

STANDING COMMITTEES:
Natural Resources & Energy, Chair
Transportation & Veterans Affairs



JOINT COMMITTEES
Audit Committee, Co-Chair
Information Policy and Technology

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

FROM: Senator Robert Cowles

DATE: October 28, 2015

RE: Assembly Bill 393

Chairman Ott and Members of the Committee:

In 1977, the Legislature approved a lake bed grant for Renard Island in Green Bay for public uses such as slips, basins, docks, wharves, structures, wildlife refuges, recreation and park purposes.

One year later the Corps constructed and began to use Renard Island as a confined disposal facility for placement of dredged material from the Green Bay Harbor navigational channel.

Pursuant to the 1977 agreement between the Corps and the County, the Corps is to transfer ownership of Renard Island to the County after completion of the facility's use for disposal purposes.

In February of 2008, DNR approved the Corps and Brown County Renard Island Closure Plan and work began to remediate the island. To assist with the work ordered in the closure plan the Corps constructed a causeway for access to the island. With work now completed, the Closure Plan requires the Corps to remove the causeway unless Brown County wishes to maintain it as a permanent structure.

Brown County notified the Corps that they wanted to maintain the causeway because it would provide access to the island to fulfill the original public use intent of the lake bed grant. In March of 2014, the DNR issued a Chapter 30 permit allowing the causeway to permanently remain on the lake bed of Green Bay.

In November 2014 and April of 2015, the Corps indicated that due to the revocable nature of ch. 30 permits the County would need to seek a new lake bed grant or an amendment to the original lakebed grant issued by the State of Wisconsin if they were going to maintain permanent ownership of the causeway.

AB 393 amends the original 1977 lake bed grant to include the causeway to provide public access for Renard Island. The causeway will be used for the same public use purposes as originally described in the 1977 lake bed grant. AB 393 also further protects Green Bay by limiting the placement of structures on the land conveyed to the county. Structures may be placed if they facilitate public use of and access to the land or aid navigation.

AB 393 also prohibits Brown County from conveying all or any part of the lake bed land to any person other than this state, a political subdivision of this state or a special purpose district of the state.

Office:
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
608-266-0484

Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-334-1465
Fax: 608-267-0304
Sen.Cowles@legis.wisconsin.gov

Home:
300 W. St. Joseph Street, #23
Green Bay, WI 54301-2328
920-448-5092
Fax: 920-448-5093