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Conservation Groups Emphasize Urgency on Water Issues at 4-3 Water Quality Taskforce Hearing

Madison, WI – April 4, 2019—River Alliance of Wisconsin echoes the statements from our conservation partners that presented at the Water Quality Task Force informational hearing yesterday. We consistently heard groups emphasize the urgency to be bold and address long-term root causes to Wisconsin’s water pollution problems.

For example, Matt Krueger, Wisconsin Land & Water’s executive director shared, “We are at the most critical juncture on water quality that we have seen in decades, and we collectively owe it to the people of Wisconsin to use this opportunity to advance real, lasting solutions.”

“Wisconsin needs to put water first; it’s not a partisan issue. As Wisconsinites, we all recognize the value of our water. Yet too many of us have experienced tap water fouled by animal waste, or lakes layered in algae. Wisconsin’s safe water future and strong water economy require urgent action. We can all agree that we should be able to safely drink the water from our faucets and eat the fish from our rivers and lakes. Our businesses and tourism economy rely on clean water to thrive,” stated Raj Shukla, Executive Director for River Alliance of Wisconsin.

Governor Evers’ budget outlines some good first steps to addressing water issues in Wisconsin. The state agencies that gave presentations at the March 20th Water Quality Task Force hearings concurred with many of the Governor’s recommendations. River Alliance and our members across the state look forward to seeing the approaches proposed in the legislature’s version of the budget and the specific proposals from the Task Force. It’s clear that our state budget must include funding to prevent and fix water pollution.

"Bottom line, we cannot compromise people’s health and safety. Water is one issue elected officials are taking notice of right now. You can’t go wrong in pursuing solutions to water problems. We need to think big right now. We appreciate that the Water Quality Task Force will seek public input across the state,” Shukla continued.

River Alliance of Wisconsin urges the Water Quality Task Force and the Joint Finance Committee to review the water initiatives in the Governor’s budget—and recommendations from state agencies and

conservation groups—and support funding to begin to take action on providing clean water for all Wisconsinites.

Key initial solutions proposed by Governor Evers, state agencies and stakeholders include:

- Providing \$70 million in funding to daycares, schools and water utilities to replace lead service pipes and support nonpoint runoff and manure management programs such as the Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) and Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) programs
- Fully implementing statewide and targeted performance standards and prohibitions via NR 151. Providing \$12.4 million in funding for county conservation staff to implement the non-point runoff and other essential programs at the local level.
- Supporting the watersheds with Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plans by providing four staff and \$4 million in grants to facilitate implementation of water quality restoration and improvement plans.
- Supporting raising the CAFO fees to create five new staff positions at the DNR to oversee the permitting, inspection and enforcement CAFOs.
- Increasing DNR scientific research staff to develop a model to identify and prioritize sites with likely per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) contamination and conduct a survey of local and state emergency responders to determine the level of use of PFAS-containing firefighting foam.

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About River Alliance of Wisconsin

Formed in 1993, River Alliance of Wisconsin is a statewide nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy organization that empowers people to protect and restore Wisconsin's waters. The organization's membership includes more than 1,500 individuals, businesses and local watershed groups. For more information, visit: www.wisconsinrivers.org