



Kewaunee Drinking Water Study Should Sound Alarm When Concentrations of Animal Pathogens Spike, Drinking Water is at Risk

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MADISON, WI – Critically important [study results out this week](#) should be another red flag for Wisconsin State Legislators to take immediate and meaningful action to protect the groundwater that is the source of drinking water for Wisconsinites who live near concentrated animal feeding operations and land on which CAFO waste is spread.

The study, conducted by a team of scientists including Mark A. Borchardt, a microbiologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and funded by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has been a significant investment in advanced scientific methods to study the presence and source of pathogens in Kewaunee County drinking water.

“What this study shows is that while there is a presence of both bovine and human sourced bacteria in the groundwater, it is fundamentally a cause for alarm when spikes in the concentration of manure spread on land have a measurable impact on the sources of drinking water for Kewaunee County families and continues to threaten human health.” said Kim Wright, MEA Executive Director. “The presence of human-sourced pathogens must be weighed against the higher concentration of pathogens from the hundreds of thousands of gallons of liquid manure a single CAFO can spread on land in a year. Rural households that use septic systems have their own individual rights and responsibilities to maintain their small-scale sewage treatment, but industrial-scale farms also have a responsibility to prevent their manure from contaminating neighbors’ wells.”

Midwest Environmental Advocates is proud to be one of the [six environmental organizations that petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2014](#), to urge the federal government to take action under the Safe Drinking Water Act and ensure that families whose drinking well water may not be safe to drink due to animal manure contamination will have access to clean water.

Wright also said: “Taking action to control manure management in our state’s livestock industry is a responsibility that lies squarely on the operators who spread massive quantities of untreated animal waste on vulnerable soils. A recent [Legislative Audit Bureau report showed a massive failure of our Department of Natural Resources](#) – the agency that permits large-scale agricultural operations – to follow its own rules to implement, monitor and enforce regulations designed to protect public health. For our DNR to reform its practices, our legislature needs to provide adequate resources and authority so that trained, professional staff can make science-based decisions that protect public health. It’s time legislators listen to families in their districts who shoulder the expense of widespread contamination of groundwater by profitmaking, industrial facilities rarely held accountable to public health standards in current law.”

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest organization that uses the power of the law to support communities fighting for environmental accountability. Learn more about the Midwest Environmental Advocates on the web at midwestadvocates.org, like MEA on [Facebook](#) or follow @MidwestAdvocate on [Twitter](#).

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