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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2009-10

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Transportation, Tourism,
Forestry, and Natural Resources (SC-TTFNR)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Mike Barman (LRB) (June/2012)



Editorial: Governor blocks best chance for independent DNR

Thursday, April 09, 2009

Governor Jim Doyle no longer believes the Department of Natural Resources secretary should be appointed by an independent board and insulated from political pressure.

The governor's new position is worse than a flip-flop; it's a betrayal of progressive governance.

Progressives were aghast 14 years ago when then-Gov. Tommy Thompson, with the approval of a conservative state Legislature, gutted Wisconsin's independent DNR and made the secretary a political appointee who serves at the governor's pleasure. Not long after the change, the DNR found itself at the mercy of big-time campaign contributors who could leverage favorable regulatory treatment from the governor's office.

If there is any area of government that needs insulation from political pressure, it's the DNR. Issues of conservation and the environment, more than any other, involve conflicts between short-term individual gain and long-term sustainability. It may be profitable in the short term to destroy wildlife habitat, but the long-term consequence is less wildlife. It may be profitable in the short term for a developer to scrape off acres of farmland and let construction runoff slide into a nearby creek, but the long-term consequence is a polluted creek. It may be profitable in the short-term for a factory to pump mercury into the air or PCBs into a river, but the long-term consequence is a degraded and less bountiful eco-system.

There has never been a more opportune time restore an independent DNR. Democrats control the governor's mansion and both houses of the state Legislature for the first time since 1987. If Wisconsin can't get an independent DNR from this legislative session, it's unlikely to ever happen.

It's much easier for the DNR to perform its long-term stewardship function when it's insulated from political pressure and campaign cash. Perhaps Doyle believes his administration won't be pressured into short-term exploitation policies, but Doyle won't be governor forever. The political cycle will eventually produce a governor who puts short-term profits over long-term sustainability. And when a future governor puts the hammer down on a politicized DNR, much of the blame can be assigned to Jim Doyle.

<file:///C:/DOCUME~1/Owner/LOCALS~1/Temp/Tomah%20Journal%20-%20Opinion.htm>

OUR VIEW

ISSUE:
Natural Resources
secretary

Time to restore system's integrity

Year after year, conservationists have urged the state to restore the Natural Resources Board's power to appoint the secretary of the Department of Natural Resources. Year after year, Gov. Jim Doyle has dragged his feet on the issue, and now he's changed his mind completely.

In 1995, at the behest of then-Gov. Tommy Thompson, the Legislature took that power away from the board and made the secretary an appointee of the governor.

Doyle was the attorney general then, and he called the change nothing less than a "wholesale attack on the way we protect our government."

But now Doyle is the governor. Now the power is in his hands, and he likes it there.

"The DNR secretary can do much more when it is part of the governor's cabinet and has the power of the governor's office behind it," Doyle said the other day. He said such initiatives as the Great Lakes Compact, the state's new mercury emissions rules and the expansion of the Stewardship Fund could not have happened without gubernatorial appointment of the DNR secre-

Hogwash. All of those initiatives had the strong support of both the governor and the Natural Resources Board, and it's inconceivable that Doyle would have fought them on the basis that he didn't get to pick the DNR secretary. Good policy will win the day because it's good policy.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress and the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters have repeatedly and overwhelmingly supported putting the appointment back in the hands of the Natural Resources Board — and so did Doyle until recently, although the lack of action during his first six years in office should have been a red flag.

Aldo Leopold, Wisconsin's revered conservationist, helped establish the state's system of natural resources management in the 1920s, and one of its cornerstones was the appointment of the secretary by an independent board as a way to insulate the agency's functions from politics. That's one of the reasons Wisconsin has always led the nation in environmental policy.

As he has done in every session since 1995, state Rep. Spencer Black, D-Madison, has introduced a bill to restore the traditional appointment process.

This time 51 Assembly representatives and 17 senators have already co-sponsored the bill — a majority of both houses, but not yet a veto-proof majority.

Doyle was right in 1995. The Legislature should vote to restore integrity to the appointment process.

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DNR

A flawed process

Scott Hassett is right: The secretary of the Department of Natural Resources should be appointed by the Natural Resources Board, not by the governor.

Scott Hassett, former secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, has joined the ranks of those who favor the idea of having the Natural Resources Board appoint the DNR secretary. That's a good side to be on, and it's one favored by legislators, other former DNR secretaries, conservation and environmental groups, many hunters and anglers and this newspaper.

And it's a position once favored by Gov. Jim Doyle. He should change his mind and return to his original position. But even if he doesn't, legislators should press ahead with a bill that would make the change and make sure they have enough votes to override a possible veto.

Hassett was Doyle's first appointee to the position. In an interview with the Journal Sentinel's Lee Bergquist, Hassett said, "You can never escape the pressure from legislators calling you up and trying to put political pressure on enforcement cases and regulations. If you report directly to the governor, he is going to get all of those pressures, too, and it rolls down to you."

Hassett is right. And that's the way it has been since 1995, when the appointment was taken from the board and given to the governor. Returning the power to the citizen-member board provides the secre-

tary with a layer of insulation from the partisan politics that can affect decisions better left to science and good public policy. Even when politics doesn't affect a decision — and we agree that most of the time it doesn't — the perception can be that politics, not science, is what matters. And even the perception can undermine public trust.

In addition, protection of the state's natural resources is better served by a continuity of professional leadership. And it's important to have administrators with relevant experience — such as administrators who are also deer hunters — something that is not always assured with political appointees, as former DNR Secretary George Meyer has pointed out.

Those who argue against change say the DNR is more responsive and accountable when its secretary reports to an elected official. While those are good points, the DNR's budget still would have to be approved by the governor and the Legislature, and secretaries still would want elected politicians' support for major policy changes. If additional measures are needed to ensure accountability, they should be added to the bill.

But the bottom line should be returning the appointment to the board.

What is your view on how the DNR chief is chosen? E-mail your opinion to jsedit@journal sentinel.com to be considered for publication as a letter to the editor. Please see letters guidelines

The Journal Times.com

MAKE A CONNECTION

Doyle should shelter DNR secretary's job from political winds

Journal Times Editorial Board | Posted: Saturday, September 26, 2009 7:15 pm | [1 Comment](#)

Perhaps now that he is a lame duck, Gov. Jim Doyle will return to his roots.

We can only hope that is the case when it comes to management of the state's natural resources and governance of fish and game policies.

The state Assembly vote last week to distance the state Department of Natural Resources from political pressure will give the governor that opportunity before he leaves office.

Doyle, who has said he is not running for another term, long supported an independent state Natural Resources Board as the policy-making body for the state agency that oversees and develops clean air and water regulations, manages hunting and fishing and runs state parks and wildlife areas.

Before 1995, one of the Natural Resources Board's duties was to select the head of the DNR - the DNR secretary. Then-Gov. Tommy Thompson persuaded the Legislature to turn that selection over to the governor and make the position part of his cabinet.

The Assembly voted 61-32 in favor of a bill to return the appointment of the secretary to the Natural Resources Board.

We support that legislation, and we hope that Doyle backs away from his threatened veto of it in the long-term best interests of Wisconsin's environment. For many years, first as attorney general and then as governor, Doyle backed the idea of a Natural Resources Board appointing the secretary. We would urge him to return to that mindset.

The governor would still retain the ability to appoint the members of the Natural Resources Board itself, but that is done over a period of several years and tends to buffer the agency from political pressure and quick swings in policy.

As state Rep. Spencer Black, D-Madison, put it last week, "The timetable of Mother Nature is different from the political timetable, and that's why it is so important we give our conservation decision makers the ability to look long term and not just think about the next campaign fundraiser or election."

