



## **NRB PFAS Votes Put Politics Ahead of Public Health**

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**Madison, WI** – Today, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) rejected the science-based recommendations of the Department of Health Services (DHS) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on two of three water quality and public health protections meant to guard Wisconsinites from PFAS, the highly toxic chemical compounds increasingly being found throughout our state. The board rejected groundwater quality standards, set a much higher limit for drinking water contamination than recommended, and approved surface water quality standards for PFAS.

Many local officials, concerned residents and experts testified in favor of all three protections. Registering opposition were Madison-based lobbyists, representing Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) and other polluters and industry groups.

“These rulemakings were years in the making. Unfortunately, the scheme to allow appointees of the previous governor to discard science and inject politics into the process of protecting public health has also been years in the making,” said Tony Wilkin Gibart, executive director of Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA). “With the help of the Republican state senate and WMC, Fred Prehn held on to power so that he could be a deciding vote today. His vote to increase the drinking water limit to three and a half times higher than the science-based standard leaves his community with more questions than answers.”

Wausau’s drinking-water wells have tested above the DHS-recommended health limit of 20 parts per trillion for several PFAS compounds; however, the wells are below the 70 parts per trillion number that the NRB set.

“The NRB members’ actions, which appear motivated by big-money interests, will leave Wausauians more confused,” said Tom Kilian, City of Wausau alderperson. “I am committed to providing Wausau residents with clean and safe water based on DHS health guidance.”

The NRB also failed to approve any PFAS standards under the state’s groundwater law. Because there is no federal law that directly protects groundwater resources, it is solely the state’s responsibility to act.

“The outright rejection of groundwater standards for two PFAS compounds and two dozen other toxins leaves the approximately one million Wisconsin households that rely on private wells without protection,” said Rob Lee, staff attorney for MEA. “Why don’t private well users deserve PFAS standards to allow the state to take action to protect their water?”

“Today’s votes demonstrate that the health of our democracy, the health of our environment, and the health of Wisconsin families are linked,” said Wilkin Gibart. “Fred Prehn, Bill Bruins, Terry Hilgenberg and Greg Kazmierski replaced their judgment for the judgment of Wisconsin voters and public health experts. As a result, more Wisconsinites will be unnecessarily exposed to toxic chemicals linked to cancer, reproductive and developmental problems, impairment of the immune system and other diseases.”

“We commend the professional staff at DNR and DHS for their arduous work to move these rulemakings forward,” said Jorge Roman-Romero, attorney at MEA. “At times, their integrity and expertise were questioned, but they conducted themselves in a way that shows the very best of our state. We also praise the many residents and local leaders who testified today. We believe their voices made a difference.”

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