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Testimony of the Department of Natural Resources  
AB 380 and SB 329: Cumulative preference system for sturgeon spearing and transferring of licenses

Sturgeon spearing is a very popular recreational activity on the Lake Winnebago System with an economic impact to the region during the average 12 day season of over \$3.5 million dollars. The Department has conducted and managed annual seasons there since 1932. Lake sturgeon are very vulnerable to over exploitation, and as such, Fisheries staff, working closely with the Winnebago Citizens Advisory Committee develop annual harvest caps and have worked over the years to develop the current season format and harvest management objectives. The three lakes upstream of Lake Winnebago (the Upriver Lakes – Buttes des Morts, Winneconne, and Poygan) have a separate annual spearing season (concurrent with the season on Lake Winnebago in February) in which effort is managed through a lottery limiting the number of licenses issued there each year.

This bill will provide important license options to sturgeon spearkers applying for or receiving via the lottery a sturgeon spearing license for the annual winter sturgeon spearing season on the Upriver Lakes. To maintain sturgeon harvest from these lakes at acceptable and safe levels, the Department limits the number of licenses issued to 500 per year out of more than 4000 annual applicants. Under this bill applicants would be able to apply for a preference point OR a chance at being drawn for a license. Also a person issued a license from the lottery would be able to transfer their Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license to a youth after October 1 giving them an opportunity to then purchase a spearing license for Lake Winnebago prior to the October 31 sales deadline. License numbers are not restricted on Lake Winnebago. This bill was discussed and supported by the Winnebago Citizens Sturgeon Advisory Committee at their September 2012 annual meeting.

The Department would be happy to provide any additional information or answer any questions.

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