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For Immediate Release
February 18, 2020

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Water Quality Task Force Legislation Passes Assembly

MADISON – Thirteen bills recommended by the Speaker’s Task Force on Water Quality chaired by Rep. Todd Novak (Dodgeville) passed the Assembly today with bipartisan support. The task force report detailing the committee’s recommendations was released in January following a total of fourteen hearings held around the state.

“When this task force was formed one year ago, I could not have imagined how rewarding it would be to serve as chairman of this committee,” said Novak. “We heard from over 70 diverse stakeholder groups, traveled over 2,000 miles, and heard over 100 hours of testimony. We brought everyone to the table to ensure we collected information that was both balanced and comprehensive. Clean water is not a Democrat or Republican issue, it is a Wisconsin issue.”

The bills passed today include investments in research and data collection, resources for our farmers to engage in conservation, and assistance for those in immediate need. Two bills authored by Rep. Novak create the UW Freshwater Collaborative to aid in developing a freshwater workforce along with additional funding for County Conservation Staff who work to build relationships and implement the state’s many water quality programs.

To assist farmers engage in conservation, the bills passed today include the creation of a Nitrogen Reduction Pilot Program which will award grants to farmers who implement nitrogen reduction strategies on their fields. Legislation passed today also increases funding for producer led groups will allow this successful program to grow.

Finally, to encourage more counties around Wisconsin to follow the lead of the successful Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater and Geology Study (SWIGG), legislation passed today will create a county grant program to provide funding to counties who wish to learn more about their unique groundwater challenges.

“I’m so very proud of the work this task force has accomplished,” said Novak. “The issue we are dealing with has been decades in the making and will take time to fix. We have successfully worked across the aisle to craft meaningful legislation and build a foundation for continued work on this important issue.”

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