

PRIVATE WATER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
January 7, 2026
Kalahari Resort and Conference Center – Ebony Meeting Room

Meeting Notes (DRAFT)

Attendees:

In-person: Marty Nessman (DNR, Chairperson), Pete Chase (WGNHS), Terry Marshall, Bob Aune, Dennis Crow (co-chair), Scott O'Brien, Brian Broga, Bruce Walker, Tim Jenks, Kevin Olson, Chad Vande Yacht, Terry Farago, Jared Niewoehner (DNR), Bob Gundrum (DNR), Rick Peterson (WWWA), Jeff Beiriger

Online: Tim Butterfield

2026 Council Membership

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 5:09

Discussion Points:

1. Kevin Olson's term as Water Well Driller representing the DNR will expire on 1/31/2026. Kevin will not extend his membership for a 2nd term.
2. Tim Jenks position as Water Well Driller representing the WWWA will expire on 1/31/2026. Tim agreed to serve for a 2nd term.

Action Items:

- A Water Well Driller is to be appointed by the DNR to fill the vacancy left by Kevin Olson's departure from the Advisory Council.

New Business – Compressible Couplings for Pitless Unit Connections and Steel Riser on PVC Casing Connections

Presenter: Jared Niewoehner

Time: 5:50 - 20:40

Discussion Points:

1. The department was contacted by Minnesota Department of Health regarding how a steel riser is used in Wisconsin on PVC casing. Their code currently does not allow this.
2. Wisconsin allows threaded slip x NPT coupling for PVC to steel.
3. Minnesota is not aware of ASTM 480 couplings that are approved for this.
4. Wisconsin code disallows pitless units or riser pipes to be connected via compressible joint (NR 812.31(3)(b)3 & 812.42(12)(a)6).
5. Council members were asked if they had used compressible couplings in other states and discussion was held on whether this should be allowed in Wisconsin in a future code revision.
6. A reason why Wisconsin does not approve compressible couplings is because they do not restrain pipe movement and are susceptible to failure with movement caused by frost heave.
7. Council members expressed concern with use of compressed couplings. Vertical pull strength is one factor that was questioned. More research is needed.
8. One application where it would be an advantage is with flowing wells where gluing a PVC connection may be difficult.

Action Items:

- More research will be done on uses in other states.

- Tim Butterfield offered to provide further information on threaded products or a glued PVC joint with enough surface area to ensure seal strength and integrity.
- Jared Niewoehner will do further research and report back at a future meeting.

New Business - Airbnb Commercial vs Residential Classification

Presenter: Terry Marshall

Time: 20:55 – 37:20

Discussion Points:

1. Airbnb's are being set up as a business with 40-acre parcels purchased. Multiple residential homes are built on the parcel as Airbnb units.
2. Wells for these units are 20 gpm or less with constant pressure pumps (typical for residential units).
3. When 4 or 5 units are built on the parcel, the 70-gpm threshold is being reached.
4. What is questioned is whether treating this as commercial high cap property is appropriate.
5. It was pointed out that this is a residential (not commercial) setting, and having high cap paperwork required is unnecessary.
6. Each unit could be sold as an individual lot.
7. The department's high cap program was contacted, but no response has been provided.
8. Adam Freihoefer works with the department's Water Use section and will be available for questions on this later at the conference.

Decisions / Outcomes:

- No policy has been set by the department regarding Airbnb parcels being classified and treated as high cap property.

Action Items:

- Terry Marshall and Jeff Beiriger will seek out Adam Freihoefer at the conference to verify whether policy has been established or if the department intends to establish high cap requirements for Airbnb properties.

WGNHS Updates

Presenter: Pete Chase

Time: 37:55 – 1:04:49

Discussion Points:

Maquoketa Group Subsurface Mapping

- Research is underway to create depth-structure and thickness interpretations of the Maquoketa group.
- Original intent with Airborne electromagnetics (AEM) was to determine depth to bedrock and to establish policy on manure spreading.
- AEM is used to determine rock and soil types.
- Research is being done to determine if airborne data can also be used to ground truth where water below the Maquoketa is saline and of poor quality.
- Gama logs / resistivity are used to measure potassium which is a marker for shale.
- Light blue areas are thought to be areas of saline water.
- The Maquoketa is not uniform. Water capacity and quality changes with depth.
- Gardner Lime Kiln core samples were analyzed in one-foot intervals.
- Core samples were measured for potassium, silica and calcium.
- Silica is used as an indicator of sand. Calcium indicates dolomite.
- These parameters are used to try to determine areas that might provide a good water source.
- WGNHS is planning more borings to the east in Door, Calumet and Manitowoc counties.

Wisconsin Groundwater Network Monitoring

- Around 100 wells are used to monitor water levels across the state.
- Data provides information on aquifer recharge from groundwater and from surface water sources. It is also used to control demand for agriculture during times of drought.
- USGS funds maintenance of monitoring wells and pools Wisconsin data with that collected from other states.
- Data is also used for well siting, documenting impacts of pumping, and groundwater resource evaluation.
- Brown County well drawdown was presented as an example.
- A question was raised regarding the impact of data centers on groundwater levels.
- Water demand for data centers varies depending on design. Closed loop systems require less water and are more efficient.

