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Cooperative Network supports proposed agricultural producer protection legislation

MADISON, Wis. [March 14, 2017] – Cooperative Network strongly supports proposed legislation (SB 76 and AB 105) related to the replacement, reconstruction and transfer of approved high capacity wells, recommendation of special groundwater measures by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and metering requirements and grants for certain high capacity wells.

“At the end of the day, producers with high capacity well permits are careful and conscientious caretakers of our water resources,” says Tom Liebe, Cooperative Network President and CEO. “Their livelihood depends on it and these bills recognize that fact.”

The regulatory certainty aspect of these bills is critically important to producers and agricultural and finance cooperatives. Cooperative Network members approved language at their Annual General Meeting for a resolution on groundwater that advocates for permitting certainty for high capacity wells. We appreciate the leadership of Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) and Representative Gary Tauchen (R-Bonduel). Cooperative Network believes that these bills will both help sustain a vital part of Wisconsin’s 88 billion dollar agriculture industry while also providing a mechanism to conduct important research in Central Wisconsin.

“Completely depleting water resources would effectively put these producers out of business,” Liebe says. “That is a powerful and practical incentive to be mindful about water use. In addition, their stewardship ethic is plain to see given that producers in this country are responsible for a massive but largely unknown productivity increase.

“Our producers generate two and a half times more products today while only using the same amount of inputs as they did in the 1930s. That’s not just a productivity story; it’s a remarkable conservation and sustainability story. Producers are in it for the long-haul and can be trusted to continue their safe and sound conservation practices.”

Cooperative Network serves approximately 400 Wisconsin and Minnesota member-cooperatives by providing advocacy, education, public awareness, and development services to a wide variety of cooperatives including agricultural marketing and processing, credit unions, dairy, electric, Farm Credit, farm supply, health care, mutual insurance, housing, service, telecommunications, worker-owned cooperatives, and more. For more information about Cooperative Network, visit www.cooperativenetwork.coop.

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