Opponents of the legislation argue that having the governor pick the secretary makes the DNR more "responsive" to the voters of the state. What it actually does is make the agency less professional - less able to make water and air quality decisions based on science and professional training and more susceptible to special interests that lard up the campaign coffers of one candidate for governor or another.

Even with a board-appointed secretary, the Legislature and the governor would retain significant control over the agency and the rules it promulgates.

The regulation of Wisconsin's lands, waters and air is better made by an agency that is able to put professional judgment a half-step above fleeting partisan political pressures.

In the long run, the state of Wisconsin would be better for it.

Posted in Editorial on *Saturday, September 26, 2009 7:15 pm Updated: 7:15 pm.*

http://www.journaltimes.com/news/opinion/editorial/article_e0634a1e-aafa-11de-b1ea-001cc4c002e0.html



Doyle is wrong, wrong, wrong on DNR secretary

3/07/2009

Jim Doyle campaigned for governor in 2002 as a supporter of the proposal to remove the position of Department of Natural Resources secretary from the Cabinet.

He was re-elected in 2006 as a supporter of the proposal, which has long been a top priority for environmentalists and good government activists who want to ease political and special-interest pressures on the DNR.

Now, with Democrats in control of both houses of the state Legislature, Doyle should be leading the charge to make the change he promised and re-establish the DNR secretary as an independent appointee of the Natural Resources Board.

Instead, the governor now claims that he wants to keep the position in the Cabinet.

Why? The governor claims that having the DNR secretary under his wing made advances in environmental policy, including passage of the Great Lakes Compact and expansion of the land-buying Stewardship Program, easier to achieve.

Even if the governor is right — and we are not conceding that he is — his argument is an absurd one.

No one serves permanently as governor. No party and no point of view has a permanent claim on the office.

While Doyle may be tepidly pro-environment, he could easily be replaced by a conservative Republican governor who is tepidly — or even militantly — anti-environment.

Making the DNR secretary independent of the governor remains the best short- and long-term strategy for protecting Wisconsin's natural resources and the economic potential that comes with being a clean, green state.

Doyle was right when he promised the voters to make the DNR secretary independent.

Doyle is wrong — wrong for the environment, wrong for sound governance, wrong politically — when he breaks that promise now.

<http://www.madison.com/tct/opinion/441861>

The Cap Times

Your Progressive Voice

Capital Times editorial: Restore DNR independence

Capital Times editorial | Posted: Saturday, September 5, 2009 5:30 am | [1 Comment](#)



[State Journal archives](#) The Department of Natural Resources oversees state parks and campgrounds such as Devil's Lake State Park, shown here.

The Wisconsin Legislature is making slow but steady progress toward the restoration of some measure of independence at the state Department of Natural Resources.

Key committees in the Assembly and Senate have now voted to restore the Natural Resources Board's power to appoint the DNR secretary. Those votes clear the way for consideration of the plan.

Make no mistake, this is a step in the right direction.

Gov. Jim Doyle is opposed to the move. He claims that the proposed change would make the DNR less responsive to the public because a gubernatorial appointee would be more accountable.

That's ridiculous.

Gubernatorial appointees are responsive to the governors who pick them, and far too frequently, to the campaign contributors of those governors.

Restoring the power of the Natural Resources Board to appoint DNR secretaries would provide far more accountability than maintaining the current scheme - which was put in place by former Gov. Tommy Thompson and which Doyle should be ashamed of defending.

Posted in Editorial on *Saturday, September 5, 2009 5:30 am Updated: 6:31 pm*. Department Of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Legislature, Legislature, Dnr, Natural Resources Board, Jim Doyle, Tommy Thompson

http://host.madison.com/ct/news/opinion/editorial/article_0fca6c00-997c-11de-98b7-001cc4c03286.html



By TODD RICHMOND • The Associated Press • September 28, 2009

State Assembly: Let board appoint the DNR secretary

Bill would take that power from governor

MADISON — The state Assembly has passed a bill that would strip the governor of his power to pick the head of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and give it instead to the board that set the agency's policy.

Democratic supporters insisted the bill would reduce the influence of politics in conservation decisions. Republicans said the bill would do nothing of the sort, pointing out the governor appoints board members, too.

"There's no way you're going to remove politics," said Rep. Don Friske, R-Merrill.

The Democratic-controlled Assembly approved the bill 61-32. It goes next to the state Senate. Democrats control that chamber, too, but the bill faces a major hurdle in Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle.

Although Doyle had said since his first campaign in 2002 that he thought the board should appoint the Department of Natural Resources secretary, he reversed himself earlier this year, telling conservation groups he now believes the job should remain part of the governor's cabinet.

"It makes the DNR more effective when it has the weight and authority of the governor behind it," Doyle spokesman Lee Sensenbrenner said. "It's the way every other state agency works."

Legislators on Tuesday were already looking ahead to overriding a Doyle veto. A successful override would require a two-thirds vote in both the Assembly and Senate.

"If the governor wants to veto this, have at it," said Rep. Marlin Schneider, D-Wisconsin Rapids. "But we should have back at it with the opportunity to override. That's when you get the real voice of the people."

The Department of Natural Resources regulates hunting, fishing and pollution. But the Natural Resources Board has the final say on its policies, from the length of hunting seasons to pollution regulations. The secretary oversees department operations and brings policy proposals to the board, which is made up of seven gubernatorial appointees who serve staggered terms.

The board appointed secretaries until 1995, when then-Gov. Tommy Thompson, a Republican, shifted that power to his office. Thompson had said having the secretary in the cabinet would lead to more accountability and better management.

Outdoors groups have grumbled for years that the approach injects gubernatorial politics and favors into wildlife, environmental and regulatory decisions that should be science-based. They also complain it leads to turnover as governors leave office and puts bureaucrats with little outdoors knowledge in the position.

Ed Harvey, president of Conservation Congress^Q, a group of sportsmen that advises the department, said outdoors lovers prefer to have the board appoint the secretary.

"You don't have the slimy part of politics. Those board people aren't receiving donations to campaign funds," Harvey said.

But Friske said the governor would simply stack the board with people of a common political persuasion to ensure it appoints a secretary that would work with the governor.

Republicans also said that people currently can express their displeasure with the department by voting against the governor.

"It's easy to go back and go to all the Conservation Congress meetings ... and say 'I did it. I did exactly what you wanted,'" said Rep. Mike Huebsch, R-West Salem. "You're going to be as surprised as they are when all those problems are still there and you have very little influence."

The bill's author, Rep. Spencer Black, D-Madison, countered that the bill would preserve the environment.

"Think more about the next generation," Black said, "than the next election."

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/article/20090928/GPG0101/909280510/-1/archive>

Huebsch wants to split DNR into two agencies

By RICHARD MIAL Wednesday, September 2, 2009

State Rep. Mike Huebsch has introduced a proposal that would split off part of the Department of Natural Resources into a separate agency.

Huebsch said the DNR is too large and unwieldy. His plan would create a Department of Environmental Quality, to deal with pollution and permits, while the DNR would focus on hunting and fishing, wildlife habitat and similar matters.

The West Salem Republican wants his proposal to become part of a bill that would have a seven-member appointed board select the DNR secretary, rather than make it a governor's appointment.

Environmentalists and many sportsmen and conservationists say the DNR was more responsive to the public when the Natural Resources Board picked the secretary. Former Gov. Tommy Thompson changed the system in the mid-1990s to make it a gubernatorial appointment, like other cabinet posts.

