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Environmental Groups Call on EPA for Immediate Action in Kewaunee County

After 18 months of inaction, county residents deserve clean, safe drinking water

MADISON – Clean Wisconsin and five other environmental organizations [sent a letter](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today, requesting federal support for clean, safe drinking water for Kewaunee County residents.

“It is unacceptable that more than one-third of the private drinking water wells in Kewaunee County are unsafe, contaminated with bacteria, nitrates and other pollutants,” says Elizabeth Wheeler, senior staff attorney, Clean Wisconsin. “After 18 months of little action, it’s time for EPA to step in.”

Clean Wisconsin and other groups filed a petition with the EPA in October 2014, asking for intervention under its federal Safe Drinking Water Act powers; since then, neither EPA nor Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) have provided clean drinking water to residents. While the DNR has convened a lengthy stakeholder process, rollbacks of existing protections, like groundwater monitoring, threaten DNR’s ability to ensure that drinking water sources are protected from contamination from spreading too much manure on the land

“Unfortunately, proposals to protect groundwater around the state, in Kewaunee County and beyond, continue to be blocked by the Legislature and by the DNR’s interpretation of its own authority to manage our waters,” says Wheeler. “Kewaunee is the latest victim of a fundamental, systemic problem in our state, and surely won’t be the last. Sadly, since our petition was filed, Wisconsin has fewer protections in place instead of more.”

Today’s letter, signed by Clean Wisconsin, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Midwest Environmental Defense Center, Kewaunee Cares, Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin and Environmental Integrity Project, requests that EPA:

- Immediately provide Kewaunee County residents with clean water;
- Expedite test results of well water contamination;
- Issue emergency rule changes to ensure DNR has authority to protect our water; and
- Provide more research and groundwater monitoring on sources of pollution.

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The letter also asks the EPA to closely monitor the DNR's efforts to develop a timely, enforceable plan to implement recommendations from the workgroups it convened.

“Kewaunee County residents have been waiting for years for our state and federal governments’ help in solving this critical issue,” says Wheeler. “The Flint, Mich. drinking water crisis should be a wake-up call to our leaders that residents in Wisconsin expect their strong support, and that the time to act is now.

[Find the letter to the EPA here.](#)

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*On behalf of its more than 30,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects and preserves Wisconsin's clean air, water and natural heritage.
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