

☞ 05hr_JC-Au_Misc_pt12b



☞ Details: Proposed Audit: Fish and Wildlife Account, Department of Natural Resources (continuation of pt12)

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2005-06

(session year)

Joint

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Audit...

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**



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

720 ST. CROIX ST., SUITE 101, PRESCOTT, WI 54021 • (715) 262-9279 • 1-800-897-4161

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

December 10, 2005

Ms. Janice Mueller
State Auditor
Legislative Audit Bureau
22. E. Mifflin Street, Suite 500
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Legislative Audit of the Fish and Wildlife Account

Dear Ms. Mueller:

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is the state's largest conservation organization comprised of one hundred and ten hunting, fishing and trapping groups in the state. I have attached the listing of our affiliate organizations.

Founded in 1949, the Federation has been a long-time strong supporter of conservation in Wisconsin and an organization that closely monitors the proper use of the state Fish and Wildlife Account. In the past we have been very active in supporting properly sized increases in hunting, fishing and trapping license fees and believe, to a very reasonable extent, we have been getting high value for our license dollars. The Department of Natural Resources staff funded by the account, whether they be conservation wardens, wildlife managers, fish managers and necessary support staff have done an excellent job of implementing one of the finest fish and wildlife management programs in the country. We appreciate the high value that we receive for our license dollars.

Is the use of the account and its funding perfect? No, no public or private sector institution is perfect but our general reaction is that, by and large, DNR is doing a very good job in implementing its fish and wildlife programs, sometimes under great duress such as the need to deal with chronic wasting disease.

As you undertake your audit, please take the following points into consideration:

1. We agree that no activities should be undertaken with funds from the Fish and Wildlife Account that are not primarily supportive of hunting, fishing and trapping. Obviously that means the fundamental programs associated with the Law Enforcement, Fisheries Management and Habitat, and Wildlife Management . We also see the need for strong support services that provide everyday value to these programs and ourselves as consumers of fish and wildlife services. These programs include licensing, information technology, legal services, facilities management, human resources, information and

education, administration, etc. that provide the wherewithal to make the other programs productive and vital.

In the last audit, there was a dispute between DNR and certain legislators as to whether the DNR was spending too much for "administrative purposes." Regardless of who was right in that debate, the Legislature passed a statute limiting administrative expenses to 16%. We understand the DNR is well below that total, possibly at the 10 to 11% level. That is far better than most large and complex private or public sector organizations.

2. Contrary to the way that some opponents of DNR spun the last audit by your agency, we as hunters, anglers and trappers understand that projects undertaken for our benefit have value to others who do not buy hunting, fishing and trapping licenses. As an example, when a parking lot is built for a State Fish or Wildlife Area for us to use, we know that it will be used by bird watchers, people walking their dog and outdoor photographers. That is alright with us. We surely don't want to see signs in those parking lots saying: "For Hunter and Anglers Only"

Another example is that when a conservation warden serving as the official DNR court officer in a county, while in court to see that fish and wildlife citations went through, would also stay to see that the couple of State Parks citations were processed properly. This saved another state natural resource employee from having to take time out of the field, travel to court and sit around until their cases were disposed of. It makes sense to us as taxpayers and license payers that there be this type of organizational efficiency in government. We also know that we get hunting and fishing benefits from state parks.

After the last audit, these type of activities were construed by some with a political agenda, that DNR was spending fish and wildlife dollars for non-fish and wildlife purposes. **Please set the record straight in your current audit. The test should be whether the expenditure of the funds is primarily for fish and wildlife purposes.** If the expenditure has residual benefits to other natural resource users and programs that is fine with us. As an example, the management of grassland habitat for pheasants will, necessarily and indivisibly, support non-game songbird species. We also enjoy seeing a redwing blackbird when we are out hunting pheasants.

Rather than setting the stage for others to unfairly criticizing what is sound expenditure of fish and wildlife dollars, **please indicate to the Legislature, that if they want to deal with the issue of non-hunters and anglers getting benefits from spending Fish and Wildlife Account funds, the Legislature needs to seek and appropriate funding dollars from non-hunters, anglers and trappers to support the Fish and Wildlife Account.**

3. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under the federal statutory mandate of the Pitman-Robertson and Wallop-Breaux Acts, has just conducted its audit of the full state Fish and Wildlife Account including state hunting, fishing and trapping license dollars. It is our understanding that once again the federal audit will show that the DNR is appropriately

spending our license dollars. Please coordinate your review closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service audit.


The Fish and Wildlife Service conducts an audit every five years. It did not make sense to us that a state audit by your agency be done immediately after the completion of a positive federal audit. We do support both federal and state audits but believe that it would be more effective and taxpayer-wise to alternate the state and federal audits by two to three years. Candidly, as hunters and anglers, we know that it is the federal constraints of the Pitman-Robertson and Wallop-Breaux Acts and the penalties that they would assess on the DNR that is the real protection for our hunting, fishing and trapping license dollars.

