

River Alliance of Wisconsin



306 E. Wilson St., Suite 2W
Madison, WI 53703
www.wisconsinrivers.org

Contacts: 608-257-2424
Denny Caneff, Executive Director
Rich Bogovich, Policy Program Manager

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KILL JOB CREATION, REVIVE GOOD REGULATORY REFORM BILL, CONSERVATION GROUP URGES

Madison – The Job Creation Act should be completely abandoned and a good regulatory reform bill ought to be revived, according to a statewide conservation group. In addition, the River Alliance of Wisconsin believes that passing Job Creation bodes ill for important upcoming conservation policy.

Rather than wait to see what kind of “compromise” is struck on an already severely compromised bill, the River Alliance is opposing the so-called “Job Creation Act” on its face, before the final details of the bill are known. Furthermore, the River Alliance asks both Governor Doyle and legislators to revisit AB 514, a regulatory reform bill that has bipartisan support but has been eclipsed by the far more draconian Job Creation Act.

“The Job Creation Act was never about job creation in the first place. It was cooked up in secret by special interests and ramrodded through the Legislature, barely stopping for public input,” said Denny Caneff, executive director of the River Alliance. “It attacked not only good regulations on air and water, but also processes for the public to challenge bad government decisions on resource protection.

“Even if the permitting process is streamlined and improved by this legislation – the real goal of the bill – the process of creating this bill should not be rewarded,” Caneff said, noting that it has the cloud of an attorney general’s investigation hanging over it. Accepting this legislation would set a bad precedent that makes secret, closed-door, special-interest driven, fast-track negotiations on water and land conservation policy acceptable, he added.

Especially disappointing to the River Alliance is the apparent death of Assembly Bill 514. That bill, developed by the bipartisan Legislative Council and passed by the Assembly Natural Resources committee in November by a 10-0 vote, calls for many of the regulatory reforms of Chapter 30 that “Job Creation” attempts to make.

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“The big difference,” according to Rich Bogovich, policy program manager for the River Alliance, “is that AB 514 is a product of how policy should be developed in Wisconsin – careful review of the flaws of current policy, broad-based and public review of the policy options, and bipartisan support of those new options. By trying to get ‘regulatory reform’ through Job Creation, the legislature tossed out over three years of careful deliberations and good work by a very broad-based special committee.” That committee was comprised of representatives from agriculture, municipal government, real estate, and the recreation industry. For full details on the Joint Legislative Council’s Special Committee on Navigable Waters Recodification, see www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/studies/NAV/nav_materials.htm.

Passing – indeed, accepting anything about – the Job Creation Act bodes ill for upcoming legislation on groundwater withdrawal and the siting of large livestock farms, according to Bogovich.

“Both these big issues have been taken up by broad-based interests trying to develop a consensus that will be fair to everyone affected by these policies,” Bogovich points out. “If Job Creation passes, and the Governor signs it into law, it sends the signal that special-interest legislation is the way to go in Wisconsin, and public participation in policy-making will be doomed.”