

Blue Water Business Consortium

Wisconsin's small business voice for clean, plentiful water

December 18, 2015

Madame Secretary:

We are writing to you as Wisconsin business owners who are heavily invested in clean and plentiful water in Wisconsin. Our members hail from all corners of the state and represent a healthy variety of interests: waterfront development, agriculture, manufacturing, recreation, retail and tourism.

Our water-related businesses are important drivers for economic growth in the communities in which we are invested. For example:

- If tourism were a corporation, it would be the fifth largest Fortune 500 company in Wisconsin (revenues exceeding \$18.5 Billion in 2014¹)², and, in Wisconsin, tourism is synonymous with clean and healthy rivers and lakes;
- In 2013 alone, Wisconsin had more than \$1.5 billion worth of real estate change hands that was connected to water (source: Terra Firma Realty, Inc. and WIREX MLS);
- The craft beer industry - whose main ingredient is high-quality water - contributed more than \$1.7 Billion to the Wisconsin economy in 2014³.

We have been following the media reports about the Petition for Corrective Action, filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with growing concern. The issues identified in the petition have a very direct effect on our own businesses and livelihoods. The businesses we nurture, the jobs we create and the economic growth we contribute to all live or die by adequate access to clean water, and systems and processes by which that water is protected.

We worry about the levels of contaminants in the water we use to manufacture our products; our clients expect their vacations to happen on clean, safe rivers and lakes; our crops depend on long term access to groundwater; our home sales rise and fall by the clarity of the nearby waters.

For us, being “open for business” is a heartening message because our businesses rely on our waters being clean and accessible. But cleanliness and access necessitate a balance in how water is used, and how that use is monitored and regulated. We firmly believe that water stewardship is essential to the prosperity of our businesses. The jobs-versus-environment argument is a false one, and in our view a self-defeating choice.

As such, we ask to have a dialogue with you to find out how the agency is planning to address the challenges highlighted in the Petition for Corrective Action. We also welcome the opportunity to share with you our need for a reasonable and level playing field for all when managing water resources, whether the business is a small family-owned tavern on a lake or a major multinational corporation. We all contribute to the economic vitality of Wisconsin and we are all residents who build homes, raise children, shop, swim, fish, paddle and hunt in this beautiful state.

A delegation of our consortium would like to meet with you early in the new year to learn more about what the DNR is doing to address the management concerns raised in the Petition for Corrective Action. We would like to use that meeting to also convey our general concern that the waters of the

state belong to all of us, and small businesses like ours desire a strong, effective, committed natural resources agency to steward the waters on which our livelihoods depend.

We ask that you advise us of your availability for a meeting in early January and will follow up with you soon to determine your availability. In the meantime should you wish to contact someone directly feel free to reach out to consortium member Darren Bush of Rutabaga Paddlesports in Madison at darrenb@rutabaga.com or (608) 223-9300 to offer meeting times that work for you.

We look forward to the opportunity to meet.

Sincerely,

The Blue Water Business Consortium

Carlson's Rustic Ridge Supper Club; Castle Rock Lake, Juneau County
Central Waters Brewing Co.; Amherst
Chequamegon Adventure Company; Minocqua
Driftless Angler; Viroqua
Holiday Acres; Rhinelander
Indian Trails Campground; Pardeeville
Isherwood Farms; Plover
Lake Louie Brewing; Arena
Milwaukee Kayak Company; Milwaukee
Rutabaga Paddlesports; Madison
South Shore Brewing; Ashland
Terra Firma Realty, Inc.; DeForest
The Flying Pig Gallery & Greenspace; Algoma
The Lure Bar & Grill; Lake Petenwell, Adams County
Underground Food Collective; Madison
Wisconsin Canoe Company; Spring Green

Sources:

¹ <http://industry.travelwisconsin.com/research/economic-impact>

² http://host.madison.com/wsj/business/ten-wisconsin-companies-make-the-fortune-list-for/article_b0bf5377-7fa6-5eef-95bb-1deb8a3352e8.html

³ <https://www.brewersassociation.org/statistics/by-state/?state=WI>