
Wisconsin Legislative Council

AMENDMENT MEMO



Memo published: February 14, 2020

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2019 Assembly Bill 799

**Assembly
Amendment 1**

2019 ASSEMBLY BILL 799

2019 Assembly Bill 799 creates an office of water policy, to be housed within the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey. The bill appropriates \$150,000 and provides one full-time equivalent staff position for the office in fiscal year 2020-21 for that purpose.

The bill sets forth the office's purpose as follows: "to coordinate efforts to manage, conserve, protect, and enhance the productivity of the state's water resources for domestic, municipal, commercial, agricultural, industrial, recreational, and other private and public uses." The bill requires the office to do all of the following:

- Evaluate statutory requirements, state agency rules, and legislative proposals related to state water policy and make recommendations for implementing or improving them to the Governor, Legislature, and state agencies.
- Act as a liaison to the Great Lakes Commission's Blue Accounting initiative.
- Submit a report to the Legislature by January 15 of each odd-numbered year.

The bill authorizes the office to provide technical assistance to units of government other than the state to assist in planning and implementing water resource policies, and to charge for those services. The bill requires state agencies to cooperate with the office and assist the office with carrying out its duties and exercising its powers.

Under the bill, the office is led by a director, who is appointed by the Governor, subject to the concurrence of the Joint Committee on Legislative Organization, and serves at the Governor's pleasure. The director must do all of the following:

- Facilitate and make recommendations for sharing information between state agencies, the University of Wisconsin (UW) System institutions, and other stakeholders.
- Create a user-friendly dashboard for public access to certain reports and data as soon as practicable (but no later than December 31, 2021).
- Work with the Department of Workforce Development to analyze demand for water-related public and private sector job opportunities.
- Submit a report, including an analysis of undergraduate and graduate water programs at colleges and universities around the nation, to the UW Board of Regents as soon as practicable (but no later than December 31, 2021).
- Divide the state into areas to better understand the diverse and localized water quality issues in each area.

- Prepare a report on the unique water quality challenges in each area, the severity of those challenges, the known level of specific contaminants in those areas, and the overall success of state and federal water quality programs in each area as soon as practicable (but no later than December 31, 2021).
- Work with the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and the Department of Soil Science of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at UW-Madison to provide recommendations on how to improve or expand the soil nutrient application planner developed by UW-Madison to better address the unique water quality challenges identified in various areas of the state.
- Assess the feasibility of establishing statewide programs for promoting water efficiency and conservation and improving water quality that are similar to the Focus on Energy program, which is the state's principal renewable energy public benefit fund.

ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1

Assembly Amendment 1 instead creates the Office of Water Policy within the UW System and delays the effect of the bill until the start of the next fiscal biennium. Because of the delayed effective date, the amendment does not make any appropriation for the new office in the current fiscal biennium. The amendment also delays by a year the date by which the new office (or its director) must take certain actions, including submitting certain reports and creating a user-friendly dashboard. The amendment otherwise retains the duties set forth in the bill.

BILL HISTORY

2019 Assembly Bill 799 was recommended by the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality and introduced by Representative Kurtz. Following a public hearing on the bill, Representative Kurtz offered Assembly Amendment 1 on January 30, 2020. On February 5, 2020, the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight voted to recommend adoption of the amendment by a vote of Ayes, 9; Noes, 2; and passage of the bill, as amended, on a vote of Ayes, 10; Noes, 1.

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