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To: Assembly Committee on Environment

From: State Representative Clint P. Moses

Date: January 12, 2022

Subject: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 614

Thank you Chairman Stafsholt and committee members for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 614, relating to the creation of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) habitat work plan.

Senate Bill 614 will require the DNR to create a plan every 2 years that outlines goals and priorities for habitat work on lands overseen. The DNR owns and manages over 1.6 million acres of properties on behalf of Wisconsin's 5.8 million residents. The properties provide a wide range of recreation opportunities and diversity of habitats throughout the state. The DNR manages these lands, but there is seldom if ever a single report that establishes an annual goal, progress and outcomes associated with this management. Without targets, tracking and reporting, it is impossible to determine if the agency is meeting its obligation to manage these lands. Any successful organization knows, you cannot improve on what you don't measure.

This bill will increase transparency and accountability on how the DNR manages land. This bill will provide insight on the plans of the DNR and allow Legislature to address their budgets to suit the needs of Wisconsinites. Outdoorsmen and women deserve to be informed about the plans of how the DNR manages land. Put simply, this Senate Bill 614 will increase transparency on our public lands.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 614.



Assembly Committee on Environment

2021 Assembly Bill 660 *Department of Natural Resources Habitat Work Plan* *January 12, 2022*

Good morning Chair Kitchens and members of the Committee. My name is Anne Reis, Public Lands Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 660 (AB 660), related to department habitat work plans.

AB 660 requires the department to develop a department-wide habitat management work plan with specific habitat priorities and objectives, following the state's biennial budget cycle. The bill also requires the department to annually report on habitat management accomplishments to the Natural Resources Board.

Current habitat work completed by the department is work-planned annually by the specific habitat management programs within the Divisions of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Forestry. Existing habitat management planning is in place to accurately allocate funding, and accomplishment reporting is largely administered to meet requirements associated with stamp funding and federal grants. For habitat planning work, the department follows the Annual Property Implementation Plan (APIP) process. The APIP process allows the department to monitor property planning implementation and track habitat work affected by forest certification. All forest and non-forest, and some aquatic habitat work, is entered into the Wisconsin Field Inventory & Reporting System (WisFIRS). Data and information contained in this system are provided for review on the department's website. Additional work planning, budgeting, and reporting systems exist, and others are in development, to accommodate program business needs.

By its nature, habitat management work can be affected by several variables, especially site access and precipitation. For this reason, planning for two years could be problematic at the property scale as these variables may not allow the work to take place during the biennium. Developing work plans at a regional or statewide scale instead addresses this issue. Existing planning systems have the capacity for including aquatic habitat management planning and reporting in the future, however there would be additional workload to incorporate aquatic habitat management work into a biennial work plan and report. Funding would be needed to continue development of data systems, for annual maintenance and programming costs, and training for staff.

The bill authors could consider clearly defining the habitat management practices desired for planning and reporting. Defining habitat management into forest and non-forest would best fit our current approach to scheduling and reporting, minimizing the need for new system development, maintenance, and training. Adding aquatic habitat management would require considerable new system development.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



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January 12, 2022

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Environment:

RE: Wisconsin Conservation Congress position on Assembly Bills AB-658 (WDNR partnering with Aquaculture Industry Report), AB-670 (DNR Habitat Work Report), AB- 673 (WDNR Brook Trout stocking in Lake Michigan)

On behalf of the over 300 delegates of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) who represent the citizens of this state, I would like to provide our position on the aforementioned bills.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress does not support AB-658 (SB-617) Partnering with Aquaculture Industry Report or AB-670(SB-614) related to Habitat Work Report. The WCC feels that the addition of such "reports" simply adds unnecessary bureaucracy—adding paperwork for the sake of paperwork. These do nothing for the actual natural resources of our state and directs limited WDNR funds & resources to unnecessary uses.

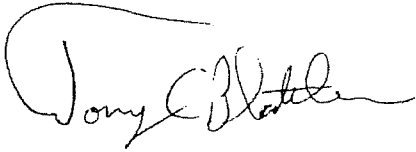
AB-676 (SB-612) related to WDNR Stocking Lake Trout into Lake Michigan (no appropriation). WCC opposes the passage of this bill in part because no funding source has been identified. The bill also fails to provide a true source for this stocking. Our state hatcheries are at capacity producing fry of other species. We would have to reduce production and stocking of currently produced species (like great lakes salmon) to provide additional brook trout production and stocking. We do not feel this is the best utilization of our state funds for the return on investment.

The WCC is normally heavily involved in the creation of the rules and regulations that govern and protect Wisconsin's Natural Resources as we are advisory to the WDNR and NRB and provide the Wisconsin Legislature with valuable citizen input, however in the case of these bills we were not involved at any level. The involvement of the WCC provides the sportsmen and women of Wisconsin an opportunity to provide their ideas and feedback on regulations for the use of Wisconsin's natural resources. This process that allows for the public's involvement also helps to ensure the protection of Wisconsin's natural resources now and for the future.

As established by Wisconsin State Statutes, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is officially recognized as the only natural resources advisory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to represent their interests on natural resources issues on a local and statewide level to the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources. Their mission is to represent the citizens of Wisconsin by working with the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources to effectively manage Wisconsin's greatest asset, our abundant natural resources, for present and future generations to enjoy.

Thank you for your careful consideration of our input.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Blattler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "B".

Tony Blattler, WCC Chair