



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #395

Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (Historical Society)

[LFB 2015-17 Budget Summary: Page 254, #4]

CURRENT LAW

The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, located near Ashland in Bayfield County, provides educational events, public programs, interpretive exhibits, and a historical research center that educate visitors about the northern Great Lakes region. The Center opened to the public in 1998, and is visited by approximately 110,000 individuals annually. The Center is a partnership between the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS), the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the UW-Extension, and the Friends of the Center Alliance. The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center is one of a network of 14 regional research centers in the state that archive records particular to their local area.

GOVERNOR

Delete \$52,400 SEG annually from the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and the related appropriation as a result of the proposed elimination of capacity grant programs in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. State adjusted base level funding for the Center totals \$233,400 PR and \$50,900 SEG annually, with 2.75 PR positions and 1.00 SEG positions. The SEG funding is provided to WHS from the forestry account of the state conservation fund under DNR.
2. Under the bill, \$52,400 would be deleted annually from an appropriation for the Center, as a result of the proposed elimination of capacity grant programs under DNR. That amount

includes base level funding and the standard budget adjustment increase for 1.0 FTE SEG position. However, the bill does not delete the position. The Department of Administration has indicated that the funding associated with the position was deleted in error, and has requested that the Committee restore the funding.

3. The position that would be affected under the bill is a tourist information assistant at the Center. WHS staff indicates that the position staffs the Center's visitors desk, and in this role, interacts with approximately 60% of the Center's visitors. Additionally, the position is responsible for managing the Center's event schedule, which included 266 events in 2014, and training and supervising interns and volunteers.

ALTERNATIVES

1a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to delete \$52,400 annually and the related appropriation for the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center.

1b. Approve the Governor's recommendation, and additionally, delete 1.0 unfunded SEG position remaining in the budget system for the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center.

ALT 1b	Change to Bill
	Position
SEG	- 1.00

2. Restore the appropriation and \$52,400 of annual funding for 1.0 position for the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, a correction to the bill that was requested by the Department of Administration in the errata materials submitted to the Committee.

ALT 2	Change to Bill
SEG	\$104,800

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