Marc Schultz, chairman of the La Crosse County Conservation Alliance and a strong supporter of having the Natural Resources Board appoint the secretary, said Huebsch's amendment - coming just before the Assembly Natural Resources Committee is to vote on the DNR secretary bill - is just a way to "divert attention" from what Schultz regards as the real issue.

He said a board-appointed secretary "limits political influence" on the agency, while "when you have a governor's appointment, it's immediately a partisan issue."

But Huebsch said he offered the amendment because the DNR often is not mindful enough of the effect its decisions have on businesses and the economy.

"The agency is too big and has two very separate functions," Huebsch said. "One is fish and wildlife and habitat. A very separate agency is the one that regulates the balance between jobs in this state and the environment."

Under Huebsch's amendment, the DNR secretary would be appointed by the Natural Resources Board, while the Department of Environmental Quality would be a gubernatorial appointment.

http://www.lacrossetribune.com/news/local/article_887a7600-9769-11de-bb19-001cc4c002e0.html

Bill would take politics out of DNR appointment

RON SEELY / Wisconsin State Journal | Posted: Monday, March 2, 2009 12:00 am | [No Comments Posted](#)

After nearly succeeding last year, proponents of legislation that would remove the position of Department of Natural Resources secretary from the governor's cabinet say they are convinced a similar bill will pass this session.

State Rep. Spencer Black, D-Madison, chairman of the Assembly's natural resources committee, is leading the charge on the bill, which would once again make the secretary an appointee of the Natural Resources Board, a citizen group that sets policy for the DNR.

Black said support from legislators from both parties is stronger this year than last. "I've never seen anything like it," Black said of the growing list of backers.

Other supporters, such as George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, said new Democratic leadership in both houses make it likely the legislation, which will be introduced next week, will come to the floor for a vote.

Last year's bill passed the state Senate 21-12, but Republican leaders blocked the bill in the Assembly, Meyer said. "We came so close," Meyer said. "There's no question it would have passed" if it had been voted on, based on his counts.

The proposed legislation would undo a change made in 1995, prior to which the secretary was appointed by the Natural Resources Board. Meyer said the practice of the board appointing the secretary dated to 1928, when Aldo Leopold and others set up the Conservation Commission, the precursor to the DNR. It was important to Leopold and the other founders that the head of the agency be insulated from politics, said Meyer.

But in 1995, the state Legislature made the post a political appointment by the governor. Matt Frank, the current secretary, was appointed by Doyle and is a former head of the Department of Corrections.

Meyer, a former DNR secretary, said the long-term nature of natural resources management makes it important to have stability in the agency's top leadership position. Issues that require years of attention, such as controlling chronic wasting disease in the state's deer herd or slowing the spread of invasive species, are better managed through steady and continuous leadership from the secretary's office, Meyer said.

The DNR had four secretaries in between 1954 and 2001; since 2001, there have already been four more, Meyer said.

Many environmentalists have a more basic concern - that political whim can dictate policy that isn't necessarily good for the state's air or water. Anne Sayers, program director for the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, cited the Job Creation Act, passed in 2004 and supported by Doyle. That act relaxed important water quality regulations while a second act passed in 2005 loosened air quality rules, Sayers said.

Both pieces of legislation were supported by the DNR, Sayers said.

Not everyone wants the secretary out of the governor's Cabinet. The legislation is being opposed, for example, by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, according to spokesman Casey Langan.

"We think because the secretary is part of the leadership team for the governor, that the governor should appoint that position," Langan said.

Or, Langan said, if a secretary appointed by the Natural Resources Board came from a different political party than the governor, then working together on natural resource issues might be difficult. "As a team they might not both be working with the best interests of the public in mind," Langan said.

Posted in [Newsupdate](#) on *Monday, March 2, 2009 12:00 am Updated: 1:40 pm.*

http://lacrossetribune.com/newsupdate/article_cbadd518-e4ba-509d-a5f5-574e6ea75d60.html

Assembly votes for DNR shift

Proposal to restore board's power to pick secretary could face veto

STACY FORSTER and LEE BERGQUIST
forster@journalsentinel.com

Madison — In a move that would sharply weaken the powers of the governor to manage natural resources, the Assembly voted Tuesday to return authority to appoint secretary of the Department of Natural Resources to a seven-member citizens board.

The Assembly voted 61-32 in favor of a bill that's been pushed by conservationists and environmentalists since 1995.

The vote could put the Legislature on a collision course with Gov.

Jim Doyle, who opposes an independent DNR secretary.

If the Senate also passes the measure, Doyle could veto the bill. The last time a governor had a veto overturned in Wisconsin was 1985, when Democratic Gov. Anthony Earl — a former DNR secretary himself — was in office.

It's unclear whether there are enough votes in the Assembly to override a potential veto from Doyle. The 61 votes fell short of the 66 necessary for an override, but four supporters weren't present. Bill author Rep. Spencer Black (D-

Madison) said he thought there is a "very good chance" the Assembly could get the necessary votes.

The bill has been pushed by conservationists and environmentalists since 1995.

The DNR's Natural Resources Board once controlled the appointment authority — governance that has its roots in a proposal by conservationist Aldo Leopold and his contemporaries who wanted to set up a department run by a board, believing that natural resources decisions were too long-lasting to be subjected to day-to-day political

pressures.

"The timetable of Mother Nature is different from the political timetable, and that's why it's so important we give our conservationist makers the ability to look long term and not just think about next campaign fund-raiser or election," Black said on the Assembly floor.

The board lost its power in 1995 after then-Gov. Tommy G. Thompson convinced the Legislature that governors should control the

Please see **DN**

FROM PAGE ONE

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

2A Wednesday, September 23, 2009

MILWAUKEE-WISCONSIN
JOURNAL SENTINEL

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From page 1

DNR

Governor got power in '95

ownership of an agency that governs issues that range from air pollution to fishing and hunting.

The DNR is often one of state government's most controversial agencies because of a regulatory reach that touches the lives of residents in often very personal ways.

Current system backed

Business groups have generally supported the current structure, saying the DNR is more accountable for its actions when the head of the agency is answerable to the governor.

"There needs to be recognition that the voting public, the people of the state of Wisconsin who send us here, should have some influence

and have a role in the decisions of this agency," said Rep. Mike Huebsch (R-West Salem).

Backers of the legislation say the DNR has become more political, with decisions routinely needing to be cleared by Doyle's office.

Thompson, by contrast, generally had a hands-off approach with the DNR.

When the board appointed the DNR secretaries, they were usually career wildlife professionals.

Doyle's current appointee, Matt Frank, served as a Justice Department attorney for much of his career and was secretary of the Department of Corrections before joining the DNR.

As a compromise, some Republican members have argued for splitting the agency, saying it would allow state government to better address environmental regulation with one agency and hunting, fishing and wildlife issues with another. Splitting the agency is not addressed in the bill.

Doyle had supported citizen control over the DNR for much of his tenure as governor and attorney general. But in March, he flip-flopped and said he opposes any change in the law because governors should be able to manage the DNR like other agencies.

Former Natural Resources Secretary George Meyer said

natural resources management, are more independent and tend to serve longer. That gives them a chance to deep understand the agency. Meyer served as both a board appointee and an appointee Thompson.

Some lawmakers are ready for a fight with Doyle over the bill.

"If the governor wants to veto this, have at it, pal," said Rep. Marlin Schneider (D-Wisconsin Rapids), adding that the Legislature should attempt to override any veto.

In another matter, the Assembly approved legislation by a 57-37 vote that would ban many common electronic appliances, such as computer printers and TV sets, from landfills and would provide mechanisms to encourage recycling of those products.

The bill is patterned after law in Minnesota. The Senate has already passed the bill but it must approve changes made by the Assembly.

