



Wetland Regulatory Reform (SB 600 / AB 547)

Priority Statement:

The Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) SUPPORTS legislative efforts to reform state wetland regulation by striking a balance between economic development and environmental protection. Senate Bill 600 / Assembly Bill 547 will provide much-needed wetland regulatory relief by removing development barriers, while simultaneously protecting Wisconsin's environmental resources.

Background:

Wetlands are an important natural resource, providing numerous ecological and economic benefits, including wildlife habitat, improved water quality, protection against flooding, and numerous recreational opportunities. Wisconsin has 5 million acres of wetlands and roughly 85% are connected to navigable waters that are regulated by the federal government.

The balance of Wisconsin's wetlands inventory are isolated, intrastate wetlands that are regulated by the state. Wisconsin is one of only a handful of states that regulates non-federal wetlands, and these regulations have created unnecessary and costly development obstacles.

WEDA members value the environment and the important role it plays in Wisconsin's economy, but the state's permitting requirements for non-federal wetlands are excessive and place a heavy burden on local economic development efforts. Reforming Wisconsin's regulation of non-federal wetlands is long overdue and necessary to advance future growth.

Bill Summary:

SB 600 / AB 547 eliminates the permitting requirements for both artificial, man-made wetlands and isolated, non-federal wetlands. The legislation also exempts artificial wetlands from mitigation requirements. In addition, the legislation expedites the use of monies paid into the state's in-lieu fee subprogram designed to create, enhance, and preserve high-quality wetlands. The bill does NOT impact the regulation of federal wetlands in Wisconsin.

Action Requested:

Please support SB 600 / AB 547 to streamline the regulation of non-federal wetlands in Wisconsin. The legislation will remove a substantial barrier to economic growth, allowing development to move forward in a timely and cost-effective manner without jeopardizing the state's valuable natural resources.

Key Discussion Points

- Wetlands are an important environmental resource that provide numerous ecological and economic benefits.
- Wisconsin is one of only a handful of states that regulates non-federal wetlands.
- Regulation of non-federal wetlands has created development barriers and costly project delays.
- SB 600 / AB 547 strikes a balance between economic development and the protection of Wisconsin's wetlands.
- The bill eliminates state permitting requirements for non-federal wetlands, while maintaining current delineation and mitigation requirements.
- SB 600 / AB 547 does NOT impact the regulation of Wisconsin's federal wetlands, which are connected to navigable waters.

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