4. We do know of a very serious diversion of segregated fish and wildlife dollars that almost took place this year. In April the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee proposed to divert \$1.35 million dollars from the Great Lakes Salmon, Wild Turkey and Waterfowl Stamp Accounts and spend it for purposes other than the statutorily designated purposes of improving turkey and waterfowl habitat and the stocking of Great Lakes salmon and trout. Because of the diligence of several hunting and fishing organizations led by the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, hunters and anglers spoke out in unison and successfully requested the JFC to return the money to the proper accounts.

Please relate this situation in your audit since it is truly the only really serious diversion of hunting, fishing and trapping license dollars that we have seen in the last several tens of years in Wisconsin. Please note that Senate Joint Resolution 21 proposes a Wisconsin Constitutional Amendment that would prohibit the expenditure of funds from a specifically directed account such as the special hunting and fishing stamp accounts and the base Fish and Wildlife Account. The adoption of this constitutional amendment would assure that neither the Legislative nor the Executive branches of state government could divert these conservation dollars from their specifically designated purposes. SJR 21 has passed out of the Senate Homeland Security Committee and is readily available to be scheduled in the full Senate.

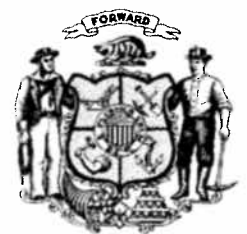
In conclusion, we along with the Conservation Congress and many other hunting, fishing and trapping groups would be very willing to assist you in any way during the course of your deliberations. I can personally be reached at 262-692-6054. We would like to thank you and your staff for your hard work on this audit..

Very truly yours.


Corky Meyer, President
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Meyer claims fee audit not needed

by Bob Hague

The head of a state sportsmens group says he's confident that fish and wildlife money is being spent appropriately by the DNR.

State Representative Scott Suder, an Abbotsford Republican, is once again calling for an independent audit of where the segregated funds raised through hunting fishing and trapping fees are being spent. Wisconsin Wildlife Federation president, George Meyer, said such an audit would be a waste of time and resources.

"The federal government is just completing an audit of those same accounts," said Meyer. "We do not need both a federal audit and a state audit in the same year." Suder claimed Monday that a 1998 audit showed only a portion of the fees collected were actually going to support hunting, fishing and trapping in the state. But Meyer, a former DNR Secretary, called that "a self-perpetuating myth."

"As I understand, the current federal audit, the preliminary findings are in fact, money's being spent appropriately." Meyer said that historically there has never been a legitimate complaint that fish and wildlife dollars are not being spent for the right purpose, something he noted would be a violation of both state and federal law.

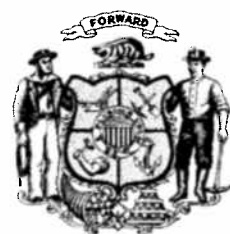
[AUDIO \(Bob Hague reports :62 mp3\)](#)

Related web sites:

[Wisconsin Wildlife Federation](#)



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Suder wants DNR fees audit

by Bob Hague

Are your hunting license fees going where they should? A state lawmaker wants an independent review, of DNR hunting and fishing accounts.

Representative Scott Suder said the Legislature's Joint Audit Committee will hold a public hearing next week on his request for an audit of the DNR's hunting and fishing accounts. Suder said the last such audit was done in 1998. "It showed that about forty percent of the money in hunting and fishing fees is actually going towards hunting and fishing programs," said Suder. "That signals a problem, and I don't believe that those accounting practices in the DNR have changed.

The hunting, fishing and trapping fees paid by sportsmen and women are earmarked for segregated DNR accounts in support of those activities, or at least that's how things are supposed to work. Suder remains skeptical, and that's why he's requesting an audit. "Since the DNR's making claims that they need more money, we need to find out if the rhetoric matches the reality, and whether the money raised is actually being spent on what it's supposed to be spent on."

Suder said he's been requesting an audit for the past four years. His latest request will be on the agenda of the legislature's Joint Audit Committee on Tuesday, July 19.

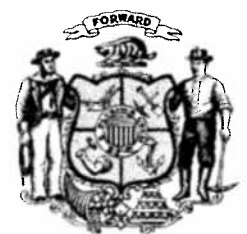
[AUDIO \(Bob Hague reports :58 mp3\)](#)

Related web sites:

[Rep. Suder press release \(PDF\)](#)



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Legislative panel approves audit of fish and wildlife account

By: Richard Moore

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee voted 7-1 last week to approve a request by several lawmakers to fiscally review the fish and wildlife account of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in an effort to track the destination of hunting and fishing license revenues.

The DNR has steadfastly maintained the funds are segregated and used exclusively on fish and wildlife programs, but critics claim the agency has diverted some of the money into environmental preservation, administrative costs and other areas.

The debate has sharpened in recent weeks with the impending rise in license fees.

“With Gov. Jim Doyle poised to sign another fee increase into law as a part of the 2005-07 state budget, Wisconsin’s sporting community has now been asked in two successive biennia to make a greater investment in the stewardship of our natural resources,” said Sen. Joe Leibham (R-Sheboygan).

“This has generated a great deal of question as to how the funds are used.”

