

Daily Register Editorial Board

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Don't drink that frothy brew

It's hard for Milwaukee Brewers fans not to be envious of their rivals to the south these days.

While our Brew Crew have been busy posting baseball's worst record, the Chicago Cubs have put themselves in contention. The Cubs' roster and farm system are flush with promising prospects, whereas the Brewers' franchise player, no longer flush with steroids, is a shadow of his former self. Even for a fan base whose most cherished memory is a World Series loss, these are dark times.

But there's one point of pride Brewers fans can hold over Cubs fans' heads (or under their noses): At least Miller Park has functioning toilets.

While the Brewers have been stinking up the joint on the field, Cubs fans have been stinking up their under-renovation stadium. With many of its restrooms out of service, Wrigley Field has become the world's largest urinal mint.

This offseason was rosy in Chicago, as the Cubs added manager Joe Maddon and ace Jon Lester. But things weren't smelling quite so sweet during the home opener, after fans frustrated with incredibly long bathroom lines relieved themselves in empty beer cups. Some fans thought free Bud Light was being served, and couldn't tell the difference.

Renovations at baseball's second-oldest park have closed upper-deck bathrooms. That means during sellouts, fans have to wait more than an hour to use the restroom. The Cubs have added portable toilets, but those aren't a long-term solution. As any fan who has visited one after the seventh-inning stretch can tell you, those aren't exactly friendly confines.

The Cubs hope the situation - and Bud-logged fans - will be relieved once renovations wrap up this summer. When Cubs fans say "wait 'til next year," they are no longer referring to the team's 106-year wait for a championship. They're offering advice to any fan who gets up to use the bathroom.

This situation won't improve public perception of the conditions at Wrigley, which a few years ago was ranked the most rank venue in the major



BEN BROMLEY
IT'S A FUNNY THING

leagues. Men's room troughs earned unfavorable reviews, as did male fans' disconcertingly low batting average when it comes to washing their hands after use. For every 100 men who went into the restroom, UFE.com reported, 79 didn't wash their hands. Cubs fans are hardly No. 1 when it comes to going No. 1.

"Something else that made for a different experience for our team was the fact that the men's restroom smelled like wet dogs," the website added. "This really upsets us to say this however, because we think it is an insult to dogs."

Animal smells at Wrigley are nothing new. The arrival of a black cat in the Cubs' on-deck circle is said to have hexed the team during a 1969 collapse in which Chicago blew a sizable lead to the Amazin' Mets. And let's not forget how the franchise's curse began: In 1945 a tavern owner brought a billy goat to a World Series game and was ejected "because the goat stinks." The tavern owner placed a curse on the team, and after the Cubs lost that series - their last, to date - he sent a note to team owner P.K. Wrigley that read, "Who Stinks Now?" Decades later, we know the answer. It's all the unwashed guys in the men's room and the frothy beer cups in the concourse.

Like a Cubs fan waiting in a restroom line, Brewers fans are feeling impatient. Our team is struggling, with no help in sight. Meanwhile, the Cubs are loaded with young talent, and we can't help but fear Chicago will break the curse and win a World Series in two or three years. Who knows? Wrigley Field's bathrooms might be ready by then.

Send email to columnist Ben Bromley at bbromley@capitalnewspapers.com, but only after washing your hands.



Muir's Wisconsin no more

It has been 100 years since the death of John Muir. A century ago this past Christmas Eve, one of the nation's most beloved naturalists died from pneumonia in a Los Angeles hospital. Raised on a farm between Montello and Portage, Muir pioneered efforts to create the National Park Service, co-founded the Sierra Club, and authored hundreds of publications. His work inspired a fountain of namesakes on Earth and beyond. Yes, even a main-belt asteroid bears his moniker - 128523 Johnmuir.

In the decades following his death, Wisconsin served Muir's legacy proud, rising to become a national leader in environmental protection and natural resource stewardship, delicately balancing these two aims through commonsense, evidence-based solutions. Leaders not only fiercely strove to protect the state's natural areas but also harness its resource endowments in a measured and sustainable way.