Also, the Assembly voted 89-5, to regulate sales of products such as switches, thermometers and other household devices that contain mercury, a toxic chemical and voted 58-36 to restrict movement of aquatic plants and animals to control spread of invasive species

Stacy Forster reported for this story. Madison and Lee Bergquist in Milwaukee. Patrick Marley of the

Political insulation

The state Assembly should give its full support to a bill to change how the Department of Natural Resources secretary is selected.

Posted: Sept. 21, 2009

The state Assembly is expected to vote Tuesday on a bill that would ease political pressure on the Department of Natural Resources and could provide better protection for the state's wildlife habitats and environment. It's a measure supported by hunters, anglers, environmentalists, good-government advocates, Republicans, Democrats and lots of people who just enjoy the state's great outdoors.

The Assembly should give the bill a resounding "yes" vote.

The bill would move the power to name the secretary of the DNR from the governor's office to the Natural Resources Board. The governor has had the authority only since 1995, when then-Gov. Tommy Thompson thought it would be a good idea to make the secretary a cabinet position, a change that overturned a 67-year-old policy.

At the time, and in his first race for governor, now Gov. Jim Doyle opposed the move, calling Thompson's plans for the DNR "a wholesale attack on the way we protect the environment. I think we're playing with fire here." Doyle has changed his mind since becoming governor, but his original position was the correct one.

Returning the power to the citizen-member board provides the secretary with a layer of insulation from the partisan politics that can affect decisions better left to science and good public policy. Even when politics doesn't affect a decision - and we agree that most of the time it doesn't - the public can be left with the perception that politics is paramount, which undermines the public's trust. In addition, protection of the state's natural resources is better served by a continuity of professional leadership.

Former DNR secretaries George Meyer and Scott Hassett, Doyle's first appointee to the position, make the same points.

In an [interview](#) with the Journal Sentinel's Lee Bergquist in July, Hassett said, "You can never escape the pressure from legislators calling you up and trying to put political pressure on enforcement cases and regulations. If you report directly to the governor, he is going to get all of those pressures, too, and it rolls down to you."

Those who argue against change say the DNR is more responsive and accountable when its secretary reports to an elected official. While that's a good point, the DNR's budget still would have to be approved by the governor and the Legislature, and secretaries still would want elected politicians' support for major policy changes. If additional measures are needed to ensure accountability, they should be added to the bill.

But the bottom line is that this bill should pass, and the state should stop playing with fire.

Should the DNR secretary be appointed by the governor or by the Natural Resources Board? To be considered for publication as a letter to the editor, e-mail your opinion to the Journal Sentinel editorial department.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/60065067.html>

Doyle, lawmakers may clash over appointment of DNR secretary

By Lee Bergquist of the Journal Sentinel

Posted: Aug. 20, 2009

Although Gov. Jim Doyle has said he won't seek a third term, he and the Legislature continue to stay on a collision course over who should have the power to control the Department of Natural Resources.

A spokesman for Doyle said the governor remains opposed to legislation that would remove his authority to hire the DNR secretary. Doyle announced Monday that he would not run for re-election in November 2010 but would serve out his current term, which expires in January 2011.

Lawmakers are expected to vote on bills early next month that would return the appointment power to the seven-member Natural Resources Board.

Doyle had supported citizen control over the DNR for much of his tenure as governor and attorney general. But in March, Doyle flip-flopped and said he opposed any change in the law.

For many years, the Natural Resources Board appointed the DNR secretary. But that changed in 1995 when then-Gov. Tommy G. Thompson convinced the Legislature that governors should have the right to control the top posts in the DNR, just as in other state agencies.

The Assembly Natural Resources Committee will vote Sept. 2 on the bill to return the appointment authority to the board.

The committee's chairman, Rep. Spencer Black (D-Madison), said he has the votes to move the bill out of committee and clear the Assembly.

"We have very strong support, and I believe it's strong enough to become law," Black said.

That could mean that Doyle would be placed in a position of having to veto the legislation - or not sign it and let it become law.

The last time a governor had a veto overturned in Wisconsin was 1985, when Democrat Tony Earl was in office.

Despite Doyle's lame-duck status, lawmakers and others believe the political dynamics have changed little: As governor, Doyle has seen how he has been able to exert more control over environmental issues when he named Scott Hassett and, later, Matt Frank as DNR secretaries.

Conservationists have been troubled by what they see as meddling by Doyle in agency matters.

But Doyle's spokesman, Lee Sensenbrenner, said the current system has made the agency more accountable because Doyle or his staff can intercede when they feel they need to.

Business groups side with Doyle and want to keep the DNR under the governor's thumb.

"Nothing's really changed," said Sen. Jim Holperin (D-Conover), chairman of the Senate Transportation, Tourism, Forestry and Natural Resources Committee. "The governor has his position, which he has articulated pretty convincingly."

Holperin believes the measure will pass both houses of the Legislature and likely be vetoed by the governor.

Then, it's unclear what will happen.

Although supporters believe they have enough votes to override a veto, some Republican support could evaporate.

With Doyle leaving, a Republican could be the next governor. Republican lawmakers who support an independent DNR could be pressured to support the current system.

"I think it's still too early to say what the impact (of Doyle leaving) will be," said George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation who was DNR secretary from 1993 to 2001.

Swing votes from lawmakers such as Sen. Jeff Plale (D-South Milwaukee) will be key.

Plale had supported an independent secretary. But he said he has been impressed by how Frank has run the DNR. He says proponents of changing the law are naïve if they think it will put an end to political interference. For those reasons, he is keeping an open mind.

"I'm trying to sort things out," he said.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/53889767.html>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Critics of politics in DNR fill hearing

Power to appoint secretary at issue

By LEE BERGQUIST

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Current and former Department of Natural Resources employees told lawmakers on Tuesday that morale has plummeted and the department has become more political since 1995, when the governor assumed authority to appoint the secretary.

The overwhelming majority who testified in Madison before the Assembly Natural Resources Committee said they backed a bill to give power to the seven-member Natural Resources Board.

Environmentalists and hunting and fishing groups dominated the 173 people who spoke in favor or indicated they backed the change.

Former Natural Resources Board Chairman Herb Behnke of Shawano said the current system has become unduly influenced by the governor's office — Gov. Jim Doyle has named two secretaries and controlled the top management posts.

Also, current and former DNR employees said the old system, in which the DNR secretary was answerable to a citizens board, was better.

Politics termed inevitable

Linda Meyer, a former DNR attorney and member of the Association of Retired Conservationists, said politics is inevitable in state government.

"But many believe that conservation is taking a back seat to political decisions," Meyer said.

She said that in some cases regulations have been weakened and higher-ups have interfered in enforcement cases.

She declined to offer specifics, citing attorney-client relationships. But she said employees have told her that air regulations have been delayed or sidetracked for political purposes.

Rep. Michael Huebsch (R-West Salem) pressed Meyer and others for details. In most cases, they declined, fearing they might threaten those still working at the agency.

One former employee, however, Douglas Risch, a water resources management specialist who retired in 2000, said the DNR has recently bent to political pressure and allowed residents with flooding problems on several small lakes in Dane County to pump water into the Wisconsin River.

Previous permits letting residents pump didn't allow water to go directly into the river. He says the Wisconsin River has better water quality and could be threatened by new invasive species.

"Morale is as low as it's ever been," Risch said.

Several DNR conservation officers called for a return to the old system. They said that, over time, they have often not been allowed to speak about cases.

Susan Miller, a conservation officer from Hayward and president of a state union representing wardens, expressed frustration that top management brought in from outside often has little relevant experience.

"I beg you to pass this bill," Miller said.

