



## Central Sands Water Action Coalition Supports the High-Capacity Well Legal Challenge

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Clean Wisconsin and the Pleasant Lake Management District have filed a legal challenge against the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The litigation addresses the agency’s continued neglect of its granted authority to issue high-capacity well permits that protect water quality and quantity and duty to protect the waters of Wisconsin. Today, on behalf of the Central Sands Water Action Coalition (CSWAC), Midwest Environmental Advocates filed an *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief in support of the litigation.

In October 2016, [Clean Wisconsin challenged nine high-capacity well applications approved by the DNR](#). Most of the wells are in the Central Sands region. CSWAC is concerned about the continued negative impact high-capacity well pumping has on lakes, streams, wetlands and other surface waters. “CSWAC’s members have seen firsthand how high-capacity wells can impact lake and stream levels,” said CSWAC Chairman Skip Hansen.

Long Lake, Pleasant Lake, Pine Lake and Huron Lake are all on the list of Central Sands Lakes that have been impacted by high-capacity wells. Water level data from the United States Geologic Service confirms dramatic declines in lake levels during years in which irrigation increases. For example, Huron Lake in Waushara County, the county with the third largest groundwater withdrawals in the state, experienced a three foot water level decline during the growing season in 2012 when groundwater withdrawals by high capacity wells increased by 68%. CSWAC and Huron Lake Association members, Monica and Dan Trudell live outside of Plainfield in Waushara County. In 2007 they noticed a drop in water pressure caused by their domestic well going dry, undoubtedly due to water extraction from several high-capacity wells in the vicinity. The Trudells were forced to drill a new well at a cost of \$7000. They were not the only persons affected - their next door neighbor also had to drill a new well, as did several other homeowners in the vicinity. Since there are 850,000 domestic wells in Wisconsin supplying drinking water to families, the cost to families would be substantial even if a fraction of these wells dried up because of high-capacity pumping.

The DNR’s record for all well approvals includes the Department’s own findings that the permitted wells would negatively impact these waters protected by the Public Trust Doctrine in our state’s Constitution, including high-quality trout streams. “The DNR has the duty to protect

the waters of Wisconsin and the approval of these wells shows that the DNR chose to ignore their own science about the potential harm these wells could have on lakes and streams. When our state is not protecting our waters, which impacts both our ecosystem and economy, we have no choice but to stand up and demand that the courts intervene to assure our laws are followed,” stated Hansen.

In this *amicus curiae* action, Midwest Environmental Advocates represents the Central Sands Water Action Coalition, who argue through citizen and local government testimonials that shared water resources in their communities are constitutionally protected and held in trust by the state. They also argue that the DNR is constitutionally required to protect these resources for all residents of the state. The approved wells would impact water quality and quantity as well as domestic wells, property values, the local economy, fishing, boating and other use and enjoyment of the water.



The Central Sands Water Action Coalition is a membership organization of 66 lake associations, lake districts, and conservation groups representing more than 50,000 members and their families concerned with negative impacts on water resources in the Central Sands Region of Wisconsin.