



American Fisheries Society
Wisconsin Chapter

February 17, 2010

Senator Mark Miller
Representative Spencer Black
Groundwater Work Group
Wisconsin Legislature
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Miller and Representative Black:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (AFS), we appreciate your efforts to better protect the surface and ground water resources of the State of Wisconsin and through these efforts to protect and preserve our natural resources.

As you are aware, it is the link between surface and ground waters that sustain the high quality warmwater and coldwater fish communities. Angling and its associated activities are well known to attract large numbers of tourists to the State and form the basis for many of these visitors to return year after year to the benefit to our State's economy. These benefits include jobs not only in the recreational industry but in associated activities such as lodging, restaurants, local retail shops, increased tax base, property values, etc. For example, recent work by University of Wisconsin (UW)-Extension and UW-Green Bay found that the recreational fishing activities contributed more than \$155 million in direct spending and 3,500 jobs to the five county Lake Winnebago Area and stimulated a further \$80 million in indirect spending which created a further 800 jobs in the region. A recent study by UW-Whitewater on Delavan Lake demonstrated an annual impact of more than \$20 million in increased property values and spending by tourists and others within the community. It is important to note that the amount of spending was largely dependent on water quality improvements achieved in the Lake. Clearly these two examples indicate the profound impact of our water resources and of high quality resources on the local and State economies.

The central role of fish and recreational angling in the local and State economies would support current legislative initiatives to better integrate management of all our water resources in order to protect these valuable resources. For this reason our Chapter supports the Groundwater Workgroup's effort to develop a policy to utilize sound science, to balance competing water uses (i.e., environmental protection, economic stability, and public health), encourage efficient water use, and coordinate activities between various levels of government to ensure the continued availability of water for both human and environmental uses.

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Specifically, the Wisconsin Chapter of the AFS would encourage consideration of a regulatory approach similar to that adopted by the State of Michigan. In this approach development proposals are evaluated on the basis of their potential impact on both surface and ground waters as well as on the fishery resources. The Michigan Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council, in their report to the Michigan legislature that can be found at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/Groundwater_report_206809_7.pdf, has recommended adoption of a science-based, state Water Withdrawal Assessment Process that incorporates an Impact Assessment Model including an automated Screening Tool. They note that the development of the Impact Assessment Model represented a significant advance in linking water use and water withdrawal to the maintenance of the ecological integrity of stream systems.

The Michigan Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council recommended most strongly that Michigan's water policy deliberations continue to move forward in an entirely inclusive and collaborative manner. Such a process, founded upon well developed and robust scientific evidence, best serves the long-term interests of all of the stakeholders and citizens of the state. The Wisconsin Chapter of the AFS endorses this process and commends a similar approach to the Wisconsin Legislature.

To this end the Wisconsin Chapter of the AFS through its Environmental Issues Committee would be willing to assist the Wisconsin Legislature in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Dr. Thomas M. Slawski, Chair
Environmental Issues Committee
Wisconsin Chapter of the American Fisheries Society
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