, four, or six-year increments. It takes involvement from everyone, throughout many years, to work together and address an issue we can all agree on – clean water. Today we celebrate clean water and a worldwide accomplishment together. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for the hard work that's been done to create a cleaner and healthier environment and will help to ensure a stronger community and economy for decades to come.'

###