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## A Smarter Approach to Flooding Signed into Law

MADISON— Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after a bill he authored with Representatives Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua) and Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna) and Senator Janet Bewley (D-Mason), 2021 Senate Bill 91, was signed into law today as 2021 Wisconsin Act 77:

*“Better preparation for flooding events today can help to prevent millions of dollars in damages and hardship for hundreds, if not thousands of residents, businesses and farmers tomorrow. By restoring natural stream hydrology, we not only can reduce flooding impacts, but we’ll yield numerous other benefits such as better habitat for wildlife, stabilized groundwater tables, reduced pollutant runoff, and more. Act 77 simply ensures that, as a state, we’re promoting preparedness through conservation while still ensuring that each project is in the best interest of property owners, our communities, and our environment.”*

Under current law, those looking to engage in a hydrologic restoration project would typically have to obtain numerous permits, meaning more time, paperwork, fees, and uncertainty. Act 77 requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to create a general permit that authorizes wetland, stream, and floodplain restoration and management activities that will result in a net benefit to hydrologic connections, conditions, and functions. Good actors looking to apply to complete a voluntary hydrologic restoration project must design the project to return hydrology to a natural and self-regulating condition in order to:

- Improve water quality
- Increase upper watershed storage
- Slow the flow of runoff
- Increase soil resilience
- Restore surface and groundwater interactions
- Reduce flood peaks
- Increase flood resilience
- Increase base flow
- Increase groundwater infiltration

This legislation was drafted with the support of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association and in consultation with the DNR. Act 77 also garnered the support of conservation groups including Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, the Wisconsin Trappers Association and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, groups which have a deep understanding of land practices including the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, groups representing governmental entities including the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Towns Association, and groups representing land interests including the Wisconsin Realtors Association.

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