



**RIVER ALLIANCE**  
*of Wisconsin*

**Midwest Environmental**  
**A D V O C A T E S**  
*pro bono publico*

## **Five Myths about Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water Designations**

**Myth #1:** An Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water designation will limit economic development.

**The Truth:** Exceptional and Outstanding Resource Water designations help spur job growth in the tourism industry. After all, healthy water and healthy economies go hand in hand.

In fact, a 1995 Natural Resources Board Report found that clean rivers contribute significantly to local economies. The DNR's 1995 study focused on Marinette County, which has the highest number of Exceptional and Outstanding Resource Waters in the state, with 30% of all stream miles in that county having the designation. The DNR study found that tourism activities in Marinette County in 1993 generated \$42.7 million and 1,135 jobs. In 1990, tourism accounted for 28% of Marinette County's economic output.

**Myth #2:** Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water designations will take away my property rights and prevent me from developing my land.

**The Truth:** An Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water designation does not stop development, but merely helps shape and pace development to protect the river from runoff and pollution. You may need a DNR permit for certain dredging and filling activities on a river designated as an Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water, but it won't necessarily prevent your development activities or keep you from building your house. If anything, it will help make your and your neighbor's development more attractive and environmentally sound, potentially increasing your property value.

**Myth #3:** There are already too many rivers and lakes designated as Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Waters.

**The Truth:** As of 1995, only 6.5% percent of stream miles in Wisconsin are classified as Outstanding Resource Waters and only 11.4% are classified as Exceptional Resource Waters. Based on a review of DNR records, no rivers have been added to the list since 1993.

**Myth #4:** Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water designations will prevent my village from building a new sewage treatment plant.

**The Truth:** Actually, DNR rules create exceptions from the Exceptional Resource Water designation for a community seeking to build a new sewer treatment plant or increase its sewer capacity:

- The Exceptional Resource Water designation allows a community to develop a sewer system and discharge treated wastewater into the river in order to protect public health (such as to correct failing septic systems);
- The Exceptional Resource Water designation allows a community with an existing sewer system to expand its treatment capacity to accommodate growth and economic development.

In the last 30 years, the DNR has *never denied a discharge permit* for discharges from factories or local sewer treatment plants.

**Myth #5:** An Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water designation will limit property values.

**The Truth:** Actually, people want to live next to clean, beautiful waters, and healthy rivers should increase property values by making residential property more attractive. In 1995, the DNR published results of an opinion survey of 1,000 property owners and recreational users in Marinette County regarding the value that should be placed on clean water. The 1995 study concluded:

- Water-based recreational activities are a big draw for recreational users;
- Clean water is an important factor in making choices about recreational activities;
- 72% of recreational users and property owners showed strong support for Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters;
- *71% of those responding indicated they would be more likely to buy property on an Exceptional or Outstanding Resource Water.*

**For More Information –**

<http://www.midwestadvocates.org/archive/northernrivers/index.htm>

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