



State Representative Todd Novak

Our Mission

“To Protect a Healthy and Stable Supply of Water for Residents and Industry”

- ▶ Identify best practices for testing and data collection, measuring water quality in different parts of the state, and types of soil
- ▶ Determining the sources and causes of contaminants impacting water quality
- ▶ Consulting with stakeholders to assess current practices to manage runoff as well as suggestions to improve these efforts
- ▶ Investigating remedies that will protect a healthy and stable supply of water for residents and industry
- ▶ Studying the best practices for designing and constructing wells and septic systems to safeguard a healthy water supply

What is “Water Quality”

- ▶ Mission Statement: It is very broad... on purpose.
 - ▶ Groundwater vs. Surface Water
 - ▶ Water Quality vs. Water Quantity
 - ▶ Point Source vs. Nonpoint Source
- ▶ Variety of contaminants
 - ▶ Agricultural Nonpoint (Nitrate, Phosphorous, Bacteria)
 - ▶ Septics
 - ▶ PFAS - Fire Fighting Foam, Manufacturing, Food Packaging
 - ▶ Lead - Plumbing

Makeup of the Task Force

- ▶ 16 Total Members
- ▶ Bicameral
 - ▶ Assembly: 12
 - ▶ Senate: 4
- ▶ Bipartisan
 - ▶ Republicans: 12
 - ▶ Democrats: 4
- ▶ Variety of Professional Backgrounds
 - ▶ Local Government, Farmers, Sportsmen, etc.

Where We've Been and Where We're Going

- 14 Hearings
- 70 Groups
- Over 200 Citizens
- 2,353 Miles



Who We've Heard From

- ▶ The Public - 214 Individuals Addressed the Committee
- ▶ Invited Experts
 - ▶ State Departments - DNR, DATCP, and DHS
 - ▶ County Staff - Land and Water, Zoning, Public Health
 - ▶ Farmers - Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, Corn Growers, Pork Producers,
 - ▶ Producer Led Groups - Lafayette Ag Stewardship Alliance, Farmers of Mill Creek
 - ▶ Academics - UW Platteville Pioneer Farms, UW Discovery Farms, Mark Borchardt (USDA), UW Stevens Point Water Lab, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
 - ▶ Conservation Groups - Trout Unlimited, Land + Water, Clean Wisconsin, Wisconsin Conservation Voters
 - ▶ Private Sector/Trades - Wisconsin Septic Trades, Short Lane Ag, Carbon Cycle Consulting, Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association

More Than Just Hearings

- ▶ We've Visited:
 - ▶ A Wetland in La Crosse
 - ▶ A Municipal Wastewater Treatment Facility in Burlington
 - ▶ A Packaging Manufacturer's Water Treatment System in Tomahawk
 - ▶ UW Stevens Point Water and Environmental Analysis Lab
 - ▶ Milwaukee School of Freshwater Science
 - ▶ Alfalawn Farms - A CAFO in Menomonie

Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater and Geology Study (SWIGG)

- ▶ January: First round of the first phase showed that 42% of 301 randomly selected wells in Iowa, Grant, and Lafayette Counties exceeded federal health standards for bacteria or nitrate.
- ▶ Following this study, Rep. Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) requested that Assembly Speaker Robin Vos form the Task Force on Water Quality
- ▶ June: Final results from 539 randomly-selected private wells the first phase showed that 27% of wells tested did not meet health standards for bacteria or nitrate.
- ▶ August: Early results from the second phase showed that 32 of 35 (91%) showed evidence of human and livestock fecal contamination.
 - ▶ Important to note that the 35 wells tested were already found to have coliform bacteria or nitrate above the threshold of 10ppm.