Still, critics of the current system did not complain about the current secretary, Matt Frank, a career attorney in state government who was appointed in September 2007.

Frank said the current system makes the DNR more accountable to an elected official. He questioned whether the Great Lakes Compact would have been passed without Doyle's leadership and questioned whether the changes being sought would be effective.

"Democracy is often noisy, and one person's politics is another person's policy," he said.

Business wants status quo

Business interests are siding with Doyle to maintain the status quo. Scott Manley, director of environmental policy with Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, said his group doesn't see the DNR as any different from other state agencies.

"The cabinet form of government works," Manley said.

Joel Haubrich, manager of state government affairs for Milwaukee-based We Energies, said the DNR is a critical agency in the utility's decision-making process, costing the company about \$5 billion in regulatory costs in 10 years.

We Energies is concerned a change might put more emphasis on natural resources issues and less on air and water regulation, he said.

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD

DNR secretary measure has heavy support

By Steven Walters

Posted: March 9, 2009



Black

Madison - State Rep. Spencer Black (D-Madison) said Monday that Assembly and Senate majorities have agreed to co-sponsor his bill restoring the authority of the state Natural Resources Board to name the secretary of that agency.

That would be the most momentum the proposal has had in the Capitol in years and set up a potential confrontation with Gov. Jim Doyle, who said last week he believes the governor should name the state's top environmental and recreational leader.

Doyle previously had supported returning the appointment power to the Natural Resources Board.

Black said 51 members of the 99-member Assembly - including 38 Democrats and 13 Republicans - have agreed to sponsor his bill. It would reverse the 1995 decision by then-Republican Gov. Tommy G. Thompson, and Republicans who then controlled the Legislature, to give appointing power to the governor.

The 1995 change ended a policy that had existed for 67 years.

In the Senate, 14 Democrats and three Republicans - a majority of the 33 senators - also back the change, led in that house by Sens. Robert Wirch (D-Pleasant Prairie) and Rob Cowles (R-Green

Bay). Other Senate leaders endorsing it are Senate President Fred Risser (D-Madison) and Assistant Majority Leader Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay).

"I can't recall a time when a controversial bill had this many co-sponsors," Black said. "This unprecedented strong and bipartisan support shows how important the independence of the DNR is to the citizens of the state."

Under the bill, the DNR secretary chosen by the board would have a four-year term, but the board could make a change before the term is up.

If it became law, it would mean that the term of DNR Secretary Matt Frank would end in fall 2011, or earlier if the board chose.

Black said he supported the environmental records of Frank and Doyle.

"It's clearly not targeted at either of them," he said. "The point of the bill is: Gov. Doyle will not be governor forever."

A DNR secretary appointed by another governor could make bad decisions that hurt the environment for decades, yet remain in the job until a new governor is elected, Black said.

Department of Natural Resources board members are appointed by governors to six-year terms - longer than the four-year terms of governors, Black said.

Last week, Doyle said he had changed his position on the issue and now believes that governors should have the ability to name the DNR secretary.

"A secretary appointed by the governor, with the full weight and authority of the governor behind it, can be much more effective," he told the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters.

Anne Sayers, program director for the League, said the support for Black's bill means Wisconsin will restore "conservation integrity."

"There is no question that since 1995 politics have played a much larger role in the decision-making processes of the DNR," Sayers said.

When he was attorney general in 1995, Doyle warned of the dangers of letting governors hire and fire the DNR secretary.

Then, Doyle called that system a "wholesale attack on the way we protect the environment." Doyle was elected governor in 2002.

Black said he will push the bill after the Legislature adopts a 2009-'11 budget this summer.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/40968317.html>

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Appointment change opposed

Governor against
proposal that has
board pick secretary

By **LEE BERGQUIST**
lbergquist@journalsentinel.com

Gov. Jim Doyle says he now opposes a proposal by environmentalists and conservationists that would end the governor's power to appoint the state secretary of natural resources and return it to a seven-member citizens board.

Doyle had been a proponent of returning the appointment power to the board, but in January, he told the Journal Sentinel through a spokesman that he was rethinking his position.

Doyle's apparent change then troubled many environmental leaders who have long supported legislation to allow board members to name the secretary.

By doing so, they reason, the agency would be insulated to some extent from politics.

As attorney general, Doyle described the board's

1995 loss of its ability to hire and fire the secretary of the state Department of Natural Resources as a "wholesale attack on the way we protect the environment. I think we are playing with fire here."

This week, Doyle said in his clearest terms yet that Wisconsin governors should retain the authority to name the secretary.

"I have seen the agency function under both systems," Doyle wrote, "and I have come to believe a secretary appointed by the governor, with the full weight and authority of the governor behind it, can be much more effective."

The letter was sent to citizens who attended Conservation Labor Day at the Capitol on Feb. 25.

Doyle pointed to his environmental record, which includes passage of the Great Lakes compact, new air pollution regulations and bolstering funding for a public lands initiative.

Scott Manley, director of environmental policy for the Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce, said his organization supports

Doyle's change in stance.

The DNR is more responsive to the public when the secretary is answerable to the governor, not a board, which he described as "insulated and unaccountable to no one."

But Anne Sayers, a spokeswoman for the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, said she was disappointed.

"We are really surprised that the governor would reverse his position," she said.

Doyle's change of heart comes as the Legislature has moved to Democratic control in both houses, when presumably it would be easier to advance legislation to return authority to the board.

Regardless of Doyle's comments, Rep. Spencer Black (D-Madison) said that he will introduce legislation next week.

Black said the legislation isn't about Doyle but long-term efforts to ensure conservation and the environment — and not politics — are the mission of the agency.

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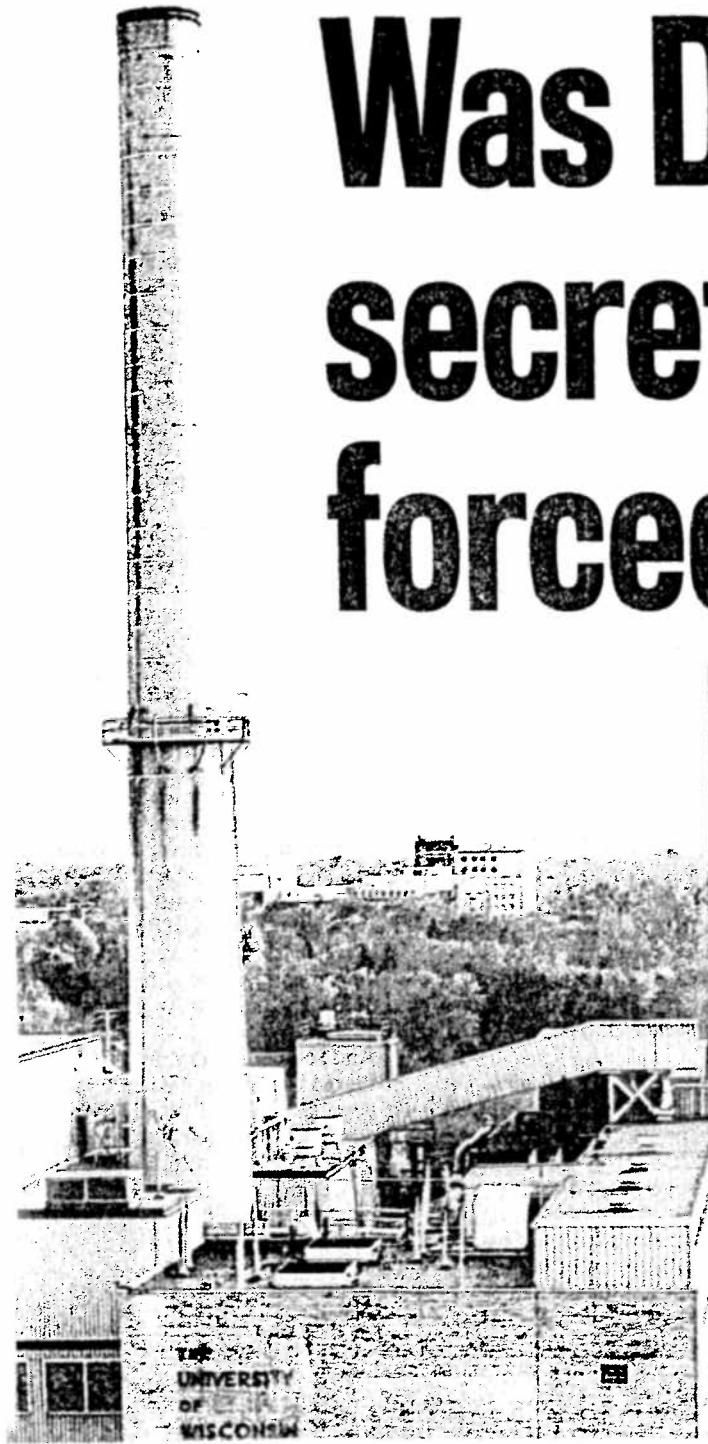
JOURNAL



