



# WISCONSIN LAKES

WE SPEAK FOR LAKES!

## eLake Letter

A publication of lake news and information

April 12, 2011 - Special Wisconsin Lakes Convention Edition!!

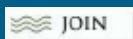
### In this Issue:

Action Alert: Tell Gov. Walker and the legislature to remove changes to state phosphorus standards from the budget.

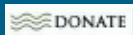
- Background on phosphorus rules
- Why Wisconsin Lakes is opposed to the proposal
- How you can be heard on this issue

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### ACTION ALERT!!

Tell Governor Walker and your legislators to leave the phosphorus standards in place and remove them from the budget.

The Governor's budget bill contains a disturbing proposal to rollback the phosphorus standards that went into affect in Wisconsin last November. Wisconsin Lakes is making this our top budget priority, and we are strongly advocating for its removal from the bill. To that end, we're asking you to contact your legislators and the members of the Joint Finance Committee to let them know how you feel. We tell you how to do so below, but first some background on the issue and some talking points:

#### The current rules on phosphorus:

New regulations setting numeric standards for phosphorus in runoff went into effect last November. These rules were the culmination of a long process of negotiation and compromise between all of the stakeholders - an example of true democracy at work - that resulted not only in agreement on defined limits, but also a unique cooperative management structure. This framework allows municipalities to save money by working with local farmers to employ management practices to reduce runoff in lieu of costly upgrades to stormwater treatment facilities. This entire process was not only adopted by the U.S. EPA, but has been hailed as a model framework for the United States.

#### What the budget proposal does:

The Governor's proposal waters down nearly all of the new regulations. It would:

- Change the specific numeric standards to vague "narrative" standards,
- Eliminate the cooperative management structure,
- Limit Wisconsin's standards to the laxest standards adopted by neighboring states.

#### Gov. agrees to modify the proposal:

Wisconsin Lakes and others have been working hard on this issue, talking to legislators, the Governor's office and DNR, and these discussions appear to be moving in the right direction. **While we are not out of the woods yet, it seems the Governor's office has been willing to listen to our issues, and has requested changes to the phosphorus provision in the original budget proposal.**

These changes include:

- Removing the reference to neighboring states,
- Keeping the current rules intact,
- Delaying the effective date to allow more time for implementation

***Although a move in the right direction, Wisconsin Lakes continues to advocate for the phosphorus policy to be removed from the budget.***

While a delay in implementation would be better than a wholesale change in the rules, the rules already went into effect and presumably all the interested parties should be working on their implementation. We also continue to believe that non-fiscal items such as this (items that don't involve a budget appropriation) do not belong in a budget bill.

#### Why Wisconsin Lakes is opposed to this proposal:

\* Lax standards allow too much phosphorus to reach our lakes, which will damage our \$13 billion tourism industry and lower property values on lakes. As many of you have experienced, cleaning up lakes after they are thoroughly poisoned by phosphorus is much more expensive than prevention. And who wants to swim, fish, boat, ski or paddle in stinky pea soup?

\* The proposal throws out years of complex, difficult negotiation that resulted in a set of standards and regulations that protected our lakes and rivers while providing flexibility for businesses and local governments. These new standards need time to work before even being evaluated for change. (Continues on back)

Wisconsin Lakes

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(Continued from front)

\* Accepting the “lowest common denominator” of standards among Midwestern states is simply not good enough. Wisconsin is a leader, not a follower, and its world class resources deserve world class protection in a manner of our choosing - not in a manner decided upon in Minnesota, Illinois or elsewhere.

\* Removal of the phosphorus standards after EPA approval makes federal intervention likely (because by gaining EPA approval, they have been incorporated into the federal regulations). It cracks the door for costly lawsuits and years of confusion and ambiguity on the part of businesses, landowners and citizens. In the meantime, our lakes - and the economy built around lakes - are at risk.

\* This provision is buried within a massive budget bill, and is not a fiscal matter (in other words, it doesn't involve budget appropriations for the biennium). As a general principle Wisconsin Lakes objects to non-fiscal provisions being included in a budget bill.

## ~~SPEAK FOR LAKES~~

### VOICE YOUR OPPOSITION: CONTACT LEGISLATORS & ATTEND HEARINGS

Wisconsin Lakes encourages you to be involved on this issue and let your legislators and Governor know that strong rules on phosphorus runoff are crucial for our lakes and our lake economy. Consider participating in one or many of the following:

#### ATTEND A BUDGET HEARING NEAR YOU

The legislature's Joint Finance Committee is currently taking public testimony on the budget bill at locations around the state. These wide ranging hearings allow the public to testify on any portion of the budget they wish to cover - and there is a lot cover - and tend to draw large crowds, and the wait to speak can be lengthy. For any one point to come across strongly to the Senators and Representatives, however, a large number of individuals need to express the same opinion. We strongly urge you to testify if you can!

For more information on the remaining hearings go to: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/jfc/schedule.htm>

In addition, Democratic legislators are hosting hearings of their own. Information on these hearings can be found at: <http://www.thewheelerreport.com/releases/April11/0404/0404demhearings.pdf>

### CONTACT THE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE

In addition to attending the hearings, contacting all the members of Joint Finance directly will help deliver the message. A phone call is usually preferred, but a letter or e-mail is also effective.

For a page that links to contact info for all the members of Joint Finance, go to <http://www.wisconsinlakes.org/policy/pdf/JFC2011.pdf>.

### CONTACT YOUR OWN LEGISLATORS

And in addition to contacting the Joint Finance Committee, your own legislators are also important contacts. Once the budget is voted upon by JFC, it moves on to both houses of the legislature, and the phosphorus roll back could still be removed at that point (of course, we hope JFC sees the light, and drops the provision). Regardless, it is important for legislators to hear from their constituents on this issue.

To find your legislators, go to <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/w3asp/waml/waml.aspx>.

### WHAT TO SAY

We've given you some talking points above as to why we believe that the phosphorus regulations don't belong in the budget bill. Remember to be polite, respectful, clear and concise in all your communication. With so many people commenting on so many items, we need a vocal, unified and effective chorus to speak for lakes.

### WHAT WISCONISN LAKES IS DOING

Wisconsin Lakes continues to educate legislators and is working closely with members of Joint Finance to advocate for removal of this provision from the budget.

And of course, we'll be keeping you informed. Watch for an eLake Letter with updates next week, as well as further Action Alerts as needed.

Remember, we ALL speak for lakes - so tell your legislators to preserve effective phosphorus standards and take this provision out of the budget!

## Attending the Wisconsin Lakes Convention?

Come to our booth and we'll help you find your legislator and you can fill out a postcard that we'll mail for you, conveying your support to preserve effective standards for phosphorus!