



## Wisconsin Conservation Voters

### 2023-2024 Budget Recommendations

#### Water

Too many Wisconsinites can't turn on their taps and drink their water. With aging infrastructure and growing pollution problems, the number of Wisconsin families who don't have access to clean, safe drinking water in their own homes is reaching crisis levels. Whether it's threats from emerging pollution like PFAS, lead poisoning impacting children's brain development, or manure forcing families to dig expensive new wells, Wisconsin is seeing increasing impacts of unsafe water.

At the same time, over the past four years, Wisconsin has made tremendous progress understanding statewide water contamination. Matched with incoming resources from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, the next four years present a historic opportunity to tackle these challenges. In service of all these goals:

► **Support** staff and funding to set up a landing page for safe drinking water-related resources available to Wisconsin communities, particularly those created under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act.

#### Protecting Our Drinking Water from PFAS

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control have advised doctors that PFAS have been linked to increased rates of testicular and kidney cancer, higher cholesterol levels, liver damage, decreases in infant birth weights, and increased risk of high blood pressure in pregnant women. Wisconsinites across the state are facing burdensome costs associated with addressing PFAS contamination. For example, a new system to treat PFAS contamination in Wausau will cost residents \$17 million. As other communities continue to test for and find PFAS contamination, they will also need access to substantial funding and technical assistance for remediation.

*We support funding needed to carry out all recommendations in the December 2020 Wisconsin PFAS Action Plan, and recommend prioritizing the following:*

- ▶ **Support** significant funding in each year of the biennium for a PFAS community grant program.
- ▶ **Support** funding for additional positions at the DNR and DHS needed to support new testing, rulemaking, and remediation efforts based on updated health advisories from the Environmental Protection Agency.
- ▶ **Support** funding for research, education, and preliminary recommendations for PFAS treatment, disposal, and/or destruction.
- ▶ **Support** funding to complete the collection and disposal of firefighting foam that contains PFAS.

### Lowering Lead Levels

Lead poisoning, especially in young children, can lead to profound and permanent health problems, including damage to brain development. Young children in childcare centers – and even in their own homes – can be exposed to lead-contaminated water without their parents' knowledge. While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is a starting point for addressing contamination, Wisconsin will still be short \$1.4 - \$1.9 billion for replacing all lead service lines (LSLs) and addressing lead poisoning more broadly.

- ▶ **Support** the funding needed to replace all LSLs by 2033. This should include opportunities for communities to receive more funds as principal forgiveness.
- ▶ **Support** funding for local health departments to increase lead-related education, blood testing for children at risk, and direct services for children impacted.
- ▶ **Support** funding to reduce lead poisoning from paint and fixtures – including support for lead hazard investigations, home remediation, and associated workforce development.

### Providing Permanent Support to Private Well Owners

Roughly 1.7 million people in Wisconsin depend on private wells to get their drinking water. It's estimated that 47 percent of these wells are contaminated by one or more pollutants at levels above public health standards. This is the reality for many families across the state. Entire communities are at risk for short-term and long-term consequences, ranging from diarrhea to learning disabilities to death. Dangerous pathogens, bacteria, and chemicals are found in manure and industrial wastewater, which can get into our groundwater and ultimately our drinking water.

- ▶ **SUPPORT** Governor Evers' last budget request to create a permanent program that would make it easier for more households to replace their contaminated wells by 1) increasing the amount of annual family income that qualifies under the state's well compensation grant program to \$100,000, and 2) allowing non-agricultural wells to qualify. In addition, make \$1,000,000 a year available for families that need to replace contaminated wells.

## **Implement Non-Point Pollution Programs to Protect Against Polluted Runoff**

County soil and water conservation departments provide essential testing and monitoring services across Wisconsin. These departments assist farmers with designing and constructing manure storage facilities, help establish conservation cropping practices, and aid in nutrient management planning. The county departments also help landowners find cost-share funds for conservation work. These services result in management practices that reduce nonpoint pollution runoff.

- ▶ **SUPPORT** \$18.7 million in annual base funding for county conservationists.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** \$4.4 million in bonding authority for the Targeted Runoff Management program, which includes assistance to local municipalities for infrastructure projects to reduce nonpoint source pollution.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** \$7 million in bonding authority for the Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) program, which assists farmers in implementing infrastructure projects such as manure storage facilities and streambank restoration to reduce water pollution.

## **Funding Oversight of CAFOs**

Families are suffering in Wisconsin. As Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) proliferate across the state – and grow ever larger – they create millions of gallons of concentrated liquid manure per day. That manure is spread over pastures and fields where it seeps into the groundwater and our drinking water. The DNR needs adequate staffing and adequate funding to allow it to implement oversight properly. In recent years, the number of CAFOs in Wisconsin have increased over 500 percent without additional support.