DNR Updates - ARPA Well Compensation

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 1:14:32 – 1:30:40

Discussion Points:

Awards Summary

- The end of ARPA well compensation program has been reached with all of the \$15 million from federal funding being allocated.
- The program ran from Oct. 2022 to December 2025.
- 1,132 applications were received.
- 945 grant awards have been issued. Grants were given in 71 of 72 Wisconsin counties.
- \$10 million has been paid out through 2025.
- The program was very successful. Members of the council were commended for their participation and contributions.
- The biggest benefit to the state was improved access to clean water at over 1,000 locations across the state.

Drilling Contractor Payment Concerns

- Concerns were expressed regarding the 90-day payment period that causes delays in payments to the contractor.
- Questions were raised regarding the payment process and what the department requires before the contractor is paid by the applicant/receiver of a grant.
- The project must be approved by the department before work commences. Once approved, the contractor can be paid at any time. The applicant who pays the contractor will then be reimbursed after all required paperwork has been submitted to the department. It is a reimbursement program. Often those who require the grant do not have the funds to pay upfront.
- It was suggested that the payment process be reviewed for any future grant programs to expedite payment to the drilling company.

Grant award demographics

- Marathon, Portage, Chippewa, Oneida and Waukesha were the top five counties to receive grants.
- Most grants for Waukesha county were well abandonment.
- Marathon, Portage and Chippewa counties were mostly nitrate related.
- Oneida county grants were mostly PFAS related.
- 158 grants were awarded for treatment systems; 582 grants were for drilling new wells and 3 grants were awarded for hookup to a municipal supply.

Reminders and recommendations:

- Approximately 150 projects still need to be completed.

- Work must be completed by July 30th, 2026.
- Well construction and abandonment reports should be submitted to the department as soon as possible.
- Contact DNR Regional Rep when work is finished so that the required inspection can be completed.
- All construction/installation must be completed by July 31, 2026.
- The deadline for submitting payment requests to the department is August 31, 2026.
- The department cannot pay out money after December 31, 2026, so keep the 90-day payment period in mind.

Pending legislation:

- Other bills are under consideration including PFAS legislation.
- Another (emergency grants) grant is pending for PFAS and manganese.
- Legislation is looking at PFAS for the Well Comp statutory program.

DNR Updates - Licensing / Continuing Education

Presenter: Bob Gundrum

Time: 1:30:40 – 1:46:39

Discussion Points:

2025 new license and expiration data

- A brief summary was provided on 2025 licensing.
- Number of new licenses issued in 2025 and expirations as of 1/1/2026 was presented.
- A trend reversal in pump installer licenses issued was noted.
- Six licenses were issued to new water well drillers while 10 water well driller licenses were moved to expired.

Online renewal processing data

- An upward trend in online renewals (vs renewal by mail) has continued.
- 81% of all credentials were processed online for 2026 which is up from 74% processed online for 2025.

10-year pump installer licensing and business registration data

- The number of pump installer licenses decreased from 1276 to 1068 for a 16% decline.
- It appears the decreasing trend has reversed in the last 3 years.
- Pump installer licenses have increased from a low of 1023 in 2023 to 1068 for 2025.
- Business registrations have decreased from 481 held in 2025 to 463 held in 2025.

10-year water well driller licensing and business registration data

- In the past 10 years, the number of well driller licenses decreased from 287 to 226 for a 21% decline.
- In the past 3 years, well driller licenses have decreased slightly from 229 to 226.
- In the past 3 years, well driller business registrations have held steady in the 131 to 138 range.

10-year heat exchange driller licensing and business registration data

- The number of heat exchange driller licenses decreased from 37 to 29 in the past 10 years for a 22% decline.
- Heat exchange driller licenses have increased from 25 to 29 in the past 3 years.
- Heat exchange driller business registrations have held steady in the 22 to 25 range.

10-year rig operator registration data

- In the past 10 years, there has been a 9% increase in water well drilling rig operator registrations and a 110% increase in heat exchange drilling rig operator registrations

- In the past 3 years, there has been a noticeable uptick in heat exchange drilling rig operators. Registrations there have increased from 31 in 2023 to 42 in 2025.

Decisions / Outcomes:

- There is a need to capture data on when licenses were first issued to those who have held a license in each respective year.
- There is a concern regarding the age of the work force and whether problems might be on the horizon with retirements.
- There was a suggestion to plot the number of licenses issued in increments of five years.
- Another recommendation was to capture the number of first-time licensees by calendar year.
- A question was raised regarding incentives for geothermal projects. All incentives at the federal level ended last year. Jeff Beiriger commented that there are still state incentives available through Focus on Energy. Attention at the federal level has shifted more towards commercial projects. For commercial systems, incentives are provided through expense deductions like accelerated depreciation. There have been discussions about community loops that would capture heat generated by data centers. This would reduce the use of fossil fuels in these communities and would be seen as a benefit from an environmental aspect.

