

Clean water needed

A Daily Press editorial

The Daily Press

Monday, July 10th, 2006 10:52:08 AM

Although Wisconsin is lucky to have its own regulations protecting wetlands, the rest of the country is in jeopardy of having some 30 to 60 percent of wetlands outside federal protection following a Supreme Court decision that narrowed the definition of what waters the Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for maintaining.

That 2001 ruling was furthered by a June 20, 2006 decision.

Water is, of course, a precious resource. Clean water for drinking is a basic life necessity, not just for us, but for the plants and creatures we depend on for food. We depend on water for economic health and for recreation.

Since 2001, Sen. Russ Feingold of Wisconsin has several times introduced a Clean Water Authority Restoration Act, which to date has gone nowhere.

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That's unfortunate. The bill is intended to strengthen the 1972 Clean Water Act by defining the "waters of the United States" as historically done by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Corps to include wetlands; clarifying that the Clean Water Act protects from pollution as well as to navigability and asserts Congress's authority to protect water.

As water grows more precious and pressure to develop wetlands and drain rivers increases, a strong Clean Water Act will become increasingly needed to protect this resource for future generations.