



Circuit Court Ruling a Win for Clean Water Groups

Decision Prevents Rollback of Agricultural Pollution Rules

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 2019

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Madison, WI—A ruling today by Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge William Pocan is being heralded by clean water groups as a win for public health and transparent government. Judge Pocan sided with four environmental groups represented by Midwest Environmental Advocates when he ruled that an agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the State’s largest dairy business lobby violated state law.

The November 2017 settlement agreement, which resulted from a lawsuit brought by the Dairy Business Association against the DNR, limited DNR’s authority to protect water quality through the science-based application of state law intended to prevent pollution from Wisconsin’s largest concentrated livestock feeding operations. Four environmental advocacy groups—Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin, Friends of the Central Sands, Milwaukee Riverkeeper and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation—challenged the settlement on the basis that the agreement, negotiated behind closed doors, changed DNR pollution permitting policies and rules without going through the official rulemaking process.

“This case illustrates the importance of public scrutiny and citizen action to hold industrial livestock operations and our government agencies accountable to the law,” said Midwest Environmental Advocates Staff Attorney Sarah Geers. “We are pleased that we were able to overturn this backroom deal between a special interest group and the state agency that is supposed to protect our health and the health of our environment.”

George Meyer of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation described today’s decision as a win for citizens who are harmed by special interest groups’ attempts to roll back environmental protections. “People in every corner of the state are increasingly concerned about the safety of their well water and the health of their lakes and streams. We chose to intervene in this case to prevent DNR from taking a major step backward in environmental law enforcement by giving in to business lobbyists.”

“This ruling is a victory for those of us working to achieve clean, swimmable and fishable waters in the Milwaukee River Basin,” added Cheryl Nenn of Milwaukee Riverkeeper. “Comprehensive state oversight of runoff and other water pollution caused by CAFOs is necessary to help us reach our goals.”

For more information on the DBA v. DNR case, visit [Midwest Environmental Advocates](#) website.

Midwest Environmental Advocates is a public interest organization that uses the power of the law to support communities fighting for environmental accountability. Learn more about MEA on the web at midwestadvocates.org, like MEA on [Facebook](#) or follow @MidwestAdvocate on [Twitter](#).

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