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**1,100 Miles of Northern Wisconsin's Most Pristine Rivers Protected for All of Us**

MADISON – A recent advertisement in a Northern Wisconsin newspaper says it all, offering “rare, wonderful Northwoods properties” with “frontage on a northern river with an Outstanding Resource Waters designation.” As of today, there are 1,100 more miles of northern rivers carrying the special designations of Outstanding and Exceptional Natural Resource Waters, to be afforded an extra level of protection in recognition of their valuable fisheries, outstanding recreational opportunities and their unique environmental settings.

In August of 2004, Midwest Environmental Advocates filed a petition on behalf of the River Alliance of Wisconsin and 43 additional statewide and local conservation organizations calling on the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to increase protections on over 100 northern rivers. Three tribal governments passed formal resolutions of support.

The rivers included in the request were identified through the DNR's Northern Rivers Initiative, an inclusive process drawing expertise and opinion from property owners, elected officials, tribal members and resource experts across the north, as the best of the best. After two years of research, analysis and public hearings, the DNR determined they had sufficient data to demonstrate that 45 of the rivers indeed met their criteria as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters. The Natural Resources Board unanimously agreed in June, and as of today, the Legislature has allowed the designations to become official.

The special designations ensure that the excellent water quality in these 45 rivers, which include sections of the Flambeau, the Amnicon, the Jump, the Chippewa and the headwaters of the Wisconsin Rivers, will be maintained. Development is not prohibited along the shore, but requires additional oversight to make sure development activities do not degrade the resource. The designations also raise the bar for any future “point source” pollution, requiring a higher level of treatment for any discharges. Keeping these pristine waters clean protects fish and wildlife, enhances recreational opportunities, increases property desirability as demonstrated above, and enhances Wisconsin's \$11.7 billion tourism industry.

The original idea to recognize and protect the pristine water quality of these northern rivers came from a group of several local citizens in north central Wisconsin dedicated to protecting them as a legacy for future generations. One of those groups was the South Fork Flambeau River Watershed Association.

According to Marty Kascewicz, an active member in the South Fork Flambeau group, “How can we as a people say to future generations that we refuse to protect the birthright of these rivers that now enrich our lives?” Today, we can celebrate that as a people, we said “yes” to protecting the values of the state.

For a complete list of all existing Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters in Wisconsin, visit [www.dnr.state.wi.us](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us).