Assumptions

- ▶ No One Size Fits All Solution
 - ▶ Wisconsin Geography is variable.
- ▶ These Problems Didn't Occur Overnight
 - ▶ Nitrates have been increasing since the 1950s
 - ▶ Improved technology and testing has made us more aware of these issues
- ▶ The Federal Government Plays a Large Roll
 - ▶ USDA and EPA

What the Administration Has Done

▶ PFAS

▶ Executive Order #40

- ▶ Requires DNR to: Create a PFAS Coordinating Council, Establish a Public Information Website, Expand Monitoring, Collaborate with Municipalities and Wastewater Treatment Plants to Identify Sources, Develop Regulatory Standards, etc.

▶ Livestock Facility Siting

▶ Administrative Rule Revisions by DATCP to ATCP 51 (Required every 4 years)

- ▶ Modifies Setback Standards, permit compliance monitoring, etc.
- ▶ Public Hearings have begun

What the Administration Has Done

▶ Nitrate

- ▶ Governor Directed DNR to create targeted nitrate performance standard for soils most likely to experience nitrogen contamination
 - ▶ Pursue rulemaking through NR 151
 - ▶ Will likely be focused on areas of karst topography in eastern and western Wisconsin and the Central Sands.

▶ Lead

- ▶ Executive Order #36
 - ▶ Creates a position within the Department of Health Services to serve as the coordinator of the state's efforts to address Wisconsin's lead crisis.
 - ▶ Promote collaboration among local health departments to accelerate prevention, treatment, removal, abatement, and surveillance efforts.

Recommendations

County Conservationist Funding

- ▶ A top priority - mentioned by a majority of experts invited to testify.
- ▶ What they are:
 - ▶ Grant program administered by the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.
 - ▶ Provides cost sharing with County Land and Conservation Committees to support conservation activities (cost-share grant assistance, conservation practice education and engineering, etc)
 - ▶ “Boots on the Ground”
- ▶ How they’re funded:
 - ▶ Base allocation to each county of \$75,000. Remaining funding is allocated to fund 100% of first position, 70% of the second, and 50% of each thereafter.
 - ▶ Counties make up the difference.

County Conservationists Funding

- ▶ The Problem:
 - ▶ Significant shortage - especially in more rural counties who need services but do not have the resources to hire additional staff.
- ▶ Proposed Solutions:
 - ▶ Provide enough state funding to allow for an average of 3 staff per county.
 - ▶ Currently funded at \$9.5 million (includes \$500,000 increase in the 2019-2021 budget → \$12.4 million needed)

County Conservationists + Nutrient Management Planning

- ▶ Currently, only 1/3 of Wisconsin's 9 million cropland acres (2.96 Million) are under a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP).
 - ▶ Up from 0.9 Million Acres in 2006
- ▶ NMPs are only required if:
 - ▶ 1. The Producer receives cost sharing or participates in the Farmland Preservation Program
 - ▶ 2. Are regulated as a large livestock operation
- ▶ NMPs are typically written by Licensed Agronomists
 - ▶ A Certified Crop Advisor or the Producer following a DATCP approved training course
- ▶ **What We've Heard: Change the incentive so that NMPs are no longer viewed as a requirement, but rather as a service to the producer.**

County Conservationists + Nutrient Management Planning

- ▶ Our Proposal: Allow County Conservationists and Extension Ag Agents to work with farmers on a NMP
 - ▶ Voluntary: Counties would elect to allow their Conservationists and Ag Agents to provide this service
 - ▶ Flexible: The Producer could choose the specialist - The County Conservationists or the Ag Agent.
 - ▶ State-Supported: In addition to the \$12.4 Million, County Conservation Departments would be reimbursed at a flat rate or on a per plan basis for providing this service
 - ▶ Innovative Uses for Cost-Sharing: Recommend sub-optimal Nitrogen application rates to the producer. The producer received cost-sharing dollars to be made whole.

