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Testimony for Assembly Bill 359 September 25th, 2013

I would like to thank the Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 359. I introduced this bill at the request of the Boulder Junction Shooting Range. This is a simple bill that is meant to amend current statutes to increase the number of years the Boulder Junction Shooting Range can lease state owned land from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The shooting range is home to hunter education courses, summer youth instruction, high school trap shooting leagues, DNR Turkey and Bear hunting clinics, boy scout and Lions club events, and is utilized by law enforcement agencies in Vilas County.

Currently the Boulder Junction Shooting Range has a 15-year lease with the DNR to use state owned land. The club's long range plans include enhancing and renovating the shooting range facility to provide more activities for outdoorsmen. The enhancements include improving handicap accessibility, installing a new septic system, and expanding the clubhouse and range. The group wants to make sure the land will be available for more than 15 years once resources are used to improve the shooting range.

Under this bill, the current state statutes will be amended to allow the Boulder Junction Shooting Range to lease state owned lands for a period not exceeding 30 years. The DNR has permitted other facilities in the state within current state statutes to lease state owned lands for a period that does not exceed 30 years. Facilities that have been exempted to enter into 30 year leases include:

- **Rib Mountain State Park Lands**
- **Willow River State Park Lands**
- **Boundaries of the Wisconsin Dells Natural Areas**
- **Kettle Moraine State Forest Land for the YMCA Camp Matawa Land**
- **North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters**

I'm hoping for strong bipartisan support for this simple legislation.

TESTIMONY ON AB 359, September 25, 2013

My name is Mike Keintz, President of the Boulder Junction Shooting Range.

This is Pete Drahn, range Secretary.

Thank you for allowing us to speak on behalf of AB 359 today.

The range was established in 1974 on approximately 56 acres of land leased from the DNR.

The range is classified as a 501(c) (3) public charity by the IRS and has a Sales and Use Tax Certificate of Exempt Status issued by the State of Wisconsin.

We offer pistol range and rifle ranges for targets at 50, 100, 150, 200, and 300 yards free of charge to the public and the range is operated by an all-volunteer staff. We have 3 trap ranges, 2 skeet ranges and one 5-stand set up. We have nearly ¼ of a million dollars invested in buildings and equipment; all purchased by individual membership fees and donations. We currently have 150 members plus their spouses and minor children.

Our mission is to provide a safe and supervised facility for the public to engage in shooting sports. As part of our mission, we teach firearms safety and responsible gun handling, and do so for free. We actively promote and further Wisconsin's outdoors sporting heritage and the conservation of natural resources in these tangible ways.

- High School Trap League. In partnership with Northland Pines High School in Eagle River, we're currently sponsoring a weekly trap league with class instruction. These classes teach firearms safety, responsible gun handling, and shooting instruction. Targets are provided free to all students.
- Summer Youth Shooting Instruction. This is an ongoing program for new shooters, age 12-17, to learn gun safety and receive hands-on practice in clay target shooting from qualified instructors. Guns are provided for instruction and targets and ammunition are free.
- Hunter Education Courses. We host this required training for hunters with qualified instructors, again free of charge. Under Wisconsin law, anyone born after January 1, 1973, must complete such a course to be licensed to hunt.
- DNR Turkey and Bear Hunting Clinics. Our grounds are used annually for this purpose.
- Boy Scouts and Lion's Club Events. The range serves as a safe and supervised venue for local organizations to hold shooting events.
- Conservation Scholarships. BJSR annually funds college scholarships for deserving students at Lakeland Union High School, with plans to continue his or her education in college-level courses in fields of study related to natural resources conservation.
- Law Enforcement Agencies such as the Vilas County Sheriff's Department and Wisconsin DNR Wardens use BJSR facilities free of charge to qualify in shooting proficiency.
- Beyond this, we host many family fun shoots, organized shooting leagues and donate funds for community causes in Vilas County, including The Community Food Pantry.

State Statutes restrict DNR leases of state forest land to 15 years, although exemptions in the statute for terms up to 30 years have been granted to other organizations, including one only a few miles from our range. Our current lease expires in 8 years. On July 11th of this year, Senator Tiffany, Pete and I met with Scott Gunderson, Executive Assistant to DNR Secretary and Keith Warnke, DNR Hunting and Shooting Sports Coordinator at our range. We expressed our desire to improve the facilities for use by the public and our intent to work with our delegation to extend our lease term. The DNR representatives supported both initiatives.

A 15-year lease is not an adequate term to amortize any significant capital improvement. Since the area does not have a large population, it is not feasible to publically raise the capital needed to develop major facility improvements. Our long term goals include expanding the clubhouse, improving handicap accessibility, installing a new well and septic system, and developing a sporting clays course. These improvements total many thousands of dollars, and funds would have to be borrowed from a commercial lender to finance them. Such financing requires a longer term lease. As an example, we had to replace one trap mechanism this year. It cost \$8,500 for just one machine.

Our goal is to enter into a long-term lease with the DNR in order to facilitate these improvements.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of AB 359.

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