DNR Board Approves Narrowed Drinking Water Protections

Written by Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Ryan Billingham
Saturday, 06 August 2016 09:40

http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/dairy-cow-eating-s5.jpg

Citizens, conservation groups, farmers urge fast action to draft and implement new rules.

ASHLAND, WI – With contamination of drinking water becoming a crisis in parts of Wisconsin, the Natural Resources Board (NRB) approved on Wednesday an outline for groundwater protection rules – rules that were narrowed by Governor Scott Walker and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) after meeting with dairy business operatives.

"This a first step," said Jennifer Giegerich, legislative director for Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters. "It is a less ideal first step, but it is in the right direction – toward protecting drinking water from manure-caused pollution."

The approved scoping statement – an outline that will guide drafting of the actual rules – passed unanimously, despite requests made by private citizens, farmers, and conservation organizations that the board approve the original statement, which contained more robust groundwater protections.

"Citizens should be proud," Giegerich said. "They moved the process to this point, not dairy industry insiders."

The approved rules, which were revised by groups that represent the interests of large dairy operations, left out important considerations regarding CAFOs and the aerial spreading of manure – among other recommendations crafted by the citizen-led collaboration.

Giegerich said Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters now expects the DNR to create the new rules without delay, make them as strong as possible, and send them onto the Legislature.

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"We look forward to advancing these rules quickly, to protect the citizens of Kewaunee County – and beyond – from manure-tainted drinking water," Giegerich said.