



Environmental and Public Health Groups Announce Legal Action to Defend Communities from Toxic Chemical Lawsuit Brought by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce

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Madison, WI— Today, Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) filed a [request to intervene](#) in a lawsuit initiated by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce that threatens to fundamentally undermine the Spills Law—a bedrock environmental and public health protection that keeps Wisconsinites safe from exposure to PFAS and other hazardous substances.

[The lawsuit](#) was filed in February by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce and Leather Rich, Inc., who are suing the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in an effort to limit the agency’s ability to investigate environmental contamination and require responsible parties to clean up contaminated sites.

MEA’s request to intervene was filed in Waukesha County Circuit Court on behalf of a group of environmental and public health advocates who are seeking to participate in the case in order to defend their interests and the interests of their members.

The group includes Citizens for a Clean Wausau, Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Environmental Health Network and Doug Oitzinger, a former mayor of Marinette.

“WMC’s agenda prioritizes industry profits at the expense of public health and natural resources,” said **Tony Wilkin Gibart, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates**. “MEA filed a motion to intervene on behalf of our clients because we refuse to sit by while WMC attempts to dismantle one of Wisconsin’s most significant environmental and public health protections.”

Doug Oitzinger, a former mayor of the City of Marinette, said, “We’re not talking about theoretical legal arguments here. The court’s decision will have real-world consequences. Under the Spills Law, DNR is providing critical assistance to people in Marinette, Peshtigo, La Crosse and other communities devastated by PFAS contamination. If WMC prevails, that assistance would vanish—the required well testing, the orders for cleanup and remediation—it would all come to a halt. No other law gives DNR the authority to address PFAS pollution.”

“The outcome of this case could have implications for virtually every community in the state, not just those facing PFAS contamination,” said **Tom Kilian of Citizens for a Clean Wausau**. “Here in Wausau, the Spills Law has enabled us to address industrial contamination that impacts residential areas, public parks, and the Wisconsin River. Without the Spills Law, we’d have no legal recourse for holding polluters accountable.”

Everyday people would be forced to figure out how to deal with soil and water contamination on their own."

"Our request to intervene in this case is about defending the legal protections that keep Wisconsin families safe," said **Beth Neary, M.D., Co-President of Wisconsin Environmental Health Network**. "Responding to hazardous substance spills and cleaning up contaminated soil and groundwater is critical to protecting public health."

Allison Werner, Executive Director of River Alliance of Wisconsin, said, "Preserving the integrity of the Spills Law is crucial to DNR's ability to protect Wisconsin's rivers and lakes. WMC's assault on the Spills Law is a significant threat to Wisconsin's water resources, to public health, and to all the sectors of our economy—including tourism and agriculture—that rely on clean water."

"When it comes to regulating PFAS and other toxic chemicals, we need to move forward, not backward," said **Dean Hoegger, President and Executive Director of Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin**. "The idea that the Spills Law could be gutted and that we could return to a time when polluters weren't held accountable for cleaning up contaminated soil and water—it's unthinkable. Unfortunately, that's exactly what's at stake in this lawsuit."

Learn more about this case [here](#).

View a recording of the June 14th press conference [here](#).

***Midwest Environmental Advocates** is a public interest law center that works to defend public rights, protect natural resources, and ensure transparency and accountability in government. Learn more at www.midwestadvocates.org or www.facebook.com/midwestadvocates.*

***Citizens for a Clean Wausau** is an environmental watchdog group whose volunteers monitor the activities and impacts of significant current and past local polluters. CCW works primarily on issues related to defining the extent and nature of industrial contamination in a footprint on Wausau's southwest side, so that it can and will be remediated. Learn more at www.cleanwausau.com or www.facebook.com/cleanwausau.*

***Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin** is a nonprofit corporation organized to promote a safe, healthy, and sustainable environment in northeast Wisconsin, to educate and inform members and the public on environmental issues, and to take action on behalf of members and the public to protect the environment and human health. Learn more at <https://www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/>*

*Formed in 1993, **River Alliance of Wisconsin** is a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that empowers people to protect and restore Wisconsin's waters. The organization's membership includes more than 1,500 individuals, businesses, and local watershed groups. For more information, visit www.wisconsinrivers.org*

***Wisconsin Environmental Health Network** is a group of healthcare professionals collaborating with local environmental advocates. WEHN works to inform healthcare professionals, the public, and policy makers about the effects of environmental toxins and climate change on public health. WEHN develops and promotes clinical tools, offers environmental health education for public and healthcare professionals, and advocates for strong environmental regulation to protect human health. WEHN is a program of the nonprofit Physicians for Social Responsibility Wisconsin. Learn more at <https://www.wehnonline.org/>*

***Doug Oitzinger** is a former Mayor of the City of Marinette who came out of retirement after learning about the PFAS contamination impacting his community. He is now a Marinette City Council Member representing people who have been impacted by the plume of PFAS contamination stemming from Tyco Fire Products' testing operations. Watch [this video](#) to learn more about how the Spills Law has enabled his community to address PFAS contamination and why he is seeking to intervene in this case.*

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