



## Today marks the 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Earth Day!

I wanted to update you on some of the important environmental issues that are happening in our state and local community.

Care for our environment has always been a priority of mine. I am proud of the many “*Clean 16*” awards I have received from the Wisconsin Environmental Decade and my “*Conservation Champion*” award from the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters.

You can be sure I will continue my strong record on voting to protect our environment and natural resources. I hope this Spring and Summer you can find time to get out and enjoy these treasures.

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### The Milwaukee Estuary Cleanup Project



- [More Helpful Programs: H2O Workforce Equity, Hazmat Collection, Rain Barrels](#)

Photo Credit: Susan Bence via WUWM

Funded through a collaboration of the city, county, state, and federal governments along with private sponsors, The Milwaukee Estuary Cleanup is a \$400 million project focused on removing underwater sediments polluted with mercury, PCBs, and other contaminants from former Milwaukee industries going back to the 1800s.

Contaminated material will be dredged and properly disposed of. The project will take approximately six years to complete, and will include the harbor, and parts of the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic rivers. This cleanup project has been described as a “once in a lifetime opportunity” which will protect local natural resources and improve quality of life for all of us.

[Read more.](#)

## Environmental Proposals in the Governor's Budget

Governor Tony Evers has proposed a major extension of the [Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program](#), allocating up to \$70 million each year for the next 10 years to procure important parcels of land. This popular program has protected priceless natural areas for conservation and public enjoyment for generations to come.

The governor has also proposed [designating funds to combat PFAS](#), otherwise known as "forever chemicals", through testing of municipal water systems, remediating contaminated sites, and disposing of PFAS-containing firefighting foam.

His budget proposal also includes about [three dozen recommendations](#) from the [Governor's Task Force on Climate Change](#), aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting clean energy helping the state prepare for severe weather events, and requiring the Public Service Commission to evaluate the social costs of carbon pollution when determining whether to approve new power plants.

## Kinnickinnic River's Flood Management Plan

To address flooding issues in the Kinnickinnic River watershed, which covers 25 square miles and is topped with nearly 50% impervious surfaces such as parking lots, streets and rooftops, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) has created a [flood management plan](#).

In the 1960s, areas of the Kinnickinnic were “channelized” or lined with concrete to move water away as fast as possible. More than 8 miles of waterways are lined in concrete or enclosed in culverts. This strategy creates a dangerously fast flow of water, and many of these channels and culverts have reached the end of their 60 year lifespan.

The flood management plan will restore the natural flow of these waterways, which we now know improves water quality and allows pollutants to break down instead of being deposited into the lake, creating “dead zones.”

To complete this project, MMSD will be restoring the natural landscape to the river in Pulaski, Jackson, and Wilson Parks, as well as the river between 6<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Streets. This will reduce flooding and lake pollution, while enhancing these parks’ natural beauty and infrastructure. As MMSD has completed portions of the flood management plan, we have seen salmon migrating further and further upstream. Stop by Pulaski Park to see what one of these projects looks like as it nears completion!



## Managing "Forever Chemicals" (PFAS)

[Underhanded rules procedures](#) were recently used to stall progress on removing contaminants from our state’s environment. In accordance with a bill that passed the Legislature with *overwhelming bipartisan support* and the Governor signed last session, the DNR created procedures for prohibiting the use of, and proper disposal of PFAS chemicals.

Republicans on the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules undermined their colleagues’ work without even talking to the bill’s Republican author, Senator Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay). He stood up on the floor of the Senate to express frustration, saying the DNR had perfect authority to take action and that the DNR’s actions made his bill work better. Only he and one other Republican voted with the Democrats to let the DNR do its job, but it wasn’t enough.

Recently Governor Evers and several of my Democratic colleagues introduced legislation which would create even stricter standards for PFAS in drinking water,

provide more funding for testing and establish grant and loan programs to help communities with mitigation efforts.

[Read more.](#)

## Climate Change and Invasive Species Effects on Lake Michigan

A [new report](#) compiled by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration using data collected hourly over the last 30 years shows the water at the depths of Lake Michigan is warming by about 0.11 degrees Fahrenheit each decade which is faster than ocean and the air temperature.

Although this change may seem small, it impacts the amount of ice cover on the lake each year, and the erosion that occurs along the shoreline, as well as the organisms that live in our great lake.

