



A1 Ott

State Representative • 3rd Assembly District

AB 793

**Inclusion of Water Trails in the State Trail System
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources & Sporting Heritage
February 27, 2104**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Assembly Bill 793 (AB 793), which allows for the addition of “water trails” to the Wisconsin state trail system.

“What is a water trail?” you may ask. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, water trails provide a network of access points, resting places and attractions for users of water craft on lakes and rivers.

Water trails can be of significant benefit to waterfront communities. They offer enhanced recreational opportunities for local residents, and attract visitors who will spend their tourism dollars in these communities. The inclusion of water trails will be a valuable addition to an already outstanding state trail system, and will provide both residents and visitors with greater opportunities to enjoy Wisconsin’s amazing waterways.

While AB 793 allows water trails to be part of the state trail system, it also deletes the prescribed uses of state trails under current law. Some may look at these deletions and automatically jump to the conclusion that we will no longer allow the more traditional uses of state trails, such as hiking, biking and cross-country skiing; or assume that we are out to dismantle the state trail system as we know it.

In reality, eliminating the prescribed uses – a move requested by the Department – provides greater flexibility to consider and accommodate other possible uses of state trails, now and in the future, through the master planning process. As it currently stands, people are already using state trails beyond the statutorily prescribed uses – in-line skating, for example. This more flexible approach is consistent with the mission of the Wisconsin State Trails Council to promote the use and development of trails in all parts of the state for a variety of uses.

I would also note the Senate companion bill, Senate Bill 596 (SB 596), which is authored by Senator Luther Olsen, received a unanimous vote out of committee yesterday. SB 596 was amended to clarify that the Department will not be required to inspect water trails. (Other state-managed trails must be inspected twice per year.) I will be introducing that same amendment to AB 799.

Thank you for your time, and for your consideration of this bill.

The Rock River Trail

Along the Rock River in Wisconsin and Illinois

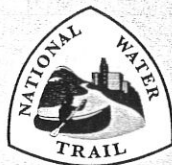


A River of Opportunities for All Interests!

Drive it. Hike it. Bike it. Kayak it. Canoe it.

Begin your journey at
www.rockrivertrail.com
 for maps and information on:

- Rock River Water Trail**
The first National Water Trail in Wisconsin and Illinois to be designated by the US Department of the Interior.
- Rock River Trail Scenic and Historic Route**
Established by state legislation, the 320-mile auto route through eleven counties in two states provides the traveler with access to the scenic beauty, natural resources and historic and cultural assets of the Rock River Valley.
- Rock River Trail Bike Route**
A designated on-road and off-road bike route along the river with hiking opportunities for the outdoors recreationist.



www.rockrivertrail.com

The Rock River Trail

320 river miles and 37 river communities



www.rockrivertrail.com



Rock River Trail Initiative
112 S Lake Street
PO Box 89
Hustisford, WI 53034

February 25, 2014

To: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
Public Hearing February 27th, 10:00 AM, 417 North

Re: Support of Assembly Bill 793

Dear Chairman Ott and Committee Members:

We appreciate consideration by your committee of Assembly Bill 793 to include water trails in the state trails system.

We had the privilege to work with Brigit Brown, state trails coordinator of the Department of Natural Resources, and her colleagues to establish a water trail on the Rock River through the counties of Fond du Lac, Dodge, Jefferson, Dane and Rock, and six Illinois counties. The Rock River Water Trail was opened for paddlers in summer 2012. In August 2012 the *Rock River Water Trail Inventory, Analysis and Plan - Illinois and Wisconsin* was presented to the Illinois and Wisconsin departments of natural resources and the National Park Service.

The Initiative was honored to have the Rock River Water Trail designated into the National Water Trails System by the Secretary of the US Department of the Interior on April 4, 2013. The Rock River Water Trail is the first national water trail in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Water trails can provide tangible benefits to river communities. There is often a positive economic benefit from increased tourism and water trails offer enhanced recreational opportunities for residents. Cooperation among public agencies and private organizations to establish water trails often lead to increased protection for outdoor recreation and water resources, and contributions to public health and quality of life from restoring water resources.

I look forward to offering testimony in support of Assembly Bill 793 and to answer any questions of committee members.

Sincerely,

Gregory M Farnham

Gregory M. Farnham
Coordinator
920 296-8771
waterdown@wildblue.net

The Rock River Trail in Wisconsin and Illinois - River of the Heartland



Rock River Trail Initiative Council in Wisconsin

February 25, 2014

Representative Alvin Ott, Chair
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and
Sporting Heritage
Room 323 North
State Capitol
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Ott:

Support of Assembly Bill 793

In summer 2012 the Rock River Water Trail was opened for paddlers in each of the 11 counties and 37 municipalities through which the river flows -- 155 river access sites of which 50 sites are accessible to persons with disabilities. In August 2012 the *Rock River Water Trail Inventory, Analysis and Plan - Illinois and Wisconsin* was presented to the Illinois and Wisconsin departments of natural resources and the National Park Service.

