ADDRESSING DELICENSING
WISCONSIN AIPG SECTION

WI-AIPG Section have written to our legislators several times about the importance of professional licensing of geologist in Wisconsin. We also held four Geology Day events at the Wisconsin State Capitol and rallied licensed geologists, college professors and students to show support for licensing in a Department of Professionals Services survey.

This survey was to be a pathway to delicense almost all professions in Wisconsin in 2018, but over 60% of the licensed professionals answered the survey in support of licensing (over 90% answered that licensing was extremely or highly important) and no further action was taken by the legislators considering delicensing professionals at this time.

The paragraphs below outline some examples of what we did in Wisconsin. You are welcome to use any part of these examples for your own battle against delicensing.

Example 1
Open Letter to Wisconsin Legislators

"Wisconsin licensed professional geologists grow the economy and keep us safe!"

Dear Wisconsin Legislator:

The State of Wisconsin saw a need for professional geologist licensing in the late 1980s; specifically, in mine siting, solid waste facility siting, operation of solid waste landfills, and remediation clean-up activities. Wisconsin understood that licensed professional geologists help grow the economy and keep us safe at the same time.

New mining, construction and remediation efforts need the licensed professional geologists more than ever before.

Past Successes
In 1997, Wisconsin’s Governor signed into law the State Statute Wis. Stats. Chapter 470 “EXAMINING BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL GEOLOGISTS, HYDROLOGISTS AND SOIL SCIENTISTS “, which was just updated in 2015-2016. See https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/470.pdf for more details.

This law requires that all professional geologists, professional hydrologists, and professional soil scientists be licensed by the Wisconsin Board.

Since 1997, Wisconsin AIPG Chapter members have heard proposals by various legislative members that licensing geologists may not be needed in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources explained the need for the continued use of licensed geologists, hydrologists and soil scientists in Wisconsin, and helped detailed that need into State Statute and Code requirements.

Current Successes
The following list of required licensed geologist statutes and codes established by the Wisconsin Legislators and Governors are making a positive economic difference in Wisconsin:

Wis. Statutes 295 - Preservation of marketable nonmetallic mineral deposits

Beginning on October 14, 1997, a landowner may register land owned by that person under this section if all the following apply:

The land has a marketable nonmetallic mineral deposit, as evidenced by the certification of a professional geologist licensed under ch. 470 or a professional engineer registered under s. 443.04 and by any other information required under sub. (4).295.20(1)(a).
Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 135 – Non-metallic Mineral Deposits

The registration documents for a marketable nonmetallic mineral deposit shall include the licensed professional geologist's or registered professional engineer's seal.

Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 500.05(4) - Solid Waste Facilities

Initial site reports, feasibility reports, plans of operation, site investigation, remedial action options reports and any other reports where interpretation of geology or hydrogeology is necessary shall be under the seal of a licensed professional geologist.

Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 512.09(3) – Field Direction of Well Drilling and Installations

A professional geologist or qualified technician who is directly supervised by a professional geologist shall observe and direct the drilling of all borings and the installation, development and abandonment of all wells. A professional geologist or qualified technician who is directly supervised by a professional geologist shall also conduct all in-field hydraulic conductivity tests and visually describe and classify all geologic samples.

Wisconsin Administrative Code (NR 700) – Personnel Qualifications for Conducting Environmental Response Actions

General.

All sampling, field work and development of plans for field activities for response actions being taken to satisfy the requirements of ss. NR 708.09 to 708.15 or chs. NR 716 to 754 shall be conducted by or under the supervision of a professional engineer, hydrogeologist or scientist, unless sub. (2) or an exemption in s. NR 712.11 is applicable. Submittals that are prepared to satisfy the requirements of this section shall be prepared by or under the supervision of a professional engineer, hydrogeologist, or scientist.


Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 820 - Environmental Review of High Capacity Well Applications

A determination by a registered professional engineer, registered professional geologist or registered professional hydrologist of the 80% exceedance flow for the stream and associated water level at the location closest to the proposed well location.

Future Successes

Our newest addition to Wisconsin requirements (September 2017) is our Storm Water Infiltration – Technical Standard 1002 Soil Evaluation Requirement. The documents must be completed and signed in the future by a licensed professional soil scientist, or licensed professional geologist as licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services.

Wisconsin AIPG Section is working with several Wisconsin engineering organizations to reach out to new staff in the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services and we plan on sharing additional information with our Wisconsin legislative members.

In the past, we’ve held Geology Day at the Wisconsin State Capitol for geoscience education of representatives and their aides and hope to do this again in the future. It’s an ongoing job; providing geoscience expertise and educating others on the importance of our professional licensure here in Wisconsin.

We appreciate your support in getting the message out to everyone: “Wisconsin licensed professional geologists grow the economy and keep us safe!”
EXAMPLE 2
Geology Day at the WI State Capitol

2000 Geology Day at the Capitol with WI AIPG Vice President Steve Sletten and Wisconsin Senator. Photo taken by Christine Lilek

Photo Archive

Geology Day at the Capitol

2019 Geology Day at the Capitol with WI AIPG Vice President Steve Sletten and Wisconsin Senator. Photo taken by Christine Lilek

Photo Credit: Christine Lilek

The Wisconsin Section of the American Institute of Professional Geologists hosted “Geology Day at the Capitol” on Wednesday, November 6th, 2019, from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm in the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda.

There were two Geology Tours of the Capitol led by Dr. Ken Bradbury – Director of the Wisconsin Geological Natural History Survey (Survey) and Wisconsin State Geologist. The tours were very well attended, and the participants appreciated learning about where all the dimension stones came from, what fossils could be seen in the stones, and information about the groundwater well in the State Capitol basement!

Attendees of the event were able to talk with several legislators and legislative aides and with people touring the Capitol that day. It was a great opportunity to share information with the State legislators on issues and topics that geologists are dealing with throughout the State.

Twelve display tables were arranged around Rotunda including information from:

- Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program with Wisconsin rocks & natural resource education program information
- PFAS Updates from GZA
- Brownfield Remediation Case Studies from AECOM & MSA
- New Groundwater maps & models from the Survey
- Lake District Projects from the Lake Sinissippi Lake District
- Responsible Mining and Groundwater Research Findings from UW Eau Claire
- The Importance of Professional Geologist Licensing and Responsible Mining Information from Foth
- Wisconsin Section of AIPG displayed AIPG event information and resources available to members.

EXAMPLE 3
Rally Survey Support for Keeping Licensing

Efforts to deregulate licensed professions are surfacing all over the nation, including efforts in Wisconsin in 2018.

At the end of 2018, Wisconsin Legislators required the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services to survey numerous stakeholders (including geologists) on the benefits and drawbacks of licensing, and the responses
were uniformly in support of continued licensing requirements. WI AIPG quickly emailed all the licensed professional geologists, college professors and students and asked them to get the word out and take the survey asap. Everyone that was contacted either took the survey or forwarded the survey to others who took the survey.


“Of the individuals surveyed, 77.57% indicated that their license was either “extremely” or “very” useful in improving their skills, 77.56% indicated that their specific license was “extremely” or “very” important to protect the public from harm or danger, and 90.11% indicated that licensing in general was either “extremely” or “very” important for protecting the public.

And what of the much-touted “harshness” obtaining or retaining licenses supposedly poses? In those cases, 88.26% respondents described the amount of hardship they faced in getting initial licenses as “none,” “small” or “moderate,” and an eye-popping 97.37% percent indicated the same low level of hardship in retaining their licenses.

So, if the numbers do not bear out the claims that licensing is “unnecessary” or “overly burdensome,” what other possible reasons could those who oppose occupational licenses?