



ANDRÉ JACQUE

STATE SENATOR • 1ST SENATE DISTRICT

Phone: (608) 266-3512

Fax: (608) 282-3541

Sen.Jacque@legis.wi.gov

State Capitol - P.O. Box 7882

Madison, WI 53707-7882

*Testimony before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Senator André Jacque
January 30, 2020*

Chairman Cowles and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 709, relating to creating an office of water policy.

This legislation is part of a package of recommendations from the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality. The bipartisan and bicameral task force was created in February of 2019 and has traveled the state holding 14 hearings across the state. Members of the task force heard from hundreds of citizens, over 70 organizations, and traveled thousands of miles gathering information to address Wisconsin's water quality challenges

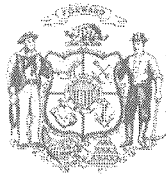
Senate Bill 709 creates an Office of Water Policy at the Wisconsin Geological & Natural History Survey to serve in a variety of capacities to aid a diverse group of stakeholders in addressing Wisconsin's water quality challenges. Our work to address water quality in our state will not stop after the conclusion of this task force. By creating this office, we are committing to continued coordination and analysis of these challenges for years to come.

The Director of the office will be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization.

The Office of Water Policy will be responsible for the creation of a Water Quality Dashboard. This online resource will be a one-stop-shop for residents in any part of our state to view the most up to date data on the quality of their water source. Whether they drink from a municipal well or private well, or are planning a trip to their favorite lake, an individual will be able to click on any lake or local unit of government and see exactly what is in their water.

The office will also work with the Department of Workforce Development to develop a report detailing the demand for job opportunities in the area of water quality. The director will proactively solicit private sector employers to better understand their current and future needs. These findings will be shared with UW System as they work to develop undergraduate programs and research opportunities to address our freshwater challenges.

Accountability of our limited resources is important and we want to ensure that the dollars we are spending are having the greatest impact on water quality. To address this, the Office of Water Policy will divide the state into zones with similar geographic characteristics and water quality problems. The director will then produce a report that details the dollars spent in each area and metrics to determine the overall success. This report will assist the legislature as we make additional investments in this area.



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Additionally, the Office of Water Policy will work to facilitate the sharing of information between state agencies, UW, and other stakeholders. This will include working with UW to improve and/or expand the soil nutrient application planner and provide recommendations on the feasibility of additional statewide programs to improve water quality.

Finally, the Director of the Office of Water Policy will serve as the liaison to the Great Lake's Commission Blue Accounting Initiative. This initiative aims to create a more comprehensive approach to monitoring our Great Lakes water resources. Blue Accounting measures progress based on nine desired environmental, economic, and social outcomes for the Great Lakes Region. It works to gather data to provide information to help decision makers set priorities and allocate resources to support five complex issues: aquatic invasive species, source water, phosphorous control, coastal wetlands, and maritime transportation.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 709.



TONY KURTZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

2019 Senate Bill 709

January 30, 2020

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

Relating to: creating an office of water policy and making an appropriation.

Thank you Chairman Cowles and members of the committee for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 709 (SB 709) which creates an Office of Water Policy that is administratively attached to the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey at UW Madison.

SB 709 is one of the pieces of legislation that arose out of the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality. As a member of that Task Force, I, along with members from both parties and both legislative bodies, traveled throughout the state and we heard about various programs overseen by several state agencies such as: DNR, DHS, DATCP, PSC, DSPS, UW-Extension, and UW-System. Each of these departments possesses unique information and authority over a variety of water quality programs in our state.

The idea for this bill is to create, one centralized location that will act as a clearinghouse for water-related initiatives. The Office of Water Policy will take a big-picture view of water issues across that state, without being beholden to one agency or stakeholder group. Essentially, the Office is meant to be the one-stop shop for anything and everything related to water resources. Because it is simply administratively attached, The Office of Water Policy will stand completely on its own, answering to no agency of the Executive Branch and it will only have the responsibilities that are prescribed in this bill. The Legislature will also have some oversight of the Office, as the bill requires the governor to appoint the Director and the Director will then need to be approved by the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization.

The duties of the Office of Water Policy and its Director will be to coordinate efforts to manage, to conserve, to protect, and to enhance the productivity of the state's water resources. The Director will be responsible for: creating a public dashboard, sharing information between agencies and the UW System, analyzing job opportunities in the area of water quality, addressing water quality challenges, and acting as a liaison to the Blue Accounting Initiative which was created by the Great Lakes Basin Compact to help decision makers set priorities and allocate resources of the Great Lakes. The Director will also produce reports highlighting the success of state/federal water quality programs within the various regions of our state.

Thank you Chairman Cowles for your work on the Task Force and for holding a hearing on SB 709.



Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

2019 Senate Bill 709 *Creating an Office of Water Policy* *January 30, 2020*

Good morning Chairman Cowles and members of the Committee. My name is Todd Ambs, and I am the Assistant Deputy Secretary for the Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 709 (SB 709).

SB 709 creates an Office of Water Policy, attached to the University of Wisconsin System and housed within the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey (WGNHS); requires the Governor to appoint a director of the Office; and sets out a series of ambitious duties for the position.

