



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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IT'S TIME TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

By Rep. Gary Hebl

During the last two legislative sessions, the legislature has lost its way when it comes to protecting our environment.

Take, for example, a law passed last year that stripped many of Wisconsin's environmental protections in order to cater to a single mining company that has since left the state without creating any jobs.

I have introduced legislation to repeal this destructive new law. My bill would restore our state's stronger environmental standards that were replaced in 2013 by relaxed rules for iron mining in Wisconsin. For example, my bill eliminates language which states that when considering a mining permit, the Department of Natural Resources should presume that significant adverse impacts to wetlands is **necessary**. The bill restores previous language directing the DNR to presume significant adverse impacts to wetlands to be **unnecessary**. My bill also eliminates new statutory language that allows the filling of lakebeds or other navigable waters.

A West Virginia coal mining company was able to convince the legislative majority to abandon our state's environmental legacy and repeal generations-old environmental standards. That company – which paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to organizations that benefited Gov. Walker and legislative Republicans' campaigns – has now abandoned the state. It is time to do right by our environment and restore our previous conservation standards.

If a company is going to attempt to mine in Wisconsin, that company should be required to live up to our previous, stronger environmental safeguards. As we have seen already, it is not worth it to potentially sacrifice our world-renowned natural resources in order to bend the knee to a mining company.

It is imperative that we protect our natural resources, especially our water. So I was shocked during the last budget cycle to see the majority party strip away control of local governments to craft their own shoreland zoning standards which meet the unique needs and demands of local bodies of water.

Shoreland zoning law is in place to protect Wisconsin's lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams from irresponsible shoreland development which could deteriorate coastlines and lead to polluted waters. Who knows the complexities of bodies of water better than local governments?

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Environmental impact and tourism often go hand in hand. Providing greater protections over our lakes and rivers means a more marketable tourism industry. Considering that Wisconsin tourism generates nearly \$19 billion each year, protecting our natural resources isn't just good for our environment – it's good for our economy.

Imposing a one-size-fits-all approach on shoreland zoning doesn't work. That's why I have introduced legislation along with Senator Janet Bewley (D-Ashland) to repeal this statewide restriction and restore local control over shoreland zoning standards.

Wisconsin has a long and proud conservation legacy. Continued efforts to strip away environmental protections will undo the life work of such conservation champions as Gaylord Nelson, Aldo Leopold, and John Muir. I will continue to fight to protect Wisconsin's environment and uphold our conservation tradition.

Rep. Gary Hebl represents the 46th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Sun Prairie and Stoughton, the village of Cottage Grove, and the townships of Cottage Grove, Dunkirk, Pleasant Springs, and Sun Prairie.

Contact Rep. Hebl with any questions or concerns you may have at (608) 266-7678 or via email at Rep.Hebl@legis.wi.gov.

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