

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 recent 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 and the Juneau County Board have recent voted to allow a local ballot referendum supporting the ethic of clean water. You, the voters of Juneau County, can use your voice by way of your vote to express your opinion on this issue. Consider contacting your Assembly and State Senate Representative to express your support for protecting the precious resource of our clean water.

The result of this vote will be a message as well to those that represent us that we expect the funding to provide oversight and enforcement of the statues intended to protect and preserve our environment.