The audit will focus on the following:

- A review of DNR accounting procedures used in the receipt and allocation of hunting and fishing license fees;
- A review of the funds raised from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and the extent to which the department appropriates these funds to fish and wildlife programs;
- A review of how the funds received from the sale of hunting and fishing license fees are used for other expenditures; and
- An examination of how Wisconsin fares against neighboring states in spending percentages of funding for fish and wildlife activities versus administrative costs.

Another lawmaker who has pressed for the audit, Rep. Scott Suder (R-Abbotsford), said the vote represented a “huge victory” for both sportsmen and women, and taxpayers. Suder has pushed for the audit for almost four years.

“Sportsmen throughout the state expect the DNR to be using 100 percent of their hunting and fishing fees for programs related to these activities,” Suder said. “With this audit announcement, the DNR will be forced to show how

these segregated funds are being spent.”

As he has in the past, Suder pointed to a 1998 audit indicating that only a portion of hunting and fishing fees were actually used to fund hunting and fishing programs by the department.

According to that review, fees totaling \$981,000 were diverted to other programs and areas, while 23 percent of the fees, or \$11.6 million, were spent on DNR overhead costs.

Suder said it appears those same problems still plague the fish and wildlife account today.

At the same time, Wisconsin’s budget for fish and wildlife activities is larger than those of most states, ranking sixth nationally and first among Midwestern states – figures that cry out for accounting reform and justification, Suder said.

Sporting Heritage, Inc. – a group that has in the past organized campaigns to add the right to keep and bear arms and to hunt, fish, and trap to the state’s constitution – also praised the audit, even as it acknowledged the good work the DNR does.

Greg Dzedzic, the group’s president, praised DNR staff for “doing an outstanding job protecting Wisconsin’s natural resources,” but he said tough times demanded a thorough accounting.

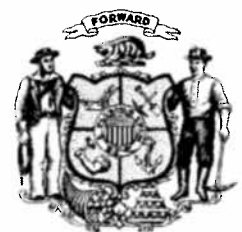
“Before you go ahead and raise license fees at a time when hunting and fishing numbers are declining, you’d better first make sure that these funds are going exactly where they are supposed to go,” Dzedzic said.

At hearings on the proposed audit, no one testified in opposition.

Posted: *July 26, 2005*



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



DNR - Fish & Wildlife Scope 7/19/05

10:19
Cowels
Keckman
Cullen
Lassa - 10:25
Roessler - 10:26
Travis - 10:40
Kaufert 10:43

- Fed audit out soon - finished work in February
SIB out in a couple months

Sue - ?

% of fed funds?

↳ about 20% of overall spending

Carol ?

Why does WI have a heavy reliance on user fees than other states

↳ ? MN? - 2/10 of 1% of sales tax?

↳ SCA

↳ Participation rates higher than other states & generate enough for the state match for fed dollars

add
to audit

→ include looking at other states in audit

? → donated self box-check-off for DNR purposes

Cullen - Explain secondary benefits

→ worthwhile for LAB to look into alternative funding?

Sue → GPR?

↳ none anymore

Lassa

- talk to credible sporting groups

Kaufert - How is this diff from fed audit
→ feds give back a portion of license fees
↳ WI has a lot
↳ fed audit just makes sure those dollars
→ add to audit

↳ groups who give donations to DNR are being used for the proper purchases - private dollars

Carol - add role our (correctional) facilities in
↳ (? how operationalize)

Rep. Suder

- Find out ^{where} fees are being spent - are they complying w/ stat
- Fed audit limited in scope
 - ↳ may help LAB - \$ should we rely on fed govt
- agencies should welcome - prove they've chg'd since 1998
- only an independent audit can answer these questions
 - ↳ 1st one to compliment DNR if ~~audit proves~~ ^{audit proves} spending wasn't
- lets solve problems - some sportsmen not hunting/fishing in protest of DNR.

Rep. Petrovski

- Suder covered most
- Happy Sec. welcomes audit
- look at: fines levied - where do they go?; conservation fund - ... ?

↳ Kaufert → What are the types of things people are guping

Travis - NO

① Kerkman
② Kaulert

about?

grades

→ Have a partial list - not with him

↳ rumors - want to know how & where fees are spent (high-powered rifles - (WD) hard to answer constit complaints when all we have is the old 1998 audit. - Give peace of mind.

Kaulert

→ critical of fee increases in past

grades

↳ more likely to support if confident DNR spending properly

→ don't mind a small percentage of fees that go to overlap

She - Thinks is a perfect follow-up to the 1998 audit

prey

Sporting Heritage Inc - No written testimony

- non-profit, non-partisan group

→ monitor the issues

→ DNR does a lot of work & a great job

→ want to make sure sportsmen's dollars are used appropriately

↳ no verification of chgs after 1998 audit

→ many opposed to fee increases & welcome audit

→ # of things that need to happen w/DNR

↳ trust issue - audit can resolve this

↳ license fee increase - OK if warranted

↳ recruitment & retention of sportsmen - ^{fee} increases exacerbate this

→ Bad strategy to elim. stocking programs if no increases

Bowling Congress?