

Conservation Voters Critical of NRB Action

Written by Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Ryan Billingham
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Protections adopted Wednesday do not prioritize human health say group.

MADISON – Wednesday, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Board (NRB) voted on rules to protect our groundwater, surface water, and drinking water from PFAS, a toxic class of chemicals that are increasingly linked to poor health outcomes such as testicular cancer and low birth weight. The NRB rejected rules for groundwater protection, passed a surface water rule, and passed a significantly weakened drinking water standard.

Wisconsin Conservation Voters Government Affairs Director Jennifer Giegerich had this to say on the votes:



“We are disappointed by the outcome of today’s votes. The first priority when it comes to PFAS

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pollution is to protect human health. Unfortunately, some members of the Natural Resources Board (NRB) rejected that clear priority. Instead, they again sided with corporate polluters and their moneyed allies over the Wisconsinites who are directly impacted by these chemicals. The NRB weakened the drinking water rule by allowing more than triple the initial recommendation for PFAS parts per trillion (PPT).

That vote, however, will require communities to begin testing for PFAS – an important move to protect the health of Wisconsinites. If this testing shows there is toxic drinking water across the state, it will be imperative for the NRB and legislature to lower the standard to 20 parts per trillion to protect our health. Unfortunately, the board killed protections for groundwater – the source for much of Wisconsin's drinking water.

The board came up short today. These protections do not prioritize human health. The single bright spot is the opportunity to kick start the process of testing drinking water in our communities.

Months of advocacy from impacted communities, our members, and allied stakeholders have elevated the issue of PFAS and clean water across the state – and we will continue to do so. Concerned and impacted Wisconsinites, community leaders, and elected officials made it clear we must prioritize human health when it comes to drinking water. We will continue to hold those who diminished these protections accountable and fight for better protections. Unfortunately, as testing increases, we expect the true scope of PFAS contamination will prove to be widespread and significant. And, we fully expect the legislature to adopt the original rules and work toward strengthening water protections in the future.”

For more information on PFAS visit conservationvoters.org/clean-water .