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Was DNR secretary forced out?

HASSETT'S VERSION



Scott Hassett's sudden departure was chalked up to overwork. Privately, sources say, he was forced out - partly over efforts to clean up the Charter Street power plant, left.

Scott Hassett told others Doyle didn't like enforcement actions

By DEE J. HALL • dhall@madison.com • 608-252-6132

When state Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Hassett resigned suddenly in the summer of 2007, Gov. Jim Doyle's office announced Hassett was leaving to "write, travel and consult on environmental and regulatory issues."

Privately, however, Hassett told a different story: That Doyle, a fellow Democrat, forced him out of the top spot at the DNR because of the

agency's insistence that the state clean up UW-Madison's coal-burning Charter Street heating plant — a move now expected to cost Wisconsin more than \$200 million.

Hassett told at least two former top DNR officials that he was forced to resign and one of the reasons was the Charter Street enforcement action — which pitted two state agencies against each other in a conflict that hit close to the governor's office.

"There was no doubt in my mind that (Hassett) was forced out," said George Meyer, DNR secretary from 1993 to 2001, recounting a conversation he had with Hassett at Hassett's Lake Mills-area home in March. Meyer said Hassett said he believed the enforcement action against the plant was a key reason for his ouster.

Tom Thoresen, retired deputy chief

Please see DNR, Page A4

DOYLE'S VERSION



A spokesman called Gov. Jim Doyle a 'champion' for cleaning up the plant and said anyone who claims Hassett was forced out because of the plant is 'a liar.'

Charter Street plant photo: CRAIG SCHREINER — State Journal

DNR | Power plant a source of tension

Continued from Page A1

conservation warden for the DNR, said Hassett told him a similar story during a phone conversation this month.

Thoresen said he called Hassett to thank him for helping push for a bill that would take away the power of the governor to appoint the DNR secretary and return that authority to the Natural Resources Board. Four former DNR secretaries, including Hassett and Meyer, signed a letter last month backing Assembly Bill 138.

"I did talk to Scott Hassett ... thanking him for his signing on to the DNR letter to legislators," Thoresen said. "Scott told me that yes, Charter Street was part of the reason for his being let go."

Doyle spokesman Lee Sensenbrenner declined to answer directly whether Hassett, and his deputy, Mary Schlaefel, were forced out. He pointed to a July 20, 2007, news release that implied Hassett was resigning because of overwork after four and a half years on the job.

"Anyone who claims that Charter Street is the reason for Scott Hassett's departure is a liar," Sensenbrenner said in a statement.



CRAIG SCHREINER — State Journal

The Charter Street plant will stop burning coal and convert to biomass under an agreement reached between the state and the Sierra Club. The environmental group sued Wisconsin in 2007, alleging the plant violated the Clean Air Act.

Continued from previous page

In a telephone interview, Hassett declined to talk about the reasons for his resignation from the department, which he held from 2003 until 2007. Hassett, a Democratic candidate for attorney general in 2010, said he saw no value in "rehashing" his departure.

Schlaefter also abruptly resigned at the same time as Hassett. In an interview, Schlaefter confirmed she was asked to step aside to make way for a deputy to serve the new secretary, Matt Frank. She said replacing the deputy when the secretary leaves is not unusual.

Schlaefter was the lead official on environmental issues at DNR, including Charter Street. She declined to comment on the circumstances of Hassett's resignation, saying she didn't want to speculate. Schaefer, executive director of the Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corp., now serves as asset's campaign treasurer.

Meyer credited Hassett's "courage and integrity" in pursuing the Charter Street enforcement. Meyer and several other cabinet secretaries were removed when Republican Gov. Scott McCallum took office in 2001 after Gov. Tommy Thompson was named U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services.

"The governor has a right to hire and fire," Meyer said. "But if it's for carrying out the law and the policies set out by the legislature... that is wrong."

Ill gives board authority

Meyer, who runs the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, is part of a broad coalition environmental and sportsmen's groups supporting AB 138, which would return control over secretary appointments to the seven-member Natural Resources Board. The bill, sponsored by state Rep. Spencer Ack, D-Madison, passed the state As-

"Politics has totally shut down the DNR for anything but political purposes. The only decisions that get made at DNR are the ones the governor wants made."

RICK PROSISE, former chief legal counsel for the DNR
legislation such as the Great Lakes compact.

But Rick Prosize, who retired as the DNR's chief legal counsel 10 months ago, said he believes politics has become an overriding factor in decision-making at the agency, where he worked with all seven DNR secretaries during his 35-year tenure. Prosize said he's seen veteran DNR staff demoted and key positions left unfilled to make way for Doyle appointees with little natural resources experience.

"Politics has totally shut down the DNR for anything but political purposes," Prosize said. "The only decisions that get made at DNR are the ones the governor wants made."

Plant a 'big black eye' for state

At the time Hassett left, DNR officials were making moves to force the state to install costly upgrades to reduce air pollution at Charter Street, which provides steam, electricity, chilled water and compressed air to buildings on the UW-Madison campus.

The state Department of Administration, which is responsible for the construction of state-owned buildings, made five major modifications to the plant without getting permits required under federal law and enforced by the DNR. The \$2.8 million in improvements should have triggered permits that would've required installation of pollution-control equipment to bring the 50-year-old plant into compliance with federal clean air standards.

Tim Coughlin, a retired DNR enforce-

ment specialist who worked on the Charter case, confirmed there was a lot of tension between his former agency and other officials in the Doyle administration.

"What happened here is (DOA) broke the law, and they put the state in a pretty unfortunate situation," Coughlin said. DOA officials "knew the state would get a big black eye over this."

In the end, 'a good result'

The Sierra Club was working on those same issues since 2006. Frustrated with the pace of the DNR's enforcement, the environmental group filed a federal lawsuit against the state in May 2007. In November of that year, U.S. District Judge John Shabaz ruled the state violated the Clean Air Act by not getting required permits for the modifications, which, "resulted in significant increases in net emissions."

State officials reached an agreement with the Sierra Club to cut coal use by 15 percent at the plant beginning in 2008 and to convert it to burn biomass by 2013 — a conversion expected to cost \$251 million.

"The governor has been the greatest champion of moving Charter Street off coal, a tremendous result that didn't require one state agency suing another at taxpayer expense," Sensenbrenner said.

"The governor's decision to build a biomass boiler that will operate at Charter Street goes beyond any of the required standards, and was widely praised and supported by environmentalists and members of the community."

