



NEWS RELEASE

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SUBJECT: *DNR to respond to petition at fall NRB meeting*
Petitioners seek to add to list of top quality waters

MADISON - The Department of Natural Resources is reviewing data pertaining to a petition to increase legal protection for 100 river segments in northern Wisconsin and will bring its recommendations to the Natural Resources Board this fall, Wisconsin's top water official says.

"We've taken a comprehensive look at this and plan to respond with a detailed set of recommendations before the end of the year," says DNR Water Division Administrator Todd Ambs.

The August 2004 petition, prepared by Midwest Environmental Advocates in collaboration with the River Alliance of Wisconsin and with the support of more than 40 conservation and environmental groups, requested that DNR list those 100 segments as Exceptional Resource Waters or Outstanding Resource waters. Those designations would trigger additional levels of protection from pollution.

Under Natural Resources Chapter 207 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code, pollutants discharged into either Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters may not exceed background levels of pollutants, although there are some limited exceptions for discharges into Exceptional Resource Waters, according to Laura Bub, a DNR water quality standards specialist.

More than 2,000 stream miles, 97 lakes and six flowages are classified as "Outstanding Resource Waters," and 3,661 miles of streams have been classified as "Exceptional Resource Waters" as the result of identification processes in the 1990s, according to the "Wisconsin Water Quality Assessment Report to Congress 2004."

Bub says the department has convened a team of DNR water quality and river experts to review the petition request. The group will make its recommendation to the Natural Resources Board this fall, seeking board authorization for public hearings on the agency's proposal.