



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Allison Werner, Executive Director
River Alliance of Wisconsin
608-257-2424 ext. 113
awerner@wisconsinrivers.org

**Clean water referendum passes with bipartisan support
in Marquette, Portage and Wood County**

Wisconsin—April 7th, 2020—Yesterday, the voters in Marquette, Portage and Wood County declared broad bipartisan support for the right to clean water in Wisconsin.

Voters in these three counties showed clear support for the Clean Water Now referendum, with a 73% yes vote in Marquette County, a 77% yes vote in Portage County, and a 76% yes vote in Wood County.

They voted yes to the referendum question on their ballot: *Should the State of Wisconsin establish a right to clean water to protect human health, the environment, and the diverse cultural and natural heritage of Wisconsin?*

These counties, like most in Wisconsin, have faced water quality challenges for years. Leaders and county board supervisors have asked the state legislature for assistance before, but as of today, they are still waiting for these leaders to take real action.

Governor Evers and the legislature spent 2019 focusing on water. It was both the Year of Clean Drinking Water and the Speaker's Water Quality Task Force. The increased attention on water was due to the years of grassroots attention and demands to clean up our waters. However, the proposals from the Task Force fell short. The Senate never took action on the 13 bills that were proposed. Our state must do better.

The result of the Clean Water Now referendum vote gives Wisconsin's policy leaders even more evidence that clean water is a bipartisan issue that voters across the state want them to address.

The first step the legislature can take is to include funding in the state budget to solve Wisconsin's water quality problems. This includes addressing nitrates, PFAS, lead, and other pollutants that are keeping people from being able to drink their water, contaminating fish and wildlife, and polluting Wisconsin's rivers and lakes to the point that some cannot be used safely for recreation.

“Long-term, the legislature needs to set policies that make it clear that clean water is a right for all Wisconsinites. They need to address the root causes of the pollution and provide the tools to state and local agencies to tackle these difficult challenges. River Alliance of Wisconsin and our partners are prepared to offer solutions to manage Wisconsin's waters in a better way. Our recently released Wisconsin Water Agenda provides the framework to manage Wisconsin's waters in a way that protects the health of people and the economy of the state now and for generations forward,” shared Allison Werner, Executive Director River Alliance of Wisconsin.

“The recent results of the April 6th clean water referendum should signal to legislators how important the issue is, and—hopefully—lead to much needed progress in an area that is admittedly complex, but also a huge factor in what our future will look like in this state. Too many things hinge upon water availability and quality for us to not find ways to work together, problem solve, and think creatively and constructively about how we can improve in an area that is fundamental to our lives, our economy, and the future of our state,” Chris Holman, Portage County Executive shared.

Bill Leichtnam, Wood County Supervisor, stated, “On April 6th, Wood County residents affirmed their desire to protect our most precious natural resource AND implore Wisconsin manufacturers, businesses, farm organizations, legislators, and each individual to do their part in renewing our waters and keeping them clean far into the future.”

Al Rosenthal, Marquette County Board Supervisor, shared, “Most of Marquette County is based on a successful agriculture industry and recreation industry, so clean water is a must if we are going to continue to grow and our farmers are to be successful. Our total economy, in order to be successful, needs clean water. The results of the clean water referendum let our legislators know how important clean water is to them and we need to act now, before it is too late!”

The Clean Water Now referendum is a multi-county, multi-year referenda campaign. Additional counties in Wisconsin are expected to put the referendum on their ballots in April 2022.

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Campaign Logo & Images:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FROxJPd3JZDJ6Jw-ZM85llccezviSoi4?usp=sharing>

ABOUT

Clean Water Now:

Clean Water Now is an effort of the River Alliance of Wisconsin. It is a statewide, multi-county, multi-year referenda campaign to demand the right to clean water in Wisconsin.

For more information, visit: www.voteformcleanwater.com

River Alliance of Wisconsin:

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**