



**State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

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**Assembly Bill 12**

Senate Environment & Natural Resources Committee

Department of Natural Resources Testimony  
Paul DeLong, Administrator  
Division of Forestry  
May 15, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Good afternoon. My name is Paul DeLong and I am the Administrator of the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry and Wisconsin's Chief State Forester. I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you to discuss AB 12.

The Department of Natural Resources supports AB 12. The bill requires future foresters hired by DNR to have received a bachelor's or higher degree in forestry from a school of forestry with a curriculum accredited by the Society of American Foresters or an equivalent degree from a school located in another country. The bill also requires that on state forests, marking of timber must be done either by a DNR forester or an individual who DNR determines to be qualified and who is under the supervision of a DNR forester.

This bill is the outgrowth of concerns expressed within the forestry community that a double standard exists with respect to the requirements for hiring foresters by the Department of Natural Resources and by partner organizations. This bill is designed to create consistency and ensure that there is public confidence in Department foresters.

State agency hiring is governed by Wisconsin Statutes (Section 230.14) which prohibits state agencies from requiring a college degree as a condition of application unless the statutes require a license to practice a profession and a degree is a condition of the license. Forestry is not a licensed profession in Wisconsin and therefore the DNR cannot require applicants for forester positions to hold a college degree in forestry.

However, DNR administrative codes NR 1.21(2)(e) and NR 47.70(2)(e) require that Cooperating Consultant Foresters entering into agreements with the department and County Forest Administrators funded by the County Forest Administrator Grant program must hold a bachelor of science degree or greater in forestry from a university or college with a curriculum accredited by the Society of American Foresters.

The rationale for the difference has been that the degree requirement is the most efficient way to ensure that qualified foresters serve in the capacity of County Forest Administrator or Cooperating Consulting Forester.

In the case of the Department, foresters are hired through a very competitive process and spend 18 months on probation, including 12 months of intensive training and mentoring by

senior foresters with the Department. The Department ensures that our foresters are qualified to do the job they are hired for. The Department's support for this legislation should not be interpreted as a belief that we have foresters in our employment who, because they do not have a four-year degree in forestry, are unable to perform their jobs in a satisfactory manner. I believe we have an excellent cadre of foresters who work hard to provide professional service to the people of Wisconsin.

Rather, the Department's support for the legislation is based on the fact that it will address the appearance of a double standard and put us on more solid ground when we take issue with individuals who call themselves "consulting foresters" but who in reality do not have the necessary background or training to perform the functions of a forester. Although these individuals can not become Cooperating Consulting Foresters under NR 1.21, there is nothing that prohibits them from hanging out a shingle and calling themselves a "consulting forester". The Department, along with many of our partners in the forestry community, strongly condemn this practice and the adverse impact it has on private landowners who are taken advantage of by individuals who mislead them with respect to their credentials.

The DNR is a leader in promoting professional excellence in the forestry profession in Wisconsin and in advocating that private landowners obtain professional assistance when managing their forest land. Unfortunately, the current situation has created a perception that the Department holds itself to one standard, as required by current law, and that others are held to a different standard. AB 12 will eliminate this perception.

There are a sufficient number of quality graduates from schools accredited by the Society of American Foresters in Wisconsin, the Midwest and nationwide to provide a robust pool of applicants for our field forester positions. In addition, if AB 12 becomes law, the Department will work with Forestry Technicians on our staff who are interested in becoming professional foresters but who lack the degree. We will work with them to develop a career plan and support their efforts to obtain the necessary degree from one of the two excellent universities in Wisconsin that have forestry programs accredited by the Society of American Foresters.

The Department supports bill as amended by the Assembly. The addition of the term "field forester" will clarify the fact that the focus of this legislation is the employees of the Department that practice forestry on the ground. The deletion of the phrase "from a school located in another country," from line six on page 2 will still enable us to consider equivalent degrees from other countries, but also allows us to consider candidates with degrees providing the equivalent to what they would have received with an SAF accredited degree in forestry. The SAF itself, in implementing its Certified Forester program, accepts equivalent degrees. What's key is that candidates have the coursework and other training that prepares them - along with important interpersonal and managerial attributes - to be successful field foresters.

I appreciate this opportunity to express the Department's support for AB 12 as amended and would be glad to answer any questions you might have.

AB12

Foresters

— Pay more? NO

~~Cause any animosity?~~

— How many DNR

foresters @ present

170 total

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Vote Record

Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Date: 5/28/03

Moved by: ZIEN

Seconded by: STEPP

AB 12

SB

Clearinghouse Rule

AJR

SJR

Appointment

AR

SR

Other

A/S Amdt

A/S Amdt to A/S Amdt

A/S Sub Amdt

A/S Amdt to A/S Sub Amdt

A/S Amdt to A/S Amdt to A/S Sub Amdt

Be recommended for:

- Passage Adoption Confirmation Concurrence Indefinite Postponement
Introduction Rejection Tabling Nonconcurrence

Committee Member

Senator Neal Kedzie

Senator Cathy Stepp

Senator David Zien

Senator Fred Risser

Senator Robert Wirch

Aye No Absent Not Voting

[X] [ ] [ ] [ ]

[X] [ ] [ ] [ ]

[X] [ ] [ ] [ ]

[X] [ ] [ ] [ ]

[X] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Totals: 5

[X] Motion Carried

[ ] Motion Failed