



Ohnstad-Authored Bipartisan Wetlands Bill Signed into Law

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Story by Kenosha News

By Kenosha News Staff

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Bipartisan wetlands legislation co-authored by state Rep. Tod Ohnstad, D-Kenosha, was signed into law Monday.

The bill had passed both the Assembly and Senate without opposition this fall and was sent to Gov. Tony Evers for approval.

State Rep. Ron Tusler, R-Harrison, and state Sens. Van Wanggaard, R-Racine, and Robert Cowles, R-Green Bay, were the other co-authors.

The bill, Senate Bill 169, will require wetland mitigation to occur closer to the site of a development project in order to better protect against flooding and preserve local habitats and groundwater filtration.

“With a single stroke of a pen, Gov. Evers was able to take action that benefits both the environment and economic development,” Ohnstad said.

“Our wetlands are fundamentally important for a number of environmental reasons and are critical to minimizing potentially disastrous issues like flooding.

“This bill builds on our state’s strong environmental tradition and will make current laws more impactful, benefiting landowners, developers and the public.”

The state’s existing wetlands mitigation programs call for the creation of new wetlands or improvements to existing ones when development takes place. However, that mitigation can often take place a great distance from the location of the initial project.

This can leave the initial area potentially more vulnerable to flooding or undermine the habitat and groundwater goals inherent to mitigation.

The new law steers wetland mitigation closer to the site of a development project by requiring developers who elect to purchase mitigation bank credits to try to buy them near the site and within the same hydrologic unit or watershed where possible.

Ohnstad worked closely on this proposal with S.R. Mills of Bear Development of Kenosha, as well as the Department of Natural Resources.

“This issue is particularly important in a region of the state undergoing substantial development like the greater Kenosha area,” Ohnstad said.

“I was proud to work across the aisle and with impacted industry professionals from my district to get this bill through the legislature, and I am pleased that Gov. Evers has signed this bill into law.”