



EPA finds 75 issues with Wisconsin's water management



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The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has identified 75 potential issues with Wisconsin's environmental regulation of water, according to a written statement from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

"They (the EPA) went through our (Wisconsin's) rules and regulations word for word," Susan Sylvester, a Water Quality Bureau Director of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources tells Action 2 News.

According to Sylvester, while the EPA is auditing water quality laws in all 50 states, Wisconsin's is a bit more complicated.

"Most states automatically just incorporate the federal code, Wisconsin rewrites it," she said.

This has become a very time consuming process for both federal and state officials, and in many

cases the difference is simply word choice.

"We (Wisconsin) use the word revoke, but the EPA requires use of the word terminate," Sylvester said.

She also noted the EPA is trying to take away Wisconsin's authority to declare a state of emergency.

Sylvester said Wisconsin officials are already "doing a great job in Wisconsin issuing permits (for waste water discharge)."

"We are protecting what we need to protect," she added.

The DNR is now working on eight separate rule packages ranging from sanitary sewage overflow to lab analysis.

But there's only so much the DNR can address as far as adopting administrative rules. To be in full compliance with federal environmental regulations, some Wisconsin laws will need to change.

The federal law Sylvester references is the Clean Water Act which was adopted back in 1972 and has been amended several times since.

The law sets water quality standards for companies and is intended to protect surface waters from pollutants.

According to a written statement from the DNR, while today's board-approved changes addressing 21 additional issues, 24 water quality issues remain to be addressed through additional administrative rule changes and other efforts.

Most of the issues pertain to storm water, Sylvester said.

The DNR's board approved rule revisions that will now comply with federal environmental requirements. The new rules will better align state regulations with federal requirements for managing the state's water resources. Something that according to the EPA, the DNR had previously failed to do.

Action 2 News reached out to the EPA, but no one was available for comment.

Meanwhile in Madison, the board approved two rule packages that modify the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit program (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wastewater/>) and help

address differences outlined by the EPA.

“Our administration has diligently worked to address these issues, and we’re working hard to resolve the rest,” said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. “With the board’s approval and continued support, we believe that these rule packages will help maintain and enhance our efforts to protect and restore Wisconsin’s vital water resources.”

Issues addressed in the rule updates include establishing new regulations to cover pollutant discharges when pollutants are present in intake water and methods to calculate effluent limits.

To learn more, visit [DNR.wi.gov \(http://dnr.wi.gov/\)](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search “[WPDES permits \(http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wastewater/\)](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wastewater/).”

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