On April 4, 2013 the Secretary of the US Department of the Interior designated the Rock River Water Trail into the National Water Trails System. The Rock River Water Trail is the first national water trail in Wisconsin and Illinois.

Water trails can provide tangible benefits to river communities including a positive economic impact from increased tourism, enhanced recreational opportunities for residents, increased protection for outdoor recreation and water resources, and contributions to public health and quality of life from maintaining and restoring water resources.

We support Assembly Bill 793 and inclusion of water trails in the state trail system.

The Rock River Trail in Wisconsin and Illinois – River of the Heartland

Sincerely,

The Undersigned

Wisconsin Members of the Rock River Trail Initiative Council

www.rockrivertrail.com

Sheila De Forest
City Councilor
Beloit

Bill Ehlenbeck
Parks Manager
Dodge County Land Resources and
Parks Department
Juneau

Greg Farnham
Commissioner
Lake Sinissippi Improvement District
Hustisford

Dick Flynn
Director of Public Works
Waupun

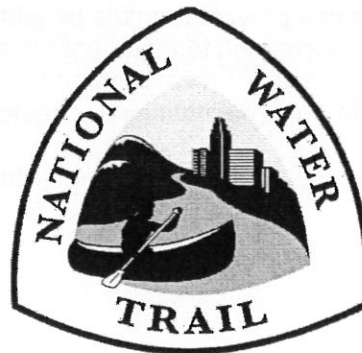
Jim Kerler
Director
Rock River Coalition
Lake Mills

Joe Nehmer
Parks Director
Jefferson County Parks Department
Jefferson

Andrew Nelson
Senior Director
GAI Consultants, Inc
Mayville

David Schreiber
Principal
SAA Design Group
Madison

Lori Williams
Parks Director
Rock County Public Works Department
Janesville



Canoeing and Kayaking

Water Trails in Wisconsin

[Water trails in state parks and forests](#)

[Flowages and other DNR properties](#)

[Wild and Scenic Rivers](#)

[Other water trails in Wisconsin](#)

[Biking and paddling trails](#)

[More information](#)

Wisconsin State Parks

Find

a Wisconsin state park, forest, recreation area or trail.

Camping opportunities

in state parks and forests.

How to buy

a vehicle admission sticker or state trail pass.

Get Outdoors!

to attend a nature program or event with family and friends.

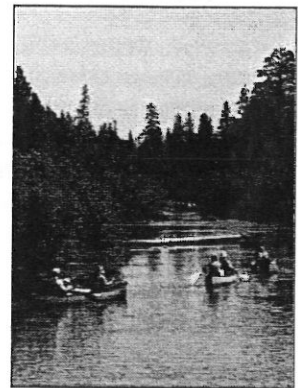
With more than 15,000 lakes, 43,000 miles of rivers, and 659 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, there is no shortage of paddling opportunities in Wisconsin. Water trails provide a network of access points, resting places and attractions for users of water craft on lakes and rivers. In Wisconsin, some trails are interpretive routes, some take paddlers to campsites, some connect communities, but all allow visitors to experience the natural beauty of our state by this original mode of transportation.

Water trails in state parks and forests

The following parks and forests have specific mapped or marked water trail routes.

- [Big Bay State Park - Lake Superior Water Trail](#)
- [Brule River State Forest](#)
- [Buckhorn State Park](#)
- [Flambeau River State Forest](#) [exit DNR]
- [Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest](#)
- [Perrot State Park](#)
- [Peshtigo River State Forest](#)
- [Wyalusing State Park](#)

A [specially adapted kayak](#) is available for use by people with disabilities at Buckhorn, Devil's Lake, Mirror Lake, and Perrot state parks.



Canoeing on the Brule River.
DNR Photo

Flowages and other DNR properties

- [Chippewa Flowage](#)
- [Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area](#)
- [Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area](#)

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wisconsin's Wild and Scenic Rivers are great places to paddle.

- [Lower Wisconsin State Riverway water trails](#)
- [Wisconsin's Wild and Scenic Rivers](#)
- [Pine and Popple Wild Rivers](#)
- [Pike Wild River](#)
- [Totogatic Wild River](#)
- [National Wild and Scenic Rivers System](#) [exit DNR]

Other water trails in Wisconsin

- [Capitol Water Trails \(Dane County\)](#) [exit DNR]
- [Jefferson County Waterways](#) [exit DNR]
- [Kickapoo River](#) [exit DNR]

Water Trails - Wisconsin DNR

- [Lake Michigan Water Trail](#) [exit DNR]
- [Lower Wisconsin State Riverway](#) [exit DNR]
- [Milwaukee Urban Water Trail](#) [exit DNR]
- [Rhineland White Water Trail](#) [exit DNR]
- [Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway](#) [exit DNR]
- [Yahara Waterways Trail \(Madison\)](#) [exit DNR]

Are you working on a water trail project? We'd love to hear about it. Contact the [state trails coordinator](#).

Biking and paddling trails

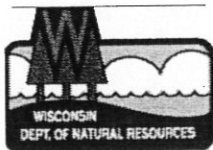
Several of Wisconsin's state trails are ideal for bike and paddle trips. Sections of these former rail corridors parallel rivers and streams. You can paddle downstream and then bike back to your starting point or vice versa. Most of these trails require a [state trail pass](#) for bikers age 16 and older.