Well Grant Program

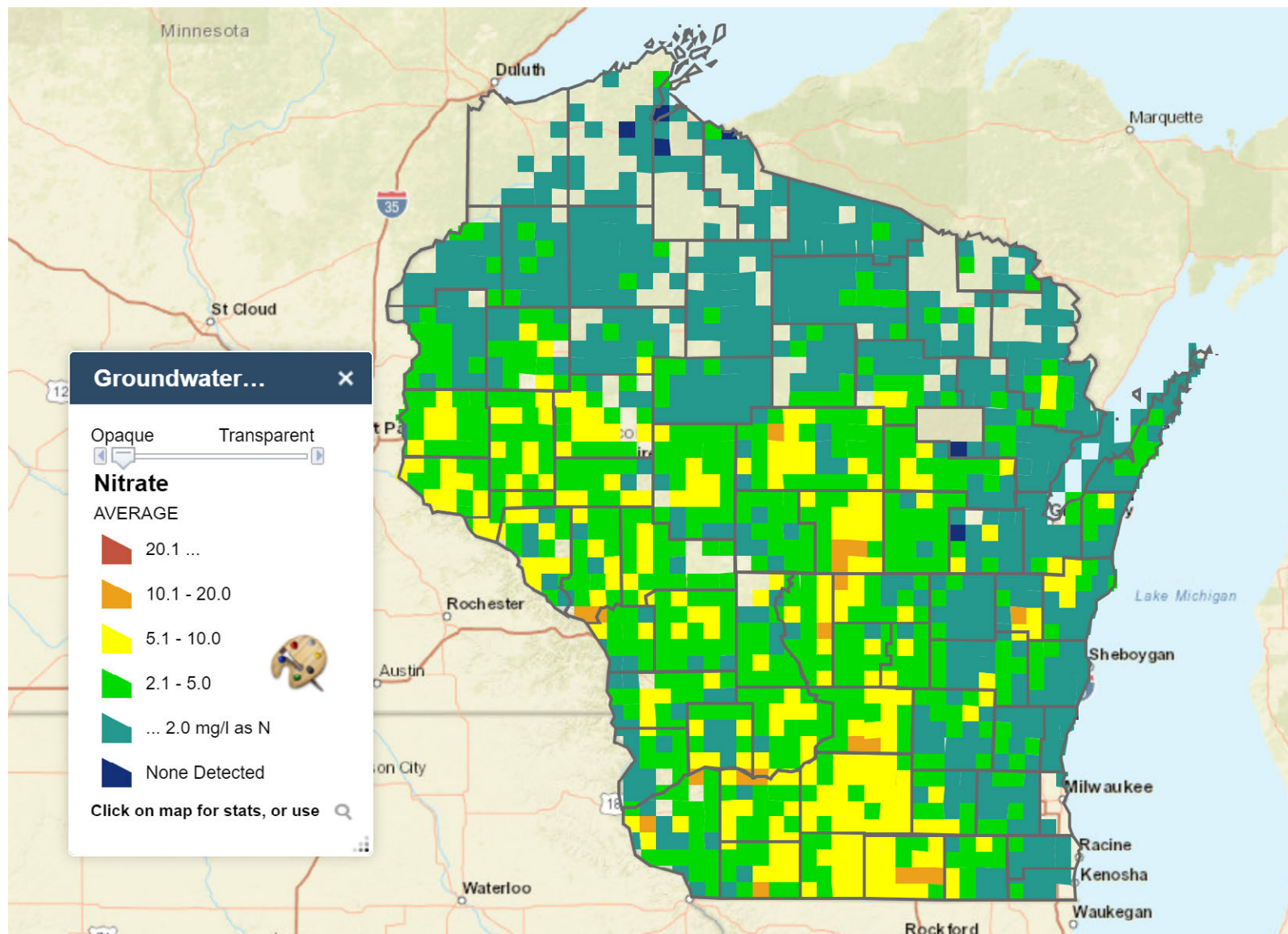
- ▶ What it is:
 - ▶ A grant program administered by DNR for landowners to replace, reconstruct, or treat contaminated wells.
- ▶ Eligibility:
 - ▶ Well must exceed a drinking water standard established by the Environmental Protection Agency.*
 - ▶ Annual family income must not exceed \$65,000
 - ▶ If contaminated by nitrate, the well must be used for livestock and exceed 40ppm
- ▶ What We've Heard:
 - ▶ Income Limit is too low
 - ▶ Lower the threshold for nitrate contamination from 40ppm to 10ppm
 - ▶ Remove requirement that wells compensated for nitrate contamination be used for livestock
 - ▶ Prioritize households with the highest levels of nitrate contamination

