

Groundwater Advisory Committee
Options Paper
for
November 15 Ballot

Date: November 14, 2007

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Topic: Adaptive Management Issues for Groundwater Quantity Legislation

DISCUSSION:

Increased demand for water caused by population and economic growth as well as changing stresses from weather patterns have caused adverse impacts to water resources in areas of Wisconsin such as Waukesha County, Dane County, and the central sand plains. Present indicators suggest stressors will only increase in the future. To prevent the problems we see occurring elsewhere from affecting groundwater protection areas (GPAs), management of the state's water resources must adapt to increased demands. In particular, the Groundwater Quantity Law, Act 310, must have adaptive management as its underpinning to ensure that both our resources and our economic growth can be protected and, where they are in conflict, informed choices can be made. Act 310 has been described as a first step in the protection of groundwater quantity in Wisconsin; subsequent steps are necessary and must be responsive to changing population, economic, and environmental conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

Adaptive management is a systematic process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operating programs. In the case of Act 310, this means the law should be on a regular, five-year review schedule that evaluates the law in light of broad water management goals and state-wide water management policies. Data and evaluation provided by the Department and the Groundwater Coordinating Council should be used by the Legislature to regularly assess the effectiveness and breadth of the Law and to revise it, if necessary.