



Testimony given to the Assembly Natural Resources & Sporting Heritage Committee
AB 112
By Jennifer Lord
April 10, 2013

Good morning, and thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources for Assembly Bill 112 .

Last year, the Grow North Regional Economic Development Corporation requested private sector providers of broadband and cellular services be able to utilize DNR communication towers. This request would require modification of DNR Administrative Code NR 1.483 as outlined in Assembly Bill 112. .

Under the existing Administrative Code, the DNR currently allows county and local public safety agencies to utilize DNR towers. As more households move away from traditional landlines, allowing increased access to DNR towers can assist with public safety. It is also important to note that the State Patrol, currently allows cell carriers on their towers.

In a January, 2013 letter to Secretary Stepp, Grow North points out that there are many areas of Wisconsin, particularly in the Northwoods, where the ability to access broadband and cellular service is less than ideal. Allowing access to DNR towers would help our private sector partners provide access to broadband and cellular service in parts of the state where access is limited.

Many providers in Northern Wisconsin are small businesses, and helping these smaller carriers provide broadband and cellular access to remote areas would improve rural quality of life. Additionally, in some situations, we would be able to form a public/private partnership that would enable us to secure federal grant funds for the site to put in a high speed connection that would benefit the both the company and the State of Wisconsin. Broadband is also key to economic development. As our society becomes increasingly reliant upon cellular and broadband service for access to educational services, health care informational systems, and e-commerce; the development of public/private partnerships can play an important role for citizens of the Northwoods to fully participate in the modern economy.

Broadband and cellular communications are important to public safety. The Federal Communications Commission, or FCC, estimates that 70 percent of 911 calls in the US are placed from wireless phones. Many people carry a cellular phone so they can call for help in an emergency. Access to wireless communications while enjoying Wisconsin's beautiful lakes and forests would allow a hunter or hiker to get emergency assistance quickly in an emergency situation.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions at this time.