



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, July 10, 2017**

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## **Proposed Rules Good Step Toward Safer Drinking Water**

*DNR's foundation must be strengthened before rules are finalized*

MADISON, WI – Proposed rules issued Friday by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources take a good first step toward addressing the ongoing livestock drinking water contamination issues in Kewaunee County.

The draft rules would require stronger manure management practices aimed at reducing the risk of groundwater contamination. Recent studies have found at least 60 percent of the drinking water wells tested in the area contained dangerous pathogens. Much of that contamination is tied to manure spread on a landscape geologically vulnerable to contamination. The new rules seek to make water in that area safer to drink.

"With this proposed rule, the DNR has taken a good first step to reduce drinking water contamination from livestock pollution in Kewaunee County," said Clean Wisconsin Water Quality Specialist Scott Laeser. "We're glad to see the DNR took the recommendations from the Groundwater Collaboration Workgroup seriously, but there is still a lot of work to be done before this rule is finalized."

This latest action by the DNR stems from a 2014 petition by Clean Wisconsin, Midwest Environmental Advocates, and local citizens asking the Environmental Protection Agency to use its federal Safe Drinking Water Act authority to study the source of polluted groundwater in Kewaunee County and to provide clean drinking water to citizens.

The proposed rules released Friday include some of the key recommendations from the Groundwater Collaboration Workgroup, including:

- greater manure application setbacks from private wells and other groundwater contamination points such as sinkholes;
- prohibitions on manure application in areas with the shallowest soils;
- requirements that farms moderate the rate at which they apply manure in vulnerable areas.

These provisions are a good base for a final rule, but more work is needed to ensure Kewaunee County residents have access to safe water.

"The final rules should have even stronger requirements on the shallowest soils and they must require all farms to have winter spreading plans. Winter is an exceedingly risky time of year to be applying manure," Laeser said.

Although the proposed rules take steps to improve the quality of the groundwater in northeast Wisconsin, other areas of the state that are vulnerable to groundwater contamination – such as parts of southwest Wisconsin – are not covered by the proposal.

The DNR, the state Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, and the agricultural community must redouble efforts to use existing tools to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination in places not covered by the proposed rule. The state must prevent another drinking water crisis like the one facing residents in Kewaunee County from happening elsewhere in the state.

"We look forward to working with the state and the agricultural community to strengthen the rule to put the state on a path to a place where every citizen in Wisconsin has access to clean, safe drinking water," Laeser said.

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*On behalf of its more than 30,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners,*

*Clean Wisconsin protects and preserves Wisconsin's clean air, water and natural heritage.*