

Policy Advisory Group Report

Members

- Josh Boxell
- Steve Crowe
- Robert Guenther
- Jarrod Hahn
- Charlie Houin
- Mark Kingma
- Aaron Lee
- Mark Legan
- Steve Miller
- Mike Morehouse
- John Nidlinger
- Steve Nottingham
- James Ramsey
- Matt Schafer
- Roger Wenning
- Neal Wolheter

Water Resources Policy Advisory Group

The Water Resources Policy Advisory Group met in March to provide input on legislative activity related to water resources and to make recommendations for the policy development process. That meeting was followed up with a call in June to review and provide thoughts regarding the recommendations for policy development submitted by counties.

To focus the discussion, the PAG identified several principles to guide decisions and recommendations from the group:

- Identify data gaps.
- Plan process and implementation steps.
- Develop legislative and regulatory response for offense and defense.
- Implement public outreach strategies.

To provide context to Farm Bureau's position and develop strategy to support implementation of the legislation, the PAG discussed several bills moving in the General Assembly. The primary focus was SB 473, which merged into HEA 1319 at the end of the session. The language, authored by Sen. Ed Charbonneau (R-Valparaiso), authorizes the establishment of a network of monitoring wells owned and managed by volunteers around the state to monitor aquifer levels.

The PAG identified several principles guiding the support of the implementation of the network:

- Gather data before water shortages occur.
- Identify localized water challenges.
- Prevent unduly restrictive regulations that reach too far.
- Support data collection to aid legislative and regulatory discussions.
- Share information to help others determine whether new water uses can be supported.

The PAG also discussed policy development needs. Overall, the group was pleased with the current INFB state policy language related to water. The recommendations and thoughts submitted to the resolutions committee sought to ensure that Farm Bureau stays the course in planning to address long-term water

availability needs.

CALL TO ACTION

As part of the ongoing debate about water usage and long-term availability concerns:

Farmers can:

- Consider off-site impacts from new well installations and proactively collect information to identify whether the new wells are causing impacts to neighbors.
- Use conservation measures where feasible to reduce the need to pump water.

County Farm Bureaus can:

- Work with members and local officials, such as county commissioners or water utilities, to identify if there are concerns with the ability to provide water services in the county.
- Educate local elected officials and water utility managers about the use of water for irrigation and livestock production.
- Work with farmers to address local concerns of how irrigation water is being used.

Questions regarding the activities of the Water Resources PAG can be directed to one of the group members or to [Justin Schneider](#), 317-692-7835, the Farm Bureau staff member facilitating the group.