The DNR has existing, constructive partnerships with the UW System, the WGNHS, as well as the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), the Public Service Commission (PSC), the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), federal agencies, other Great Lakes States and Provinces, and Great Lakes organizations. Additionally, given that the DNR is charged with protecting Wisconsin's water resource and the Department's central roles in managing and preserving water quality and quantity in Wisconsin—as laid out in Wisconsin Statutes—the DNR is best positioned to house the Office of Water Policy and to coordinate the duties of the director position.

The DNR works closely with DATCP, UW and WGNHS, and federal agencies to study and manage nutrient application to help minimize adverse water quality impacts while protecting crop yield to the extent practicable. Furthermore, within the limits of its existing resources, the DNR is working actively with other state and federal agencies and the UW to assess and address site-specific surface water and groundwater challenges throughout the state.

While the goals for the position created under SB 709 are commendable, the Department believes that these goals and duties can best be carried out through the DNR taking the lead in working with its fellow executive agencies and the University of Wisconsin—and by providing sufficient resources to do so.

Information sharing, data management, and the development of metrics by which to gauge success in addressing Wisconsin's water challenges are vital—and we can always do better. The DNR is aware of existing data gaps and, with sufficient resources, we are prepared to address them with our partners in state government and the UW System.

Following the passage of the Great Lakes Compact in Wisconsin, the DNR developed, and continues to operate, a water conservation and water use efficiency program. The Department also coordinates with the PSC in promoting water conservation and efficiency among Wisconsin's water utilities.

Finally, there is definitely a role for the private sector in solving Wisconsin's water challenges, and the Department is positioned to identify specific areas of need and to work with DWD and others to address them.

On behalf of the Wisconsin DNR, I would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

2019 Senate Bill 709

Creating an Office of Water Policy

January 30, 2020

Good morning Chairman Cowles and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. My name is Ben Van Pelt and I am the Assistant Director of State Relations for the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Today I am joined by Ken Bradbury who is the State Geologist and Director of the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey (WGNHS) which is located within the UW-Madison Division of Extension. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes today on Senate Bill 709 (SB 709), which creates an office of water policy within WGNHS.

The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey was created by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1897. It is the descendant of earlier state surveys in Wisconsin, which date back to 1854. The WGNHS is an interdisciplinary organization that conducts natural resources surveys and research to produce information used for decision making, problem solving, planning, management, development, and education. *Survey* is defined to include resource inventory and basic and applied research and analysis. Maps, data, records, and reports—including interpretations and recommendations—produced by the WGNHS provide basic data for resource, land-use, and environmental management. The WGNHS has no specific regulatory or enforcement responsibilities.

The WGNHS Director and staff are mostly geoscientists trained in bedrock geology, glacial geology, and groundwater studies. Historically and currently the office has had no expertise, experience, or responsibilities in the area of water policy, though we have long provided technical support to the Legislature and state agencies over policy questions, and it is these areas where policy and WGNHS science overlap. However, most of the responsibilities proposed for the new OWP in Assembly bill 799, such as facilitating data sharing between state agencies, analyzing water sector job opportunities, developing a new nutrient application planner, or promoting water efficiency and conservation, are not things the WGNHS has historically done.

Wisconsin is a national leader in water science, with highly trained professionals working in University departments, local, state, and federal agencies, industries and the private sector, combined with the active Groundwater Coordinating Council and robust research programs. What we lack is a clear vision on water policy and a better understanding of the complex relationships and trade-offs between water quantity, water quality, economic growth, food production, human health, and environmental quality. By focusing on these policy issues, a state Office of Water Policy would provide a touchpoint and context for coordinating science and policy in addressing vexing water-resources issues across the state of Wisconsin.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison appreciates the efforts of the Water Quality Task Force and the introduction of this bill and others that will address water quality issues in the state of Wisconsin – something that is critical to our citizens today and for generations to come. While the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey is one option for housing the new Office of Water Quality, there may be other places that would be better suited to do so. We stand ready to work with the authors of SB 709 and Task Force members to determine the best place to house this new Office.

On behalf of the University of Wisconsin-Madison we would like to thank you for your time and for allowing us to detail the important work already being done by WGNHS. At this time, we would be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

FROM: Daniel Bahr, WCA Government Affairs Associate

DATE: January 30, 2020

SUBJECT: Support for Senate Bill 709

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) supports SB 709 related to creating an Office of Water Policy and making an appropriation. The new office will be housed within the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey of the Division of Extension of UW-Madison. A director will be appointed by the Governor with experience in managing water resources. The office will seek to create a public dashboard for a variety of water quality data. The office will also identify areas of the state with water quality challenges. In addition, the office will seek to develop statewide policy for promoting water efficiency and conservation.

WCA believes that the Office of Water Policy could enhance the effort to ensure Wisconsin's groundwater supply is in the best condition possible. We also feel that our membership would benefit from such a resource.

WCA respectfully requests that the Committee support SB 709.

Please feel free to contact WCA if you need additional information.