Action Items:

- Bob Gundrum will pull data from the department database and compile to provide age of the licensed driller and pump installer workforce over time. If possible, results will be plotted on an annual basis over the past 10 to 20 years.

DNR Updates – Field Enforcement

Presenter: Jared Niewoehner

Time: 1:46:42 – 1:48:48

Discussion Points:

1. 12 NON's sent in 2025 – mostly reporting issues.
2. 2 active cases that have gone to secondary enforcement for reporting violations
3. Tom Puchalski is retiring in February. Last Day in office is 2/17/26
4. Dave Johnson / DNR Groundwater Section has retired.
 - Call Regional Field Staff with questions on casing recommendations or other things that normally would have been directed to Dave Johnson .
 - Dave was instrumental in dealing with ARPA related questions.

DNR Updates - NR 812 / NR 146 Rule Revision Implementation

Presenter: Marty Nessman / Bob Gundrum

Time: 1:48:55 – 1:55:00

Discussion Points:

1. NR 812 / NR 146 code revisions will be published in February and go into effect March 1, 2026.
2. Forms, fact sheets, web content and licensing exams are being updated to be consistent with rule revisions.
3. Training on the revisions is to be provided at the conference.
4. There will be internal training provided for delegated county staff and DATCP.
5. Much of the NR 146 revisions will take effect in 2027. Reduced training hours for driller license applicants will take effect on March 1 as will the changes to expiration dates for licenses and rig operator registrations that are issued after October 31. These will expire on the December 31 occurring after the license or rig operator registration has been in effect for one year.
6. Access to the revised code will be available through the WARS and WCR systems
7. The department will not be sending paper copies by mail to license holders.

8. The two-step verification process is required to access the WARS and WCR systems. Concerns were expressed regarding the verification process when accessing from different locations or computers.

Old Business – Pitless Adapter Issues

Presenter: Jared Niewoehner

Time: 1:55:10 – 2:00:50

Discussion Points:

1. With regard to Maass quality issues - a letter was sent to Maass by the department. Maass responded back by phone. They seemed receptive to the feedback and gave assurances that they would look into the matter.
2. It was mentioned at a previous council meeting that WWWA would represent the industry and also send a letter to voice industry concerns with Maass product quality.
3. The letter sent by the department was forwarded to Rick Peterson of WWWA.
4. There currently is a lack of availability of pitless adapters across the country.
5. Tariffs affected demand as concerns rose regarding bringing foundry production onshore. There is not a lot of foundry capacity in the U.S.
6. Adapters from other manufacturers are available but are not widely used in the industry.

Action Items:

- WWWA will send a letter of concern to Maass.
- Jared Niewoehner will check back with Maass while at the conference to see what action has been taken.

Old Business – Coliform Positive Wells

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 2:00:55 – 2:28:50

Discussion Points:

1. Marty has contacted the Department of Health and DATCP . DATCP licenses labs that do bacteria analysis.
2. When labs report a sample as being “unsafe” it carries a negative connotation. Labs are not required to use the term “unsafe”. The department has requested that they consider changing how coliform positive sample results are reported.
3. There is no coliform standard or MCL. It is an indicator organism.
4. Well owners may still request that a well driller return until they achieve a sample that is coliform negative.
5. Regarding the count test, Marty Nessman has discussed this with DHS, and they will consider this approach but not much research is available to support acceptance of a safe number. There are different types of coliform organisms. It matters more what type is present than the number that are present.
6. A question was raised as to whether code requires the driller to go back to achieve a safe sample. If so, is there anything that can be done to change rule language to avoid situations where the driller is required to make many return trips and to achieve a safe sample.
7. Return trips can result in a major expense to the driller. There is loss of time and opportunity for additional work.
8. A question was raised regarding rule language that says if after three consecutive chlorinations by a professional, if the well is still coliform positive, the well should be abandoned. The department commented that the well is not required to be abandoned. Rule language allows the department to take action if necessary. Enforcement discretion has been exercised in these cases.
9. Discussions were held around causes for coliform positive samples including connections to the household, and the need to isolate the well before sampling. Dead end lines in the home can be

a source of bacteria that can migrate to the well. The reason why a sample needs to be analyzed within 48 hours was explained. The use of count tests was discussed.

Action Items:

- Jeff Beiriger suggested that WWSA contact other state agencies to see how they address this issue. Other states may have already addressed this through their rule language.
- Marty Nessman will continue talking with DHS and DATCP regarding a count standard and whether data is available to support this approach.
- It was recommended that Andrew Jacque be contacted while at the conference regarding the questions raised in this discussion ask him how the problem of repeat trips to achieve a coliform free sample might be addressed.

Approve October Meeting Minutes

Presenter: Marty Nessman

- October meeting minutes were approved.

Future Meeting Dates

- Wisconsin Rural Water in Plover and Field and Farms near Manitowoc were mentioned as possible locations.
- Thursday, April 23rd, 9:30 – 12:30 am was selected for the next meeting date and time.

Adjourn