

Natural Resources Board asked to set minimum flow in Little Plover

By **GEORGE ROGERS**
of the *Gazette*

The River Alliance of Wisconsin, a state-wide river advocacy group, wants the state Natural Resources Board (NRB) to order the establishment of a minimum flow in the Little Plover River.

The Little Plover, a Class I trout stream fed primarily by ground water, partially dried up in the summers of 2005 and 2006 and had low flows the last two summers.

The stream starts in the town of Stockton, flows through the village of Plover and empties into the Wisconsin River. Irrigation from ground water is heavy in the watershed, and the village of Plover has municipal wells there.

Efforts to get water users to agree on a minimum flow recommended by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) appear to be at a standstill, the River Alliance said.

"The village of Plover, after reducing its reliance on wells with the greatest impact to the river, reverted once again to using these wells at the most critical time of year, and the irrigators have made clear they will not participate in developing a plan for voluntary pumping reductions to maintain a minimum flow," according to a letter to the NRB signed by leaders of the River

Alliance and other organizations.

Dan Mahoney, Plover village administrator, disputed the assertions. He said he can't speak for the irrigators, but the village hasn't walked away from the table and is still interested in working out a solution.

Efforts to protect the flow in the Little Plover have had a financial impact on the village, Mahoney said.

The Village Board, he said, has authorized changes in pumping from its wells but the village reserves the right to determine when the flow of the stream is or isn't adequate. It adjusts pumping accordingly, he said.

The village has three wells. Well No. 3, with the least impact on the Little Plover, is high in nitrates. It cost the village an additional \$100,000 in nitrate removal expenses this year because of increased reliance on this well, Mahoney said. He said well No. 1, closest to the stream, has been and will continue to be used least.

Mahoney said heavier pumping wasn't switched to wells 1 and 2 until after the village believed irrigation pumping had slowed in late summer. "Five years of drought," he said, are behind the problem.

The River Alliance joined in 2007 with other organizations in petitioning the DNR to set a minimum flow for the river - "the

minimum water flow necessary to maintain a healthy stream."

"We commend DNR for working toward consensus," the letter added, "but clearly, it's not going to happen. For the sake of the Little Plover River, it's time DNR asserts its authority and sets the minimum flow... While DNR has the authority to set the minimum flow without the NRB's approval, we are asking the NRB to make sure

DNR gets the job done. This is an issue that reaches far beyond the Little Plover River to how the state protects all our waters from
(See Little Plover, page 29)

Little Plover (Continued from page 28)

ground water overuse."

The letter said citizens supporting a minimum flow requirement could contact Laurie Ross, Resources Board liaison, 101 S. Webster St., PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707-7921. Her phone number is (608) 267-7420 and her e-mail address is laurie.ross@wisconsin.gov.

The letter to the NRB was signed by Denny Caneff, executive director of the River Alliance; George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation; Bill Heart, state chair of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited; and Rebecca Stephens, president of the Friends of the Tomorrow/Waupaca River.