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Testimony for Assembly Bill 730 February 12th, 2014

I would like to thank Chairman Ai Ott and the entire Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 730. I co-sponsored Representative Genrich and Senator Gudex's bill to grant state trail users more flexibility when using the trails for travel and recreation.

State trails are posted under the same hours as state parks. Unless the Department of Natural Resources requests otherwise, this bill will allow state trails would remain open at all hours.

Eliminating the hour restrictions would allow more commuters to use the trails legally. Residents of the Northwoods are using the trails after hours even though the trails are closed. These trails serve as a vital mode of transportation and should be treated accordingly.

As many of you know, summer tourism is the life blood of many of our communities in the Northwoods. The use of state trails has continued to increase throughout many of my smaller towns. I want to give bicyclists the opportunity to enjoy the great state trails in Wisconsin.

In addition, this legislation would extend early access to state parks for trappers. Currently, hunters with the appropriate licenses can enter state parks an hour before the posted time limits. This bill would bring trappers in line with the same regulations as hunters.

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



**Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
Public Hearing, February 12, 2014
Assembly Bill 730 Testimony**

Thank you Chairman Ott and members of the Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee for holding this hearing today on Assembly Bill 730.

Wisconsin's state parks and trails have long been a point of pride for its citizens. Today, I am here to talk about how we can better avail these resources to residents and tourists.

Currently, state parks and trails are closed between the hours 11PM and 6AM. While it may make sense for parks to be unavailable overnight for safety and preservation purposes, our state trails are an increasingly vital piece of our transportation infrastructure and should be treated as such. AB 730 changes DNR rules to allow Wisconsin's state trails to remain open at all hours with exceptions at the request of the DNR and its partners, most of which are counties.

The bill also allows trappers to access state parks one hour before their opening, offering trappers the same treatment available to hunters. In the absence of operating hours, this bill allows hunters to access the land one hour earlier than sunrise.

Representative Swearingen and I coordinated closely with the DNR to draft this legislation and worked to make sure that the needs of the interested stakeholders were addressed. Additionally, AB 730 has the support of the Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council and the Wisconsin Bike Federation. By supporting this legislation we can help foster the increased use of state trails and parks for the benefit of Wisconsinites and our valued tourists.

Once again, thank you Chairman Ott and members for your attention. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.





State Senator
Rick Gudex

District 18

February 12, 2014

To: The Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
From: Sen. Rick Gudex
Re: Assembly Bill 730

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for hearing this bill today.

This bill does two things. First, it allows the DNR to keep state trails open longer.

As you are probably aware, state trails are considered to be state parks under current law, and DNR rules require that state parks be closed between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Therefore, state trails are also closed during those hours.

There is already an exception to this rule in the administrative code. Sugar River State Trail, between New Glarus and Brodhead, is exempt from the automatic closures and is therefore open 24 hours a day.

This bill amends DNR rules to keep all state trails open 24 hours a day, unless the DNR posts closing hours for individual trails.

Different parts of the state use our trails for different reasons sometimes. In some places, trails are actually becoming part of the local transportation system, which people use getting to and from work. This bill will encourage that, while increasing the DNR's ability to respond to local demand, and still maintain control over the trails if need be.

A couple of other exceptions to posted state park hours also exist. Hunters, who have valid permits, are allowed to enter state parks one hour before they open in order to hunt in public hunting areas. Anglers are allowed to enter state parks one hour before sunrise, if they do so in order to go fishing.

The second thing this bill does is to create a similar exception for trappers. Under the bill, trappers who have a valid permit will be allowed to enter state parks one hour before trapping hours begin. This obviously has to happen during trapping season, and will still be subject to limits that exist in chapter 10 of the DNR administrative code.

This bill does not mandate that trapping be allowed in places it is currently not. It simply gives trappers the same ability to use public lands that hunters and fishermen already have.

Thank you for your attention. I urge your support of this bill.



Prepared Testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources before the Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Regarding AB 730

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

Good morning and thank you Chairman Ott and members of the Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today for information only.

As proposed, Assembly Bill 730 would amend Administrative Codeⁱ to allow users of Wisconsin's 41 State Trailsⁱⁱ to legally use these trails at hours when the rest of the Wisconsin State Park System is closed, specifically between 11:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M.

AB 730 would also amend the same section of Administrative Code (NR 45.04 (2) (a)), to reflect statutory hunting and trapping laws, as affected by AB 311 (enacted April 2, 2012).

Our State Trails serve a variety of purposes (namely recreation, physical activity, and transportation), and acquisition and development of these trails are funded by a mix of sources, including State Stewardship and Federal Transportation dollars. Particularly for those State Trails near areas of greater population, where transportation is a more significant aspect of the purpose of trails, we recognize that this change will better serve the needs of some commuters (for example those commuting home from a second-shift job).

Although we are providing testimony for information only, we do believe that there may only be a slight increase to management costs as a result of the proposed changes. We do not anticipate any significant increases to trail management or enforcement issues.

Thank you for your time.

ⁱ § NR 45.04 (2) (a), Wisconsin Administrative Code

ⁱⁱ § NR 51.73, Wisconsin Administrative Code