- [400 State Trail](#) (Baraboo River)
- [Ahnapee State Trail](#) (Ahnapee River)
- [Chippewa River State Trail](#)
- [Great River State Trail](#) (Mississippi River)
- [Oconto River State Trail](#)
- [Old Abe State Trail](#) (Chippewa River)
- [Red Cedar State Trail](#) (Red Cedar River)
- [Sugar River State Trail](#)

More information

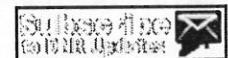
- [American Whitewater](#) [exit DNR]
- [River Alliance of Wisconsin - dams](#) [exit DNR]
- [River Alliance of Wisconsin - water trails](#) [exit DNR]
- [National Park Service - Rivers and Trails Program](#) [exit DNR]
- [UW Extension - Lakes Program](#) [exit DNR]
- [Wisconsin Association of Lakes](#) [exit DNR]
- [Wisconsin boat and developed fishing shore access](#)
- [Wisconsin Department of Tourism - paddlesports](#) [exit DNR]
- [Iowa water trails](#) [exit DNR]
- [Minnesota water trails](#) [exit DNR]

Last revised: Friday August 16 2013

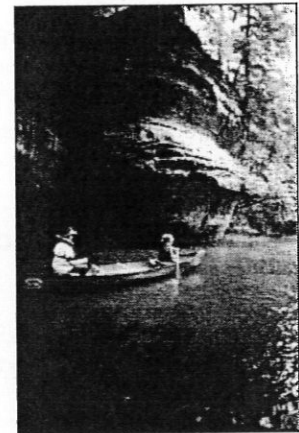


Employment
Legal notices
Privacy notice
Acceptable use policy
Site requirements
 Open the Outdoors

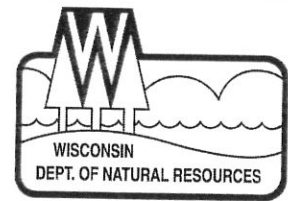
News
Staff Directory
Topics
Hotlines
Feedback



General Information 1-888-WDNRINFO | (1-888-936-7463) | Hours: 7 a.m. - 10 p.m.
101 S. Webster Street . PO Box 7921 . Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921 . 608-266-2621



Canoeing on the Kickapoo River near Wildcat Mountain State Park.
Photo © WI Department of Tourism



Prepared Testimony on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources before the Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Regarding AB 793

Thursday, February 27, 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 793 would amend State Statute section 23.175 regarding State Trails to eliminate the current list of State Trail uses. That current list of uses is neither reflective of all of the uses allowed on state trails nor does it reflect uses allowed on every State Trail. That is to say that all of the uses currently listed (equestrians, bicyclists, riders of electric personal assistive mobility devices, cross-country skiers and hikers) are not allowed currently on every State Trail, nor is that list inclusive of every use that is allowed. Snowmobilers and in-line skaters are examples of two fairly common users on State Trails not included in the list.

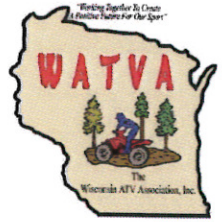
This proposed change would continue to allow the department to determine appropriate uses for trails on department lands on a case-by-case basis, through a process that involves planning, research, and public involvement.

AB 793 would also specify that water trails can also be part of the State Trail System. We have seen a growing interest at both the national and state level in water trails (as evidence, the federal government created a "national water trail" designation last year). This legislation would clarify that water trails, although not traditional terrestrial-based trails, can be incorporated into the State Trail System.

Although we are providing testimony for information only, we do believe that there may be a small increase in costs as a result of the proposed changes, mainly for creation of a DNR-facilitated state water trail program. We believe any new costs associated with the program can be largely absorbed by current operations and existing funding.

Thank you for your time.

02/27/14 - Public Hearing
Written testimony of Randy Harden & Rob McConnell, president and vice-president
of the
Wisconsin ATV UTV Association (WATVA)



**Assembly Committee on Natural Resources & Sporting Heritage
Chair - Representative Al Ott**

*Representatives Kleefisch, Williams, Mursau, Nerison, Petryk, Steineke, Born, Swearingen,
Skowronski, Milroy, Hebl, Clark, Danou, Hesselbein, & Shankland*

AB 793 - Relating to including water trails in the state trail system

To: Chairman Ott and all committee members

Thank you for taking this written testimony related to AB 793.

Recently our organization testified in support for the Off-Highway Motorcycle registration program as a show of mutual trail user support for a different type trail system than our own. Likewise we support this legislation that would authorize the addition of water trails within the state trail system.

Serving as volunteer members on various Governor's Council's, we note especially that the State Trails Council (STC) recently restructured their trail grouping makeup, adding a water trails position as one of the major user groups being represented on the State Trail Council. This legislation would complement those STC efforts and direction.

1539 N. 33rd Place, Suite A
Sheboygan, WI 53081
920-694-0583
www.watva.org