

Safe Clean Potable Water

Is the resource of clean water something we can take for granted in a State that borders two Great Lakes, is home to 20,000 inland lakes and shares a multitude of majestic rivers and streams? Should there be any reason for political parties to be at odds over the issue of protecting our water?

And what of our own Juneau County? We have issues of toxic algae blooms, fish with mercury contaminants, and sources of PFAS that threaten municipal water supplies. We have Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations or CAFO's that are huge point sources of sewage.

Does government at local, state, or federal level have a valid role in monitoring and protecting the clean water that is so elemental to our industry, agriculture, tourism, and our very quality of life? Most would agree the obvious answer is yes.

Yet we have had political representatives who have spoken quite disparagingly about the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. In 2011 the Wisconsin State Legislature enacted Act 21 which was signed by then Governor Walker. The effect was to shift authority away from the administrative professionals and scientists while giving authority to the legislature, courts, and executive branches of state government. (This is described at the Marquette Law School website <https://law.marquette.edu/facultyblog/2017/09/the-quiet-revolution-in-wisconsin-administrative-law/>)

Only recently the Wisconsin State Journal ran a headline story about a Wisconsin Judge ruling that the DNR could not enforce anti-pollution laws without having the legislature first providing a definitive list of hazardous substances. In the mean time a dry cleaning business is free to continue release of PFAS chemicals without attention to appropriate disposal. Is this the good governance we expect and deserve?

It is really too late to express your outrage to government when we are witness to large fish kills, contamination of wells with unsafe levels of nitrates, or seeing the need for bottled water when PFAS levels make municipal water sources unusable.

The Land and Water Use Committee of the Juneau County Board has put forward a local ballot referendum supporting the ethic of clean water. This referendum passed in Juneau County by a margin of 80/20. This vote was the voice of we, the electorate and is an expression of what we want and expect from government. Please thank your County Board Supervisor for putting this referendum on the ballot in the Fall 2022 election.