



Wisconsin Association of Lakes

A nonprofit group of citizens, organizations, and businesses working for clean, safe, healthy lakes for everyone.

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Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
Chair Representative Scott Gunderson
Room 7 West, State Capitol
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708

October 10, 2007

Dear Representative Gunderson and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support for restoring the Natural Resources Board's (NRB) authority to appoint the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Secretary. It is in the best interest of lakes and all the people who enjoy boating, fishing, swimming, and living on lakes to have the DNR Secretary held solely accountable to the needs of our commonly shared resources and the mission of the Department.

We feel the NRB is a fair and balanced body that equally represents the natural resource interests of both the northern and southern portions of the state. To ensure the NRB remains balanced the State Senate advises and confirms the serving Governor's NRB nominees. In turn, the seven member board provides an additional layer of objective review for Wisconsin natural resource policy. It follows that this group who is so closely in tune with the natural resource needs of the state should be in charge of appointing the state's top DNR official.

Since 1995--when the position of the DNR Secretary became an appointee serving at the pleasure of the Governor—we have witnessed political considerations unduly influence natural resource management decisions. But the needs of our lakes are not dictated by election cycles. The challenges our lakes and lakefront property owners face—polluted runoff, poorly planned development, aquatic invasive species—are constant. Our lakes do not need partisan politics; they need effective leadership over time.

The DNR Secretary is a critical position that should not be susceptible to political pressure. Improving Wisconsin natural resources management means entrusting decisions to professional natural resource managers, not politicians. And we know from our many lake association and lake district members who are working with the DNR that Wisconsin has many resource professionals who are helping concerned citizens better understand and care for the lakes they love.

While we fully support restoring the NRB's authority to appoint the DNR Secretary, we believe the recently appointed DNR Secretary should have the opportunity to perform in his new capacity. We trust that Senate and Assembly leaders can find a compromise on the date when the bill will become effective so that the agency is not unnecessarily disrupted by an abrupt change in leadership.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support on this important issue.

Sincerely,