



The Wildlife Society

THE NORTH CENTRAL SECTION

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Scott Walker
Office of Governor Scott Walker
115 East Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53702-0015

Dear Governor Walker:

Our executive board is concerned about your recent proposals currently being considered in the Wisconsin legislature that would substantially change (1) how policy decisions are made about wildlife management in Wisconsin, (2) the capacity of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to produce reliable knowledge to inform those decisions, and (3) a mechanism for funding the protection of lands that provide valuable wildlife habitat and public access for wildlife-based recreation.

The Wildlife Society (TWS) is a professional scientific organization whose mission is to inspire, empower, and enable wildlife professionals to sustain wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management and conservation. The North Central Section of TWS applies this mission to the eight states of the western Great Lakes and Midwest region of the United States, including Wisconsin.

Wildlife and other natural resources are owned by the public, and state governments are trustees of many of these resources to be managed on behalf of the public. To manage public trust resources governments need to (1) be transparent and ensure the public has opportunities to provide input about which resource management outcomes they value and (2) openly acknowledge and consider likely consequences from a range of management options. To the extent that the current seven-citizen Wisconsin Natural Resources Board represents the broad interests of the Wisconsin public more comprehensively than a single, governor-appointed Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources could, we support having the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board retain its policy-making authority.

Scientifically valid research and surveys provide the most reliable knowledge about likely consequences of management and policy options. The Wildlife Society encourages the appropriate use of wildlife, ecological, and conservation science in policy determination and decision-making processes. Furthermore, state natural resource management agencies are ideally suited to conduct and sponsor necessary scientific research and surveys on resident

wildlife resources because they are responsible for those resources and have a vested interest in acquiring the most relevant and reliable knowledge. Therefore, we support the retention of professional research scientist positions in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Protecting, enhancing, and creating habitat is fundamental to wildlife management. All wildlife, both game and nongame species, require habitat of sufficient quality and quantity to sustain thriving populations. Therefore, we support programs that allow responsible use of public funds to protect lands for wildlife habitat and for public uses that are consistent with conserving public trust wildlife and their habitats.

We urge public officials in all states to support broad public involvement in setting policies for the government's conservation of wildlife in the public trust, agency-based science to inform responsible wildlife management decisions, and efforts to provide wildlife habitat.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael A. Larson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael A. Larson, Ph.D., President
North Central Section of The Wildlife Society
235 Southwest Fourth Street
Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744
wildlife.org/ncs

CC:

Senator Robert L. Cowles, Chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Rep. Alvin Ott, Chair, Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
Kerry Schumann, Executive Director, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters
George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Tim Eisele, Freelance Outdoors Writer
Paul A. Smith, Outdoors Editor, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
Dean Bortz, Editor, Wisconsin Outdoor News