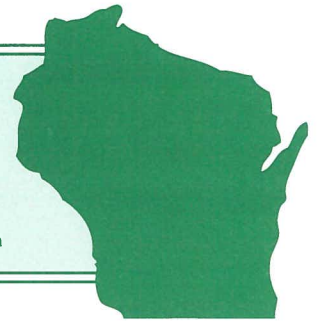


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## **New Law Protects Environment, Brings Certainty to Agriculture Community Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Praise Action on Science-Based Water Policy**

[MADISON] The Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) applauds the Governor's signing of Senate Bill 76, the science-based water policy legislation sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Senator Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) and Representative Gary Tauchen (R-Bonduel).

"Wisconsin farmers who rely on high capacity wells to irrigate farmland and feed families across the globe applaud the Governor's actions," said WPVGA Executive Director Tamas Houlihan.

"We appreciate the leadership provided by Senator Fitzgerald and Representative Tauchen as well as the efforts of Senator Pat Testin (R-Stevens Point) and Representative Scott Krug (R-Nekoosa) who worked hard to provide certainty for farmers who rely on the ability to utilize irrigation to grow nutritious vegetables in Wisconsin."

The new law maintains Wisconsin's stringent environmental requirements and well construction standards for repaired, replaced and reconstructed wells. The law also importantly requires the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to conduct a critical study of high capacity wells and their potential impacts on surface waters in areas in the Central Sands region of Wisconsin.

"Similar to the study completed on the Little Plover River, the WPVGA supports sound science in working out practical solutions," Houlihan said. "We believe that these studies are critical to understanding the interaction between groundwater and surface water. We support this scientific work that will generate reliable data upon which any necessary future regulations can be developed."

Houlihan said he and members of his association remain committed to a healthy environment and a healthy agricultural economy.

"It's not an either-or equation. Our members are committed to advancing best practices when it comes to environmental stewardship and conservation because it is the right thing to do, and because it is good business," said Houlihan. "The certainty provided by the new law will help our growers continue to invest in new technologies and new techniques to keep our land and water safe and abundant."

The new law requires any new well or any existing well that is repaired, replaced or transferred in a designated study area to have a water meter and report water usage using that meter. Importantly, all high capacity wells already report water usage to the DNR annually in March. This new metering requirement is expensive, but it may assist with the generation of more precise data in the study areas.

### *About Wisconsin Agriculture:*

- *Agriculture contributes \$88 Billion to Wisconsin's economy*
- *Provides employment for 827,000 people*
- *Each job supports 1.4 indirect positions in related industries*
- *Wisconsin ranks 3rd in potato production and 2nd in processed vegetables*
- *Central Sands region is a key area for potato and vegetable production and food security*

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