Yet these days are now gone, burned amid an underbrush of heritage set ablaze ever so recently. In the short four years and change since taking office, Gov. Scott Walker has transformed our state from leader to laggard, single-handedly dismantling Wisconsin's storied environmental tradition. His actions are not simply a matter of imposing new or different policies. They are foolishly subversive, overturning decades of settled practice forged carefully by Republicans and Democrats alike. Before I discuss the contents of such change, driven by ideology over evidence and pragmatism, and leaving our state of affairs in a terribly precarious position, let us briefly roll back the tape. In the 1930s and '40s,



JEFFRY WRIGHT
GUEST COLUMNIST

the Badger State's torch of environmental leadership passed to Aldo Leopold, the nation's first professor of game management. Leopold played a critical role in cultivating a new relationship to nature that extended beyond its commercial utility. Through writings and teachings at the University of Wisconsin, poignantly articulated in A Sand County Almanac, Leopold demonstrated how the environment should serve as an end in itself—a public good to be enjoyed by humans, plants, and wildlife—as much as a means to an end. Furthermore, he asserted we should treat the environment as an extension of our own community and health, thus applying certain principles when endeavoring to change it. This vision became known as "the land ethic."

Leopold's ideas infused public policy. The all-volunteer Wisconsin Conservation Commission, on which Leopold served, sought to uphold the dual goals of environmental protection and stewardship when debating new game management standards. His ideas also reverberated nationally, where legislation flourished. Although Leopold died in 1948, the Wilderness Act (1964) and National Trails System (1968) carry indelible imprints of his advocacy and intellect.

But it was the pioneering work of Gov. Gaylord Nelson in the 1960s and

'70s that amplified the imperative to safeguard the environment. In '61, Nelson signed the Outdoor Recreation Action Program, budgeting \$50 million over 10 years to purchase thousands of acres of land for recreation and conservation. Nelson also created the Youth Conservation Corps to employ young people in green jobs. Thousands of boys and girls would enlist in the ensuing years. So successful was the initiative that in 1974 Congress established a federal Youth Conservation Corps modeled on Wisconsin's program. Most significantly, however, Nelson spearheaded efforts to launch Earth Day on April 22, 1970. In response, Congress established the U.S. EPA eight months later and a host of clean air and water laws followed in its wake. Nelson had brought the modern environmental movement to the fore of public consciousness.

It is against this backdrop of long-running, visionary leadership that the state Legislature enacted the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) in 1972. WEPA is the bedrock of the Badger State's environmental laws and composed of two central pillars. First, state agencies must assemble relevant environmental information and use that information in their decision-making procedures. Second, broad citizen participation must help inform environmental policymaking.

From Muir to Leopold to Nelson, these principles have a long lineage in our state. But the Walker administration has chiseled both pillars with reckless abandon since taking office. Last year, lawmakers removed the requirement to perform environmental assessments (EAs) for many DNR actions.

EAs are crucial for determining whether a more rigorous environmental impact statement needs to be conducted. Without them, the more stringent impact statements are less likely to occur. EAs also require opportunity for public comment, so their removal diminishes citizen involvement in the policymaking process. What does this mean in practice? A Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation can obtain a high capacity well permit without you even knowing about it.

Walker's proposed budget for the 2015-2017 biennium replaces the chisel with a jackhammer. Much of the governor's destructive proposal amounts to cutting positions (66 DNR jobs are on the chopping block) and discontinuing programs (the Nelson-Knowles Stewardship Program faces suspension until 2028). But one potential action stands out in Walker's landfill of ideas: eliminating the DNR's science bureau, which is effectively the linchpin for providing evidence-based, impartial expertise to guide agency policy. This is the equivalent to Congress doing away with the Congressional Research Service, the go-to source for reliable and nonpartisan information.

These changes and proposals gut the core of Wisconsin's environmental traditions. They betray all that has made our state great for so long. On this Earth Day, during the centennial of John Muir's death, Wisconsin has little to celebrate.

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