



DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

March 26, 2015

Senator Alberta Darling, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 317 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Representative John Nygren, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Nygren,

As the Joint Committee on Finance concludes its statewide hearings and begins to deliberate Governor Walker's budget, we request that several short-sighted provisions in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) portion be removed. This request is based on an overwhelming response from the public, both during testimony at public hearings and through contacts to our legislative offices. Citizens from across the state have been unified in their message. The proposed changes remove transparency and citizen input, target science-based conservation, jeopardize our state parks, and harm our ability to preserve economic opportunity now and in the future.

Wisconsin has a rich heritage of investing in natural resources and recreation, and has thriving tourism, forestry, fishing and hunting programs. Freezing the Stewardship Program drastically targets the state's ability to develop and preserve these \$39 billion industries. Wisconsinites are proud of these unique assets and we should continue to work to protect them. Over the last week, our committee heard the numerous concerns of those who value and rely on the natural resources in our state. We heard opposition to the removal of grants for local recycling programs and the cuts to our State Parks System, concerns about the future of sturgeon and trout fishing, and fear that eliminating scientists and enforcement positions will jeopardize our clean water. Further, there has been overwhelming outrage over the changes to the DNR Board. The Governor's proposal would consolidate power and give decision-making authority to a single, Governor-appointed secretary potentially leaving little to no Legislative oversight.

The people of Wisconsin are understandably concerned and we are calling on you today to remove these provisions or risk dismantling Wisconsin's natural resource protections. We thank for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

LENA C. TAYLOR
State Senator-4th District

JON ERPENBACH
State Senator-27th District

CHRIS TAYLOR
State Representative-76th District

GORDON HINTZ
State Representative-54th District