



WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF LAKES

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Transportation

FROM: Bill O'Connor, Legislative Counselor (608.255.7277)
Wisconsin Association of Lakes

DATE: November 3, 2005

RE: AB-299

The Wisconsin Association of Lakes (“WAL”) opposes AB-299 because we believe the proposed legislation would undermine property values and threaten the near shore environment.

WAL supports shoreland zoning because it protects both property values and natural resources. Under present law, lake and stream shore areas in unincorporated areas are subject to county shoreland zoning ordinances. For some 30 years, these county shoreland zoning ordinances have included minimum standards regulating critical development issues, including the distance buildings are set back from the water’s edge.

The vast majority of shore frontage outside of villages and cities is developed with single-family residential buildings. A large percentage of these structures have been constructed in the last 30 years and therefore meet state minimum standards for shoreland development.

Current law protects the owners of these existing structures by retaining county shoreland standards until an annexing city or village either enacts its own ordinance (meeting state minimum standards) or until the county board amends its shoreland ordinance as it effects the annexed territory. By contrast, Assembly Bill 299 would *immediately eliminate all* existing shoreland zoning upon the annexation of land by a city or village. WAL’s membership includes thousands of lakefront owners who have invested millions of dollars in structures that are set back a minimum of 75 feet from the water’s edge. Our members are concerned that this bill is overbroad and oversimplified.

We recognize that some changes in shoreland standards may be appropriate in some cases after unincorporated areas are annexed. But the effect of this legislation would be to immediately suspend all shoreland standards on all incorporated or annexed areas, regardless of the circumstances or impacts.

Because we feel this bill is likely to significantly damage the value of our member’s investments in shoreland residences and in the natural resources that are concentrated in the near shore area, the Wisconsin Association of Lakes opposes this bill.