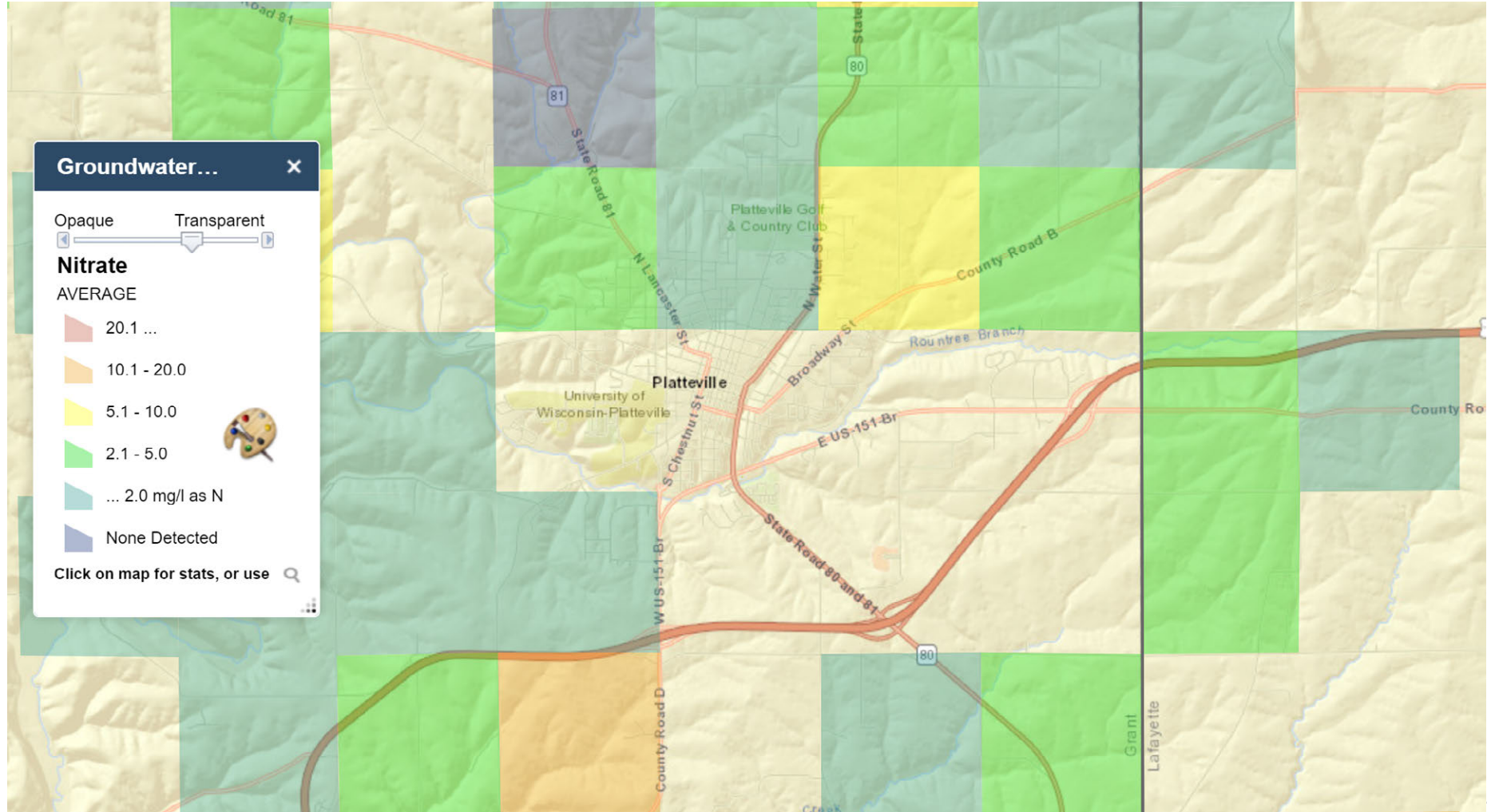
Producer Led Watershed Protection Grants

