



Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 8, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing Assembly Bill 881 in its entirety.

This bill specifies that, except in the case of an emergency, the Department of Natural Resources may not initiate, authorize, or issue a permit for a project located in a town that involves the use of stationary or portable pumps or other mechanisms that divert water to locations where water is not naturally occurring, or that raise water elevation above what is naturally occurring, unless the town board of the town in which the activity will occur approves the project by resolution. As a result, the bill limits the department's general authority under current law to regulate and control the level, flow, and course of water in navigable waters.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to this bill's limits on the department's ability to prevent flooding throughout the state. By establishing an additional level of authority at the town board level, this bill would reduce the efficiency of the department and make it harder for the department to control and prevent flooding. In addition to these concerns, the department has warned that municipalities could restrict water levels to a level too low to reasonably allow access to state-owned wetlands for recreational activities. Finally, the bill inappropriately delegates to townships the state's responsibilities to protect the public interest in navigable waterways under the public trust doctrine contained in the Wisconsin State Constitution.

This bill, along with Assembly Bill 882, appears to be directed at addressing one township's issues by changing state law. While I am sympathetic to the town of Grantsburg's concerns about flooding, water quality, and road degradation, the town's water levels are a localized issue that would be better addressed through the existing public input processes to develop solutions. My administration will continue to engage with local officials to offer support and work toward solutions for this specific situation; however, limiting the department's authority over the state's waterways in the manner outlined in this bill could lead to flooding and accessibility issues throughout Wisconsin. Therefore, I must veto this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Evers
Governor