

RESOLUTION NUMBER 116-2018-2020

TO: THE HONORABLE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE PORTAGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

RE: SUPPORT OF 2019 LRB 1197 AND WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE ACTION TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE GROUNDWATER QUALITY STATEWIDE

WHEREAS, groundwater and surface waters in Wisconsin are considered *waters of the State*, held in public trust, and regulated primarily by the State of Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, various reports, including the Portage County Groundwater Management Plan, have identified that private drinking water wells of Portage County citizens have been affected with contaminants such as nitrate and pesticides at levels exceeding safe drinking water standards. According to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) data, approximately 20% of Portage County homeowner wells sampled over the last 25 years exceed the State nitrate-nitrogen standard of 10 parts per million, compared to the State average of 9%; and

WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has historically provided assistance to citizens with high levels of drinking water well contamination through the Well Compensation Grant Program (under CH 281.75, Wis. Stats.); and

WHEREAS, a large number of citizens do not qualify for assistance under the current program due to income restrictions, limits on cost of work, and the requirement of livestock to be on the property, and modifying program requirements would allow for greater access to these funds, which could help additional citizens have access to drinking water that meets water quality standards; and

WHEREAS, the DNR recommends that homeowners test their private wells at least once a year for contaminants but homeowners often do not have the means to do so or are not aware that they should test their water; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Legislature is currently considering, through 2019 LRB 1197, modification of Well Compensation Grant Program requirements to expand eligibility to more citizens and establishing a private well testing grant program to provide well testing; and

FISCAL NOTE: There are no fiscal obligations for the County associated with this resolution;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Portage County Board of Supervisors strongly supports and encourages the Wisconsin State Legislature to take action to adopt 2019 LRB 1197 to increase assistance to citizens regarding water quality issues; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Portage County Board of Supervisors strongly endorses and encourages the Wisconsin Legislature to move with a sense of urgency to bring forward any additional legislation necessary to further enhance assistance to citizens with regard to improving the water quality of potable water wells, and protect and improve groundwater quality in the State.

DATED THIS 19th Day of March, 2019

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,


PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE

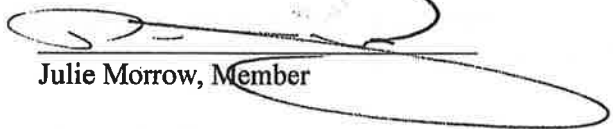
DATE: January 31, 2019


Barry Jacowski, Chair


Charles Gussel, Member


Larry Raikowski, Vice Chair

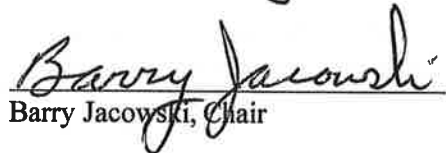

Mike Splinter, Member


Julie Morrow, Member

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

February 13, 2019

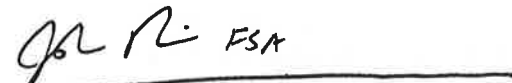
DATE: ~~February 12, 2019~~


Barry Jacowski, Chair


Bob Gifford, Member


Dale O'Brien, Vice Chair

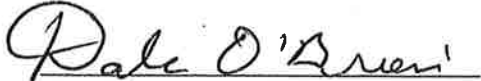

Jerry Zastrow, Member
GERRY


John Ruzicka, FSA Rep



Excused
Julie Morrow, Member


AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: February 14, 2019


Dale O'Brien, Chair


Matt Jacowski, Member


Barry Jacowski, Vice Chair


Charles Gussel, Member


Daniel Martinson, Member



PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

1462 STRONGS AVENUE, STEVENS POINT, WI 54481 • PHONE: 715-346-1334 • FAX: 715-346-1677

To: Agriculture and Extension Education Committee

From: Jen McNelly, Water Resource Specialist

Date: February 5, 2019

R.e.: Resolution in support of LRB 1197

On January 17, 2019 the Portage County Groundwater Citizen Advisory Committee passed a motion asking the Portage County Planning and Zoning Committee to support LRB 1197; proposed legislation recently authored by Wisconsin State Representative Katrina Shankland. You can find a draft resolution in support of LRB 1197 attached to this memo.

The intent of the bill is two-fold, to establish a DNR administered grant program for the testing of privately owned wells and to make changes to the Well Compensation Grant Program currently administered by the DNR.

The State private well testing program that is being proposed in LRB 1197 would be a first of its kind. The bill provides \$1 million per biennium for the DNR to administer in this grant program. Under the program local governments would apply for funding and in turn would disburse grants to eligible residents to help offset the cost of testing their wells. Local governments receiving the funding would be required to notify the public of the availability of these grants and would be required to share the data with the DNR.

Currently, in order to qualify for funds from the State Well Compensation Grant Program homeowners must not exceed an annual family income of \$65,000. In addition, if the family's annual income exceeds \$45,000 the amount of the reward is reduced. For nitrate-specific well contamination there are additional eligibility requirements that must be met which include that the well must be used as a water supply for livestock, the well must be used at least three months in each year, and the well must contain nitrates in excess of 40 parts per million.

The proposed LRB 1197 increases funding to the Well Compensation Grant Program to \$1 million annually. It increases the family income limit to \$100,000 (with a sliding reduction in grant awards beginning at \$65,000) and caps the maximum award at \$12,000. The bill eliminates the requirement that a homeowner must use the well for livestock and provides a newly structured system or prioritizing those with well exceeding the nitrate drinking water standard. It also adds funding for reverse osmosis systems for wells between 20 and 25 parts per million.

LRB 1197 is similar to a bill previously introduced by Rep. Shankland, which the Portage County Board passed a resolution supporting. Currently, Portage County Planning and Zoning has unanimously supported this resolution.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at 715-346-1334 or mcnellyjl@co.portage.wi.us.