



Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 15, 2022

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 494 in its entirety.

This bill would make numerous changes to the Department of Natural Resources' aquatic plant management program. The bill would modify the purpose of the aquatic plant management program to require the department to utilize management methods that ensure invasive and nuisance aquatic plants are suppressed or eradicated to the greatest extent possible. The bill would also require that, when reviewing an aquatic plant management plan, the department give equal consideration to plans that utilize chemical treatments. Additionally, the bill would provide an exemption from the permitting process for certain private ponds under 10 acres.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to requiring the department to eradicate invasive and nuisance aquatic plants without sufficient safeguards for protecting the plants and waters of the state. The department currently balances the benefits of eliminating invasive and nuisance aquatic plants with other ecological, social, and economic impacts. Setting eradication as the standard could lead to overaggressive policies that harm our environment, our tourism economy, and quality of life for Wisconsin residents.

I also object to requiring the department to give chemical treatments equal consideration to non-chemical treatments. Individual bodies of water and aquatic management plans must be evaluated to determine the best management strategy. Broadly requiring the department to give equal consideration to chemical treatments, even in cases where chemical treatment is not appropriate, may have the effect of favoring chemical treatments over non-chemical treatments.

I further object to providing an exemption from the permitting process for certain private ponds under 10 acres. This provision could have a major impact on Wisconsin's waters, as the department estimates that it could apply to up to 45,000 bodies of water. Before issuing a permit for chemical treatment, the department reviews the body of water to determine if there are any known endangered, threatened, or special concern species located at the site. By removing the permit requirement, we would lose this valuable check and potentially harm environmentally and culturally important species.

Finally, I object to modifying the aquatic plant management program while the department is in the process of updating its administrative rules for the program. The administrative rulemaking process began in April 2020, with the approval of the scope statement and has involved considerable stakeholder input. Stakeholder input is a valuable part of the rulemaking process and gives a voice to the citizens of Wisconsin. This bill would circumvent the department's rulemaking process and disregard the stakeholder input that was collected as a part of that process.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Evers
Governor