



OPINION COLUMN FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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To achieve clean water and thriving farms in Wisconsin, it's time for bold action

Mark Redsten, Clean Wisconsin

Tom Crave, Dairy Business Association

Elizabeth A. Koehler, The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin

Bob Micheel, WI Land+Water

We live in challenging times, and these days it can feel like we disagree more often than not. There are, however, at least two things that most, if not all, of us can agree on — keeping our water clean and our farms successful. To achieve both here in Wisconsin, we need to do more than agree they are important. We need bold action.

To kickstart the action we think is needed, our four organizations — Clean Wisconsin, Dairy Business Association, The Nature Conservancy and WI Land+Water — have come together to find common ground on water and agricultural issues core to our missions.

If not always on the same side, our organizations have been involved in state policy development on these issues for a collective 200 years. Wisconsin has made progress in that time, but not enough. We were disappointed that all the attention brought to the importance of clean water through the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality in 2019 and earlier this year did not result in meaningful policy changes.

It's time to rethink how we protect our water and support our farms.

We believe the current programs to permit farms and manage unintended agricultural runoff are in need of change. Together our state must also invest more resources in helping people who don't have access to clean water get it and in helping farmers grow our food with fewer negative environmental impacts. We need to support and encourage innovative farming practices and new cropping systems that improve farmers' bottom lines and the environment.

We can work toward a permitting process that supports farms that are meeting water quality standards, and we need to realize a future where every farm in the state is meeting a minimum set of conservation standards. We also recognize that in some sensitive parts of the state, farming practices will have to change more dramatically in order to protect our water resources, and our state needs to help those farmers adapt.

We must invest in Wisconsin farmers and Wisconsin's drinking water. It won't be easy, and it won't be free, but the results will be worth every penny. We need to support our farmers who already recognize clean water is good business and help others adjust their practices to better protect our water. Every

resident in Wisconsin has a right to clean water; if they don't have it, we have an obligation as a state to help them get it.

We cannot address clean water or the future of farming in Wisconsin as standalone issues; they are challenges that must be met together. Too often, policy disagreements have resulted in conflict and inaction instead of compromises and improvements. Our organizations are prepared to find common ground, to request bold changes from decision-makers, and to work toward a future where our state has clean water and a thriving agricultural community.

Mark Redsten is the president & CEO of Clean Wisconsin.

Tom Crave is the president of the Dairy Business Association.

Elizabeth A. Koehler is the state director of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin.

Bob Micheel is the president of WI Land+Water.

Photos:

[Mark Redsten](#)

[Tom Crave](#)

[Elizabeth Koehler](#)

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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.*

Learn more at www.cleanwisconsin.org.

*The **Dairy Business Association** is Wisconsin's leading dairy advocacy group, championing smart and sensible regulations affecting the dairy community. The nonprofit organization is comprised of farmers, milk processors, vendors and other business partners who work collaboratively to ensure that dairy farms of all sizes have the support they need to keep America's Dairyland strong.*

More information: www.dairyforward.com.

*The **Nature Conservancy** is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. In Wisconsin, we help farmers improve soil health and protect clean water while sustaining profitability. We also collaborate with communities, governments, business and other nonprofits to protect Wisconsin's most outstanding*

natural areas, address climate change and its impacts, and help make cities more sustainable.
To learn more, visit www.nature.org/wisconsin.

Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water) is a nonprofit organization that supports the local and statewide efforts of all county Land Conservation Committee supervisors and Land Conservation Department staff across Wisconsin. WI Land+Water's members work directly with landowners, farmers, and citizens to improve land and water management. This boots-on-the-ground approach provides all Wisconsinites with direct access to technical assistance and professional expertise. Learn more at www.wisconsinlandwater.org.