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For More Information:  
Contact: Senator Robert Cowles, 920-448-5092

## **EPA Still Dragging their Feet on Groundbreaking Water Pollution Program**

MADISON - As businesses in Wisconsin patiently await, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is dragging their feet in approving Wisconsin's phosphorus multi-discharge variance. In 2013, Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) authored WI Act 378, which creates a variance that provides businesses with the opportunity to pay into an account to address nonpoint source pollution in exchange for the ability to discharge a minimal amount of phosphorus. We've created a pro-business and pro-environment approach to a complex problem. This one-of-a-kind program allows businesses to continue to operate without the crushing burden of paying millions to remove marginal amounts of phosphorus in exchange for resources to reduce greater amounts of phosphorus from entering our waters through nonpoint sources, like household activities, agriculture, and transportation.

The proposal was submitted on March 30, 2016. The EPA then had 60 days to approve the package or 90 days to refuse it. Today, both deadlines have passed and this package is still sitting on a desk somewhere at EPA headquarters in Washington DC. Today, Senator Cowles received a letter from EPA Region 5's Acting Administrator indicating that the EPA's review will be taking additional time.

Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement regarding the EPA's inaction:

"During the 2013 legislative session, I authored an innovative bipartisan proposal to tackle one of the largest challenges Wisconsin's waters are facing: nonpoint source pollution. While businesses are held to high standards, removing upwards of 98% of the phosphorus in their wastewater, our watersheds continue to suffer from an overabundance of phosphorus; pollution from nonpoint sources being a major factor. Increasingly more common occurrences like algae blooms, fish kills, and aquatic habitat loss have not only created lower water quality, but if the EPA continues their inaction, Wisconsin's \$19.3 billion tourism industry could be impacted.

"It has been 44 years since the federal Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, and our groundbreaking law could address water degradation across the country, but the EPA is the major roadblock to further improving our waters. I worked vigorously through two sessions to pass legislation to create this outside-the-box point-nonpoint source partnership. However after years of hard work, the EPA is still dragging their feet on allowing us to move forward. Recently, I sent a letter to the EPA encouraging them to sort through their bureaucratic red tape and provide the people of Wisconsin a way to promote a healthy economy and healthy environment and approve our program."

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