



Preserve Groundwater: Wisconsin's Buried Treasure

The water stored in the ground beneath our feet supports industries, communities, and businesses and is the origin for springs, rivers, lakes and wetlands throughout the state. How we manage this precious resource affects every one of us, from the drinking water that comes out of the tap, to our major industries such as beer brewing, cheese making, paper making, agriculture and tourism. Our lives and livelihoods as well as the fish, wildlife and many recreational attributes of our waterways are equally dependent on abundant groundwater.

But increasing demands for groundwater place our supplies and valued natural resources at risk. Seventy percent of Wisconsin residents and 97% of Wisconsin communities depend upon groundwater to meet their day to day needs, but in some regions of the state, water is being pumped out of the ground faster than it can be replenished by rain and snow melt, limiting how communities can grow and prosper.

Current law fails to consider the impacts of groundwater withdrawals on 99% of the state's lakes, 92% of rivers and streams, and 100% of wetlands. Numerous rivers and lakes around the state have been seriously compromised by excessive pumping of municipal and irrigation wells, including the Little Plover River, a trout stream in Central Wisconsin that ran dry in the summers of 2006 and 2007. Reduced groundwater supplies disrupt entire ecosystems, reducing habitat for important plants, insects and animals at all levels of the food chain. Fishing, hunting, trapping, boating and the myriad recreational opportunities essential to our quality of life and multi-billion dollar tourism industry are all at risk when groundwater resources are depleted.

Wisconsin's buried treasure belongs to all of us, but overuse by some affects us all. Nothing is more critical to the future of this state and its citizens than the protection of our groundwater supplies, but the current law is not up to the task. Comprehensive management of groundwater resources will ensure responsible and equitable use of water resources and balance the competing demands for drinking water, agricultural and industrial uses while protecting our natural environment.

Solution

To ensure sufficient groundwater resources for future generations, our rivers, lakes, and streams, legislators must enact legislation that will:

- 1) Revise the Groundwater Protection Law to:
 - a. Tie approval of new wells to a science-based evaluation of their environmental consequences on all ground-water fed lakes, rivers and wetlands;
 - b. Require monitoring and consideration of the cumulative effects of water withdrawals;
 - c. Call for modifications in pumping when other wells and resources are disrupted.
- 2) Require the development and implementation of a statewide water conservation program to ensure all water resources are used efficiently and fairly.

Results

Preserving our groundwater will:

- Protect our quality of life and multi-billion dollar tourism industry that depends on well-managed groundwater resources.
- Expand upon the success of last session's Strong Great Lakes Compact by extending water conservation planning from the Great Lakes basin to the entire state.

**Let your legislators know you want to Preserve Groundwater: Wisconsin's Buried Treasure-
Join us for Conservation Lobby Day 2009 on Wednesday, February 25th!**

*For more information about **Conservation Lobby Day** or this issue, visit www.conservationvoters.org, or call (608) 661-0845 with questions or to receive a copy of the **Wisconsin Conservation Priorities 2009-2010** in the mail.*