



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Natural Resources Policy Needs Bold Change

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Have you ever met someone who wants to destroy air and water? We haven't.

Nevertheless, despite air and water quality getting better in Wisconsin, this is the attack consistently leveled against us. We even managed to make a special interest group's "dishonor roll" and have been labeled environmental lightning rods. Why? Because we have the audacity to take on the environmental left. Perhaps it's easier to engage in personal attacks than actually debate the issue at hand.

We both relish a good fight, but that's actually not why we engage in crafting environmental policy. Deep down, the reason we get involved in these fights is because they are incredibly important to the people we represent in rural and northern Wisconsin. While we have an abundance of natural resources, job opportunities can be very limited. Smart policies can have a dramatic impact on economic growth and job opportunities in northern Wisconsin. Why? It's a matter of scale.

Imagine if a new business opened in a suburban Milwaukee community and it provided 100 middle class jobs (loaded wage rates of \$30 per hour). This would be great, but it would barely be a drop in the bucket in a vast urban metropolis. On the other hand, where we live, many communities have less than 1,000 people. Imagine if a paper mill or frac sand facility employing 100 people at that same wage rate opened in that community. It'd be huge!

Just one good business can be the lifeblood of an entire community. It's not just the direct jobs, but it's the indirect jobs – truckers, electricians, plumbers, contractors, restaurant, and gas station owners, bankers, car dealers, realtors. Again, it's a matter of scale.

The reality is that our rural communities live or die with decisions suburban legislators make in Madison. An ill-suited, overly-restrictive rule can literally ruin a community. That's why we are so stridently opposed to Madison and Washington rules and regulations that kill job opportunities in farming, manufacturing, forestry, and tourism.

If you live downstate or in a more urban or suburban community, you may think these issues don't impact you. They do. If people in northern Wisconsin can't find family-sustaining jobs, they will be more dependent on government programs (which your tax dollars will fund) and there will also be a deficiency in our tax base, meaning you will also fund our schools. So, yes, the northern Wisconsin economy matters to you, even if you don't live there.

This session, we will continue to press for legislation that runs afoul of the dogmatic beliefs held by many so-called environmentalists. We intend to further streamline some rules and regulations and repeal those that don't make sense. It's a matter of life and death for our communities. When the attacks come from the self-proclaimed environmentalists, we hope our friends and neighbors across the rest of the state will stand with us, because it matters to you too.