Under the agreement, DOA also has evaluated 12 other state-owned, coal-burning power plants and determined the Capitol plant in Madison, and possibly one other, will need upgrades.


"It was a rough ride getting there, but it was a good result," said Jennifer Feyherm, director of the Sierra Club's Wisconsin Clean Energy Campaign.

Wisconsin State Journal

Bill to change appointment of DNR secretaries supported by past leaders

By RON SEELY rseely@madison.com 608-252-6131 | Posted: Sunday, September 20, 2009
6:15 pm | [\(4\) Comments](#)



 Sarah B. Tews -- State Journal archives George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and former secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, addresses a state legislative committee in November 2003.

Several former secretaries of the state Department of Natural Resources are supporting legislation that would remove the position from the governor's cabinet and make it once again an appointment of a citizen board.

The secretaries, whose service under both Republican and Democratic governors goes back almost 40 years, signed a letter supporting the measure, which is scheduled for a vote before the state Assembly on Tuesday.

"Several of us have talked over the past year," said former DNR secretary George Meyer, who signed the letter. "And we were enthused about restoring the position to the way it was. ... There is a common belief among all the signatories that the agency is no longer as well respected."

Previously an appointment of the Natural Resources Board, a citizen board that sets policy for the DNR, the secretary was made a gubernatorial appointee 14 years ago by then-Gov. Tommy Thompson, a Republican. Critics have charged since then that the position and the agency have become highly political and efforts to reverse Thompson's action have resulted in proposed but failed legislation every year since.]

Among the former secretaries supporting current legislation and signing the letter are Meyer, who served from 1993 to 2001; Anthony Earl, 1975-1980; Darrell Bazzell, 2001-2003; and Scott

Hassett, 2003-2006. Also signing was Bruce Braun, former deputy secretary to the late C.D. "Buzz" Besadny, who served from 1980 to 1992.

Meyer said the secretaries supporting the legislation served under both systems. The letter of support cites more continuity of leadership and greater scientific and professionally based management of natural resources.

"A prime benefit of a board-appointed system is that it substantially reduces politically based decision-making in regulatory, enforcement and grant-making decisions," the letter states. "These types of decisions should be based on the laws established by the Legislature and the Governor and the rules adopted by the Natural Resources Board, not based on political considerations."

Despite opposition by Gov. Jim Doyle, a Democrat, the proposed legislation has received strong bipartisan support, according to state Rep. Spencer Black, D-Madison, one of the bill's co-sponsors and chairman of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. He called the support by the former secretaries "extraordinary."

The bill also received strong support at a recent hearing before the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. Support came from 173 citizens, mostly outdoor sports enthusiasts, and 77 conservation groups from throughout the state. Sixteen individuals or groups registered against the bill, among them Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce. At a Senate hearing, 93 individuals supported the legislation, along with 48 conservation groups, and seven registered against.

Doyle, who supported the change during his election campaign, changed his position. He has indicated he prefers the secretary being a cabinet member because it increases accountability.

But Black said he is hoping the show of support for the change back to the former system will cause Doyle to have a change of heart about the bill.

"While he has opposed it," Black said, "he hasn't said he'll veto it."

Posted in [Environment](#) on *Sunday, September 20, 2009 6:15 pm* [Department Of Natural Resources](#), [Gubernatorial Appointments](#), [George Meyer](#), [Gov. Jim Doyle](#), [Spencer Black](#),

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/environment/article_6c6e3472-a63e-11de-8358-001cc4c03286.html

Madison.com

Not too late for Doyle to right wrong

Patrick Durkin | Posted: Wednesday, September 9, 2009 12:50 pm | [No Comments Posted](#)

What will Doyle do?

As bills advanced last week in the Assembly and Senate to remove the Department of Natural Resources secretary from the governor's cabinet, everyone wondered if Jim Doyle would veto the move or quietly let power revert to our seven-citizen Natural Resources Board.

That's assuming, of course, the legislation reaches him.

True, on March 3 Doyle finally admitted his preference that governors appoint the DNR chief. He even claimed this approach "builds much stronger popular support for environmental initiatives." Odd he didn't provide examples.

And true, no one was shocked by Doyle's slow-motion flip-flop. Maybe we were too amazed. How does one avoid a sore subject for six-plus years? Most of us can't tap-dance 6 seconds, let alone 74 months.

In 2002, candidate Doyle often ripped Scott McCallum for being the first governor to appoint his own DNR secretary. Yet the issue disappeared upon Doyle's inauguration in 2003.

In his first speech, Gov. Doyle claimed seven times this was "a new day in Wisconsin." Not once, though, did he hint which day he'd honor his campaign promise and grant independence to the DNR secretary. By avoiding the topic from that new day forward, Doyle's reversal this March was more a guilty admission than "upon further review."

Still, if the Legislature passes legislation to unleash the DNR, no one is predicting Doyle's response. He's since become a lame duck and it isn't clear if that hardens or softens his resolve.

Such as it is. His March statement read: "I have seen the agency function under both systems and have come to believe that a secretary appointed by the governor, with the full weight and authority of the governor behind it, can be much more effective."

That's mush; something you mumble when choosing a lesser evil.

But that's Jim Doyle's problem with natural resource issues. He couldn't have a change of heart on this issue because his heart was never in it. In a state bursting with wildlife and environmental riches, Doyle's the guy who thinks "roughing it" means wedging your golf ball out of the woods.

He knows a Wisconsin governor should feel something for fish, fowl and wildflowers, but that's not him. Or if it is, he can't express it in his own words. Though never shy to name-drop Gaylord Nelson or associate himself with Nelson's legacy, Doyle can't channel the man's conservation ethic or environmental soul.

When Nelson died in July 2005, Doyle said: "When I became governor, Gaylord Nelson gave me some very important advice: 'Stay focused on the things that really matter to people.' ... (He) also once said, 'The ultimate test of a man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.' "

It's odd, then, that Doyle wants the DNR secretary in his cabinet, where Tommy Thompson jammed it with his 1995 budget. People don't just favor restoring the Natural Resources Board's power to hire and fire the secretary, they scream it with 90-10 majorities in polls, Capitol hearings and Conservation Congress votes.

Those "people" Nelson championed might squabble endlessly about trail access, dove hunting, deer estimates and global warming, but they've been united in indignation since Tommy claimed the DNR secretary as gubernatorial privilege. Therefore, Doyle must know people feel betrayed when recalling his 2001 and 2002 statements:

- "Like Caesar's wife, the DNR must be above suspicion."
- "The public needs to be assured decisions ... are made on the merits, without the DNR needing a political green light from the governor's office to proceed with legal action."
- "My preference is that the secretary be appointed by the Board. It adds a layer of insulation between politics and resource decisions. That's a good thing."

Yes, elections matter. Many people voted for Doyle because they believed he would reverse what Thompson imposed and McCallum blessed.

Before leaving office, Doyle should honor his voters by finding the conscience future generations can respect.

Contact Patrick Durkin, a free-lance columnist, at patrickdurkin@charter.net or write to him at 721 Wesley St., Waupaca, WI 54981.

Posted in [Outdoors](#) on *Wednesday, September 9, 2009 12:50 pm* | Tags: [Dnr](#), [Gov. Doyle](#), [Natural Resources Board](#)

Doyle: Keep DNR boss in Cabinet

The governor changes his stance on the issue, citing benefits.