[Read more.](#)

Warming water can affect sensitive organisms that are the foundation of the food web in the Great lakes. Certain types of algae thrive in colder water, and even small temperature changes can reduce their populations, which has a rippling effect throughout the rest of the ecosystem.

In an interview with Great Lakes Now, Beth Hinchey, the Lake Erie and Lake Michigan Manager at the U.S. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office in Chicago explained that, "*Diatoms are preferred prey for fish and the zebra mussels and quagga mussels like them as well. So we've seen big reductions in some of our diatom species since the invasion of the mussels. That points to less food for fish.*"

Because invasive mussels prefer this type of algae, it has led to an open field for other types, like the kind that harbor toxic bacteria. Researchers continue to study the effects of climate change on Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes, trying to understand what new trends are developing and where they may lead.

[Read more.](#)

## Wolf Hunt

After the Trump Administration delisted the gray wolf from the Endangered Species Act on January 4th, the Wisconsin DNR became statutorily required to hold an annual wolf hunting and trapping season.

The DNR had announced plans to hold the first hunting and trapping season on November 6, 2021, and stated that the timeline to put a season in place this winter was too short. The agency was sued by the conservative [Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty](#) on behalf of Kansas-based Hunter Nation to force a wolf hunt to occur this winter, and a Jefferson County judge ruled that the DNR needed to establish a hunting and trapping season in February. The DNR appealed, but their appeal was dismissed.

During the hastily arranged season, which lasted 3 days, kills surpassed the quotas in each of the 6 wolf management areas across the state. A [Natural Resources Board](#) decision to issue twice as many permits as normal, and a statutory requirement to give at least 24 hours of notice to close a hunt contributed to the overage.

A spokesperson for the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission stated: “It will go down as a stark example of mismanagement, and the problems that can be expected when the state Legislature and the courts embrace special interest groups over the public as a whole.”

[Read more.](#)

## Take the Greenfield-KK Riverwalk Survey

The Harbor District, Inc. is working with the City of Milwaukee to create a new public space between Greenfield Ave. and S. Kinnickinnic Ave. that they are planning on calling the Greenfield-KK Riverwalk.

Below is a picture showing what this area currently looks like. The orange section is the area that is reserved for public access to the waterfront. The Harbor District is looking for local resident's ideas on what to include for public recreational activities there.

Take the survey in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).



Photo Credit: Department of City Development/Curt Waltz Aerialscapes via Harbor District, Inc.

## Wisconsin's Roadmap to Zero Carbon Electricity

On March 11th, the Wisconsin [Public Service Commission](#) voted 2-1 to engage in an investigation titled: *Roadmap to Zero Carbon*. This investigation would explore the economic and environmental considerations related to the deployment of more clean energy technologies.

Topics included in the study are:

- Changes in utility-scale generation that reduce overall carbon emissions, including the retirement of existing fossil fuel plants.
- Deployment of customer-level resources and programs that help customers control their energy use and lower their costs.
- Deployment of new technologies, such as battery storage and microgrids.
- the design and operation of the regional wholesale market and transmission grid.

[Read more.](#)

## Other Helpful Programs

### Building Equity in Milwaukee's Water Workforce

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, Milwaukee Water Works, Veolia Water Milwaukee, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources announced the One Water, Our Water: Explore Milwaukee Water Jobs Fair on **May 12th, 2021, from 5-7 pm**. This virtual event is an extension of the [Equitable Water Future Roadmap](#) to build water workforce equity in Milwaukee, by focusing on fostering greater awareness of water sector careers among individuals, groups, communities, and organizations with Milwaukee.

To participate in the One Water, Our Water: Explore Milwaukee Water Jobs Fair, register [here](#).

### Home Hazmat Collection

Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District has information about where to dispose of or recycle hazardous household materials, electronics, used batteries, and other items.

If you've got household chemicals that you don't want contaminating our local environment, take them to one the permanent or mobile drop off locations.

[More info.](#)

### Information on Rain Barrels and Workshops

Getting ready for gardening this summer? Consider installing a rain barrel and capturing free clean water that you can use on your thirsty tomatoes! Rain barrels help keep excess water out of the sewer and reduce water pollution.

[More info](#) one where to get and how to install a rain barrel.

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