

# DNR Can Monitor Water Use On Central Wisconsin Dairy Farm, Rules Judge

## Dairy Owners Say They've Been Unfairly Singled Out

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By Glen Moberg

The environmental group Clean Wisconsin is praising a court decision that upheld the right of the Department of Natural Resources to mandate groundwater monitoring at an Adams County dairy, while the dairy owners say they have been unfairly singled out.

The decision by Administrative Law Judge Jeffrey Boldt upheld the right of the DNR to require groundwater monitoring at New Chester Dairy, which is owned by Milk Source LLC. Boldt's decision came several days after he ruled that the DNR had to consider the cumulative effects of all the high-capacity wells in an area before granting approval for new ones. That case involved Richfield Dairy, another Milk Source property in Adams County.

Clean Wisconsin attorney Elizabeth Wheeler said that together, the two decisions will help protect groundwater in the Central Sands region.

“It speaks to the severe groundwater problems that we're seeing in the Central Sands area of the state where both of these dairies are located,” said Wheeler. “And we're seeing drawdowns of nearby lakes and streams stemming from the increase in groundwater pumping that we're seeing in that area.”

Milk Source, however, says it has been unfairly singled out.

“What we really objected to was the DNR's arbitrary placement of this requirement on a dairy to the exclusion of the other groundwater users, in light of the fact that the DNR just put out its big water use table where they show that dairy farms account for 2 percent of the water use in the state,” said Bill Harke, director of public affairs for Milk Source.

Harke said the monitoring wells in place at New Chester Dairy show groundwater levels have gone up in the past year.

He also said that Milk Source is considering its options on whether to appeal Judge Boldt's decision.