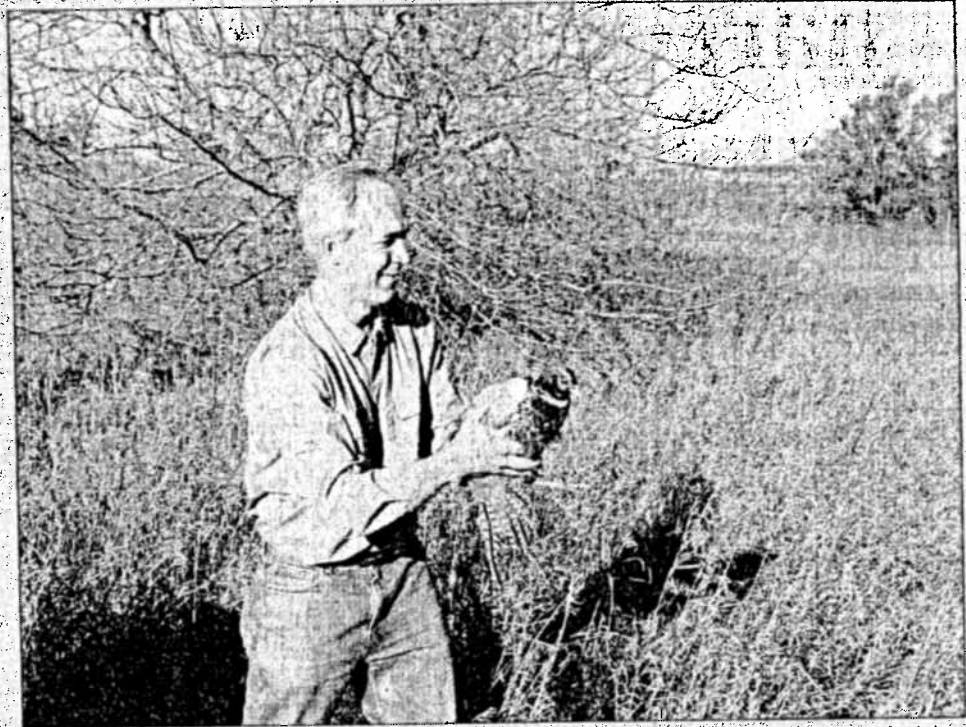
By **RON SEELY**
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608-252-6131

In a reversal of his former position, Gov. Jim Doyle said in a letter to state conservationists this week that he no longer favors removing the position of Department of Natural Resources secretary from his Cabinet.

The change comes at a time when the state Legislature may be closer than it has been in years to passing a bill that would make the DNR secretary an independent appointee of the Natural Resources Board.

Despite having supported such a change during two political campaigns, Doyle said in the letter that he now believes advances in environmental policy, including passage of the Great Lakes Compact and expansion of the land-buying Stewardship Program, would not have happened were the DNR secretary not a member of his Cabinet.

Doyle wrote in response to letters from conservationists who flooded the Capitol last week as part of a state conservation lobby day. An independent DNR secretary was named a priority conservation issue for this legislative session, along with groundwater protection, green jobs through energy development



MATT FRANK - Submitted photo

The Department of Natural Resources secretary, currently Matt Frank, shown here taking part in a pheasant stocking operation in 2007, should remain part of the governor's Cabinet, Gov. Jim Doyle wrote to conservationists this week.

and strong drinking water protections.

More than 600 conservationists attended the lobbying day.

Doyle also said having the DNR secretary in the Cabinet makes the governor more accountable.

"The governor can no longer just blame the DNR as in past administrations, but must take responsibility for policy. I believe this builds much

stronger popular support for environmental initiatives.

"I recognize that there are legitimate arguments on both sides, but I believe that a system that has a strong board and a quality secretary appointed by the governor is the most effective."

George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and a former DNR secretary, said Doyle not only supported an inde-

pendent secretary during his campaigns for governor but has also spoken in support of the change at many sporting group meetings.

"We would hope he would keep his word on this issue," Meyer said.

Lee Sensenbrenner, a Doyle spokesman, said he could not say whether Doyle's opposition would translate into a veto were legislation to pass both houses.

Group: Make DNR head 'independent'

Environmentalists want the secretary appointed by the Natural Resources Board.

By Associated Press

Some hunting and fishing groups are pushing to allow the Natural Resources Board to hire and fire the Department of Natural Resources chief, instead of allowing the governor to keep the power.

On Wednesday, members of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters pushed an "independent DNR secretary" as one of three priorities at their annual lobbying day at the Capitol.

In other years, the issue had never generated enough interest to take to lawmakers, said Anne Sayers, program director for the league.

"I think the conservation groups have organized themselves much better," said Rep. Spencer Black, D-Madison, who has sponsored a bill in seven legislative sessions.

Since 1995, the power to appoint the DNR secretary has been in the hands of the governor. And environmentalists have complained about it since.

There have been three DNR secretaries since 2001.

"Clearly, the turnover of secretaries has been a factor," said George Meyer, executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, which represents 157 hunting and fishing groups.

He is a former DNR secretary, appointed by the seven-member Natural Resources Board in 1993. He was reappointed by former Gov. Tommy Thompson in 1995.

When former corrections chief Matt Frank took over as DNR secretary Sept. 1, he and his top two lieutenants had a total of nine months of agency experience. (One official has since been replaced by a ca-



Meyer



Frank



Hassett

zy," Meyer said. "It really resonated with our members"

Paul Kruse, president of the Green Bay chapter of Trout Unlimited, said he doesn't care if the secretary is a hunter or angler, but wants someone with natural resources experience or education.

"We are getting people in there who don't know a wall-eye from a carp," Kruse said, adding that he was not speaking for the organization.

"It's all become so political, and that's what we have to get away from."

Meyer, who spent almost 30 years at the agency, was DNR secretary until 2001 — when then-Gov. Scott McCallum replaced him with Darrell Bazzell, the deputy secretary and a budget specialist.

Thompson, who made the change so governors could appoint the secretary, had said having the secretary in the cabinet would lead to greater accountability and better management of government.

Scott Manley of Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce said the DNR has become more responsive because the secretary is answerable to an elected official.

Manley credited Gov. Jim Doyle in June with pushing the DNR to ask federal authorities to re-designate eight counties as no longer violating federal standards for ozone pollution.

The request could help companies avoid spending more on pollution controls. There had been pressure from environmentalists who wanted to see more efforts to cut ozone levels.

But Black said Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce

because it's easier to exert influence and steer campaign contributions, Manley rejected that charge.

On Oct. 30, the Democratic-controlled Senate voted to return control to the board by January 2011 — meaning Doyle would not lose his authority during this term.

The Republican-controlled Assembly Natural Resources Committee, where the bill has stalled in the past, voted Dec. 19 to give the power to the board immediately.

"I think that when Matt Frank was appointed secretary, we weren't sure that it should have happened that way," said committee chairman Rep. Scott Gunderson, R-Waterford.

Frank took over for Scott Hassett, a former attorney in private practice and avid outdoorsman. Hassett resigned.

At the time of his departure, Hassett said he had grown weary of the pace and the ceremonial aspects of being a DNR secretary.

But Friday he elaborated. "With any agency, and like the DNR particularly, there is always the potential for friction between the secretary and the governor's office.

"An independent board would provide some insulation — and it probably would have in my case."

Doyle spokesman Matt Canter said the governor has long asserted that Hassett wasn't pushed out.

Gunderson and others describe Frank, an attorney who spent much of his career in the Justice Department, as a quick study who has made efforts to reach out to various constituencies. "But with no background in conservation, that doesn't help anyone," Gunderson said.

Doyle has said he will sign



We ask for your support in ensuring that AB 138 is scheduled and voted on without any further amendments before the end of the fall floor period. Thank You.

SB 113/

AB 138

SB 113
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- Sen. Halperin 4095.