- ▶ What they are:
 - ▶ Grant program administered by DATCP to fund pollution abatement activities undertaken by producer-led groups made up of at least five agricultural producers.
 - ▶ Collaborates with the DNR, DATCP, a County Conservation Committee (County Conservationists) or other qualified group.
 - ▶ Contributes matching funds for a grant up to \$40,000 per year.
- ▶ What We've Heard:
 - ▶ This program is operating well. Minor adjustments may be needed for greater accountability
 - ▶ Continue funding level at \$750,000 each year
 - ▶ Consider an increase in funding to \$1 million each year
- ▶ Our Proposal: Add an additional \$250,000 in the second year of the biennium

Groundwater Well Viewer

- ▶ UW Extension Well Water Quality Viewer:
https://gissrv3.uwsp.edu/webapps/gwc/pri_wells/
- ▶ What it is:
 - ▶ Aggregated results of well testing from a variety of sources. Allows for members of the public to access and determine which, if any, contaminants they may be susceptible to
- ▶ What We've Heard:
 - ▶ Increase funding to expand and create a more comprehensive project.
 - ▶ Provide grant funding for additional groundwater studies like the Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater and Geology Study (SWIGG)





Innovative Grant Programs

- ▶ There is growing interest in replicating the SWIGG study in counties throughout Wisconsin, however, many small counties do not have the needed resources.
- ▶ Proposal: Create a grant program for well testing for up to \$10,000 per county for a well study.
 - ▶ The county must match the funds contributed by the state.
 - ▶ The data must be shared with UW Stevens Point Well Viewer
 - ▶ Privacy of individual units is required

Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) Certification

- ▶ From AWS Website: “Certification is confirmation of having met the global benchmark for responsible water stewardship.”
- ▶ Independent organization performs the audit and certification ensuring credibility - not a government certification
- ▶ An option for organizations to prove that they are doing things right and being stewards of the environment.
 - ▶ Current Certified Sites:
 - ▶ MillerCoors Milwaukee Brewery
 - ▶ Nestle
 - ▶ Coca-Cola

Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) Certification

- ▶ River Alliance of Wisconsin Proposal
 - ▶ Let's provide a framework where farms can apply and receive this certification
 - ▶ Miltrim Farms Inc. in Athens, WI is currently registered with AWS and seeking certification
- ▶ The Problem: It's expensive, especially with our current farm economy
 - ▶ Audit costs approximately \$10,000
- ▶ Proposed Solution: Create a state grant program to provide matching funds for large farms (500+ animals) to pursue this certification.

Additional Recommendations

- ▶ Stewardship
 - ▶ Allowing for the use of Stewardship bonding to improve land already owned by the state.
 - ▶ Funding could be used for the improvement of Wetlands or the implementation of conservation practices
- ▶ \$3 Million Increase for DATCP's Soil and Water Resource Bonding Authority
 - ▶ This is similar to what Governor Evers included in his budget.
- ▶ Creation of a Sustainable Funding Source for Water Quality Initiatives
 - ▶ Minnesota's "Legacy Amendment" - 0.375% sales tax of which 33% is used for clean water.
 - ▶ What could Wisconsin do?

Tentative Task Force Timeline

- ▶ October/November: Report Completed
- ▶ January/February: Bills for consideration by the legislature

What Can You Do?

Test your Well!



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SUPPLY OF WATER
FOR RESIDENTS AND
INDUSTRY

Follow the
Task Force

Waterqualitywi.com

Questions?