



Media Release

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Statement on Natural Resources Board Meeting

MADISON – Today Assistant Assembly Democratic Leader Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) thanked the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) for asking probing questions of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) relating to its recent audit by the Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) on wastewater permitting and enforcement.

“Our state's water quality is paramount. I'm glad to see the Natural Resources Board is asking the DNR tough questions. We should be tackling the inefficiencies within our state's top water quality enforcement agency instead of cutting positions from the DNR like the Republicans did in their 2015-17 budget. The Legislature should take a close look at staffing issues and fund the DNR appropriately. The DNR needs resources so they can enforce the laws and closely monitor our state's precious water resources.”

The LAB released an audit of the DNR's wastewater permitting and enforcement practices earlier this month and the results were troubling. The LAB audit found that the DNR has been ignoring its own rules on water pollution, failing to act on wastewater violations 94% of the time from 2005-2014. The audit also found that Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) – Wisconsin's largest farming operations – are lacking in DNR oversight. Currently, CAFOs have no runoff testing requirements and are instead required to file self-monitored reports annually to the DNR. Of those self-monitored reports, only 36 of the roughly 1,900 required to be submitted had been electronically recorded as being received, according to the audit.

“When the DNR fails to monitor and enforce its own policies, it's no wonder that Wisconsin wells are contaminated with unsafe levels of bacteria or nitrates,” said Rep. Shankland. “Clean water is not a privilege. The Legislature must tackle this issue and ensure the DNR is fully staffed to manage these issues. It's imperative that we act on water quality.”

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