



Wisconsin Water  
and a Growing,  
Sustainable Economy

**Wisconsin is blessed with an abundant supply of fresh water**, and all of us, including members of the Wisconsin Water Alliance (WWA), have a duty and interest in protecting and preserving this incredibly important natural resource so it can continue to be used for drinking water, recreation, economic growth and the enjoyment of future generations. With common sense rules and strict regulatory controls, Wisconsin has been able to both protect and preserve these precious natural resources and harness them for municipal water supplies and private residential wells, business development, recreation, tourism and economic growth.

These resources are vital to the people and businesses that rely on them for success. Those involved in agricultural, non-metallic mining, dairy farming, paper making and manufacturing comply with and adhere to a broad range of water protection rules, regulations and laws. They have been at the forefront of helping protect and preserve these critical fresh water resources because without this resource, they would not be successful. Yet they have been successful, and while helping to protect and preserve our fresh water supplies, they have made and continue to make an incredibly positive impact on Wisconsin and its economy.



**Crop farming, dairy farms, sand mining and the paper industry** have a combined multi-billion dollar impact on Wisconsin's economy, and all of them depend on water as an important part of their continued success. They all share the view that it is critically important to preserve and protect our state's fresh water resources. From local controls, to state rules and federal laws, all of them are highly regulated businesses that share a commitment to protecting Wisconsin's fresh water natural resources, and they do a very good job at it.



**Dairy itself contributes more than \$43 billion dollars annually** to the Wisconsin economy, and the agricultural community overall generates more than \$88 billion in economic impact to the state, all while being highly regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other agencies on everything from water usage to water quality. Without an abundant supply of fresh water, Wisconsin's dairy and agriculture industries could not survive, and that's probably why some people call our state's farmers the original conservationists.



**The agriculture industry that shapes and makes up so much** of the state's landscape also is a huge part of Wisconsin's diverse economy, and the agriculture industry creates an estimated 413,000 jobs in the Badger State, which accounts for more than 11% of the state's total workforce.



**Wisconsin farmers own and manage more than 14 million acres** of Wisconsin land, and that includes a lot of water. Farmers know that if they don't care for the land and our natural resources, they can't operate. That means protecting the fresh water supplies on which they are dependent and making sure that they comply with the appropriate rules and regulations that are put in place to safeguard our state's fresh water supplies. Without that fresh water, crop farmers, dairy farmers and others can't do what they do best – tend the land, raise the crops and responsibly help grow the Wisconsin economy.



**The responsible use of Wisconsin's fresh water supply** and acres of farmland has a worldwide impact – our state exported more than \$3.4 billion of agricultural products in 2016 to more than 150 countries, ranking the state as one of the top 12 exporters for the value of agriculture products exported.



**Just as farmers contribute to the economy and help protect** the state's fresh water supply, so, too, does the state's paper industry. Wisconsin paper companies have invested millions of dollars over the last several years in clean water efforts and enhanced environmental controls, and they continue to play a major role in growing the state's economy and protecting our state's natural resources.



**The Wisconsin forest products industry employs more than 54,000 people** and accounts for 6.7 percent of the state's exports. Despite the digital revolution and worldwide competition, Wisconsin is still the top papermaking state in the nation, with \$1.5 billion in forest product exports to 123 countries in 2015. Paper companies cannot operate without an abundant supply of fresh water, and significant pollution controls have become part of the industry, demonstrating that the state's paper industry takes seriously its responsibilities to comply with the clean water rules under which it operates.



**Nonmetallic mining also is a major contributor to the state's economy** and another guardian of our state's fresh water resources. With many of the state's sand mining companies certified as Green Tier program participants under the DNR's watch, sand mining in Wisconsin has taken place for more than a century in the state and has expanded in the last decade as the nation puts a greater emphasis on energy independence by tapping known natural gas reserves in other parts of the country. There are about 120 active and inactive sand mines in Wisconsin, and with processing and shipping operations, sand mining makes a significant contribution to the state's economy, generating nearly 3,000 jobs.



**Sand mining is dependent on the availability and supply of fresh water**, and operators take their responsibilities seriously, both to be good neighbors and mindful stewards of this important natural resource. Like farmers, papermakers, dairy farmers and others, they cannot operate without an appropriate supply of fresh water for their processing operations.



**Whether it's a dairy farm, a crop farm, a papermaking company**, a sand mine or the many other ways that we use water in our state's economy, there are a myriad of regulatory requirements, laws and rules that govern the way water is used. These include EPA requirements, DNR regulations, nutrient management plans and other steps to help protect our state's abundant supply of fresh water. The members of the Wisconsin Water Alliance recognize the importance of adhering to these standards and support common sense rules that are well thought out and strike the right balance between preservation and economic growth.



**Many of our farms are multi-generational operations**; some dairy farms have been passed along through the ages from parents to children to grandchildren; Wisconsin has mined its nonmetallic resources since statehood and even includes a miner on its state flag; and papermaking has been a part of our state's economy for well over a century. Many in the WWA consider themselves environmentalists who visit our state's waterways, forests and recreational destinations for their own enjoyment, whether it be fishing or hunting or boating or hiking.



**The goal in forming the WWA is to have its members join** and contribute to the conversation about protecting, preserving and properly using Wisconsin's fresh water supplies and to make sure the discussion and decisions are based on science and facts.