

Capitol LINK

CURRENT ISSUES AFFECTING WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE & AGRI-BUSINESS

November 20, 2009

Groundwater Workgroup Concludes Public Meetings

By Jordan Lamb, DeWitt Ross & Stevens

On November 4, the legislative Groundwater Workgroup concluded its public meetings. At the final brief meeting, the Workgroup heard presentations from Larry Lynch (DNR) and Ken Bradbury (UW-Extension) on *Groundwater Data Gaps*, and a presentation by Chuck Dunning (USGS) on *Wisconsin/Federal Water Collaboration*. Their presentations are available on the Groundwater Workgroup's web site:

<http://www.legis.wi.gov/senate/sen16/news/Issues/GroundwaterWorkgroup.asp>.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Senator Miller thanked all of the committee members for their time and efforts and also thanked the public members for their participation.

Senator Miller stated that he and Representative Black would next work on preparing a "large discussion paper" that will outline legislative options. However, no indication was given as to whether this paper will be shared with the public at a public meeting or prior to legislative drafting. Senator Miller also stated that he will meet with Senator Kedzie (one of the original authors of Wisconsin's groundwater law and a Republican member of the Workgroup) to try to reach an "agreed-upon" [bipartisan] recommendation.

Governor Vetoes Bill Allowing Board to Appoint DNR Secretary

By Jordan Lamb, DeWitt Ross & Stevens

Governor Jim Doyle has vetoed legislation that would have allowed the Natural Resources Board to appoint the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Currently the DNR Secretary and the NR Board Members are all appointed by the Governor.

In his veto message, Governor Doyle wrote: "Wisconsin's people and natural resources are best served with a Secretary appointed by the Governor. The major environmental measures we've taken in the past seven years, from working to remove mercury from our air, expanding the Stewardship program, passing the Great Lakes Compact, moving toward energy independence and reforming our regulatory process, could not have [been] achieved by a board appointed Secretary alone."

The authors of the vetoed legislation, Representative Spencer Black (D-Madison) and Senator Bob Wirsch (D-Pleasant Prairie), are reportedly considering seeking a legislative override of the governor's veto. In this case, the override attempt would begin in the State Assembly where two-thirds of the 99-member State Assembly would be required to vote to overturn the governor's decision. When the Assembly approved this bill in September, it did so by a 61-32 vote, just shy of the two-thirds (66 votes) that would be needed for an override. If the Assembly votes to override with a 2/3 majority, then the bill would also have to secure 2/3 of the vote in the State Senate or 22 votes. This bill passed the Senate with 21 votes, with one member, Senator Judy Robson, absent.

The last time the Legislature overturned a veto by a Wisconsin governor was in 1985, when Democratic Gov. Anthony Earl was in office and Democrats controlled the Legislature.

Political Trivia:

QUESTION: When did the U.S. presidential tradition of pardoning a Thanksgiving turkey begin?

ANSWER: Despite the fact that President Kennedy stated he was not going to eat the turkey presented to him by the National Turkey Federation in 1963; and despite the fact that President Regan did use the word “pardon” in connection with his gifted turkey in 1987; the first official (recorded) presidential pardon of a Thanksgiving turkey by a U.S. president was in 1989 when, during his first Thanksgiving in the White House, President George H.W. Bush officially pardoned a turkey. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush continued that tradition.

Interestingly, the President is always given one official national turkey and a “back-up turkey,” in case the first turkey cannot “fulfill his duties.” Typically, both the official turkey and the back-up turkey are pardoned. Happy Thanksgiving!

Capitol Link Details

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