- ▶ **Support** increasing permit fees for CAFOs to \$660 each year and \$3270 to review and reissue their wastewater permits. This increase in fees would help to fund five new positions at the DNR to oversee CAFO permits and regulation.

## **Clean Up Contaminated Sediments**

The Great Lakes is the largest system of fresh water lakes in the world, and represents 95 percent of all the freshwater in the United States. Unfortunately, due to heavy industrial activities in the last century, there are many areas along the Great Lakes, including in Wisconsin, that have excessive levels of toxins accumulated in the water and soil near old industrial sites.

- ▶ **Support** Governor Evers' budget request to authorize \$25 million in bonding to clean up contaminated sediment in five areas of concern in the Great Lakes Basin. The DNR would be able to use that money to leverage \$117 million in federal money.

## Clean Energy and Climate Change

### Addressing Wisconsin's Role in Climate Change

Human-driven climate change is scientific fact and Wisconsin is already suffering because of it. Reduced corn harvests, unprecedented flooding, later snowmelts that are disrupting wildlife migration, toxic algae blooms in our lakes, degradation of water quality in the Great Lakes, even increased mosquito hatches – climate change is already having serious detrimental effects in Wisconsin.

- ▶ **SUPPORT** a goal of eventually getting 100 percent electric school buses for Wisconsin schools by taking advantage of the U.S. EPA Clean Schools Bus Rebate program.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** Governor Evers' last budget request of \$1.13 million to fully fund staff at the Office of Environmental Justice, including the director, the chief resiliency officer and two other positions. In addition, support \$250,000 to provide climate assessment and planning grants. The impacts of climate change pollution fall unfairly on communities of color. Wisconsin should assess the health impacts of our current energy use for all our communities and ensure future policies and investments do not leave any community behind.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** transportation options that increase public transportation and walking and biking infrastructure, rather than expanding highways in already polluted communities, such as the proposed I-94 expansion in Milwaukee or the Beltline in Madison.

### Promoting Clean Energy

While climate change poses the greatest threat to human life on the planet, the alternative – clean energy – offers huge opportunities for jobs and economic growth. Recent extreme weather events around the country, including severe flooding due to historic rain events in Wisconsin, have captured people's attention to the need to make bold progress now.

- ▶ **SUPPORT** efforts to establish a state green bank to ease access to Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds (GHGRF), which provides funding to support the deployment of low and zero-emission technologies. The U.S. EPA will begin awarding grants to states, municipalities, tribal governments, and nonprofits in 2023. Of the \$30 billion authorized, \$7 billion is reserved for environmental justice communities, \$8 billion to state green banks, and \$12 billion for direct investments in renewable energy projects.
- ▶ **SUPPORT** the Focus on Energy program and ensure they have the authority, and potentially additional resources they might need to allow them to move the IRA grant funds quickly to Wisconsin residents and businesses.

## **Public Lands**

### **Fully Funding Our State Parks and Trails**

Wisconsin's State Parks and Trails continue to see record-level visits – serving as a cornerstone of our outdoor recreation economy, which employs approximately 93,000 people and contributes 7.8 billion dollars to our gross domestic product. Unfortunately, years of underinvestment have left us 49th in the nation for per capita spending – leaving park stations, restrooms, water infrastructure, boat launches, roads, and favorite lookouts in serious disrepair.

► **SUPPORT** staff and funding needed to address all maintenance backlogs and support capital improvements.

## **Healthy Democracy**

Currently, Wisconsin has one of the nation's most stringent – and complex – voter ID laws coupled with the most partisan gerrymandered maps in the nation. These two elements have worked to keep good legislation supported by the majority of Wisconsin residents from being enacted, such as protecting our drinking water and building an equitable, clean energy economy. Our voter registration process is confusing for students who move frequently and members of our Native communities who don't always have a physical address. Inaccessible information, confusing requirements, and limited access to *Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)* service centers disproportionately impact voters of color, transgender voters, voters with disabilities, low-income voters, voters who do not speak English as their first language, and voters impacted by the criminal legal system.

### **Making it Easier to Register and Vote**

To fully address the issues above, we must expand the list of photo IDs with which Wisconsinites can vote, end felony disenfranchisement, and implement a system that ensures a fair process for establishing legislative and congressional maps. In the meantime:

- **SUPPORT** funding needed to create a system for automatic voter registration through the DMV.
- **SUPPORT** expanding access to DMV service centers for voter IDs in the months leading up to elections. This should include expanded hours and more DMV satellite locations.
- **SUPPORT** investment in a public education campaign that combats misinformation about the election process, expands access to information about voter registration and photo IDs, and provides outreach to eligible voters impacted by the criminal legal system.

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