



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

October 19, 2021

**Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage,
Small Business and Rural Issues**

Testimony on Senate Bills (SB) 610, 613, 615, 616 and 617

Good morning!

Thank you Chair Stafsholt and committee members for hearing the Sporting Freedom package of bills to preserve and enhance Wisconsin's sporting heritage for hunters and sportsmen and sportswomen.

As a lifelong hunter, I am proud to be the lead author of five of these proposals. My bills simplify turkey hunting regulations, seek to reduce the number of different types of hunting licenses offered in WI, share more information about public land access, clear obstacles for dog trainers and encourage partnerships for sport fish stocking in lakes and streams.

Turkey Hunting Simplification Bill (SB 610) – This bill would modify administrative rules relating to the hunting of wild turkeys to combine hunting zones and seasons to just two zones and two seasons (down from the complicated and restrictive six seasons that makes it difficult for many hunters to participate), and to modify youth hunting restrictions.

The spring turkey hunting season starts in mid-April, with the youth hunt on April 17th & 18th this year. On opening day of the regular season, April 21, 2021, there was a snow storm across portions of southern Wisconsin. The application for a turkey permit is due December 10 of the prior year. Unpredictable weather in April and May, can discourage youth hunters who have been looking forward to the hunt.

DNR Hunting License Categories Simplification Bill (SB 613) – This bill would require the DNR to prepare a report that identifies ways to consolidate or eliminate hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses to reduce the total number of types of licenses DNR is required to issue.

Currently there are over 20 categories of hunting and trapping license approvals, five special species stamps, and at least 12 different fishing licenses. Additionally, there are first time licenses for youth, disabled, spousal or mentored hunts. Hunters and anglers want to ethically participate in the sport, but could be left wondering if they have the proper license or tag for the season or the equipment that they are using?

DNR Public Lands Access Report Bill (SB 615) – This bill would require the DNR to prepare a report that identifies public access opportunities on all lands owned or managed by DNR, land

acquired under the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson stewardship program, and open managed forest lands.

Guidance from the legislature has been to increase access to lands funded by public dollars. Over the past decade additional emphasis included providing vehicular access on established roads. An aging hunting population often finds these roads gated and blocked providing inadequate access.

Dog Training Bill (SB 616) – This bill would require the DNR to make available on the Go Wild website dog training licenses. Currently, this license is not available there and that makes it harder for hunters to comply.

During the pandemic, many DNR Service Centers were closed, and counter service was restricted. This required hunters to mail a paper application for dog training licenses, allowing one to two weeks for processing. There is no justification for not making the application and permits available on the Go Wild system with all of the other hunting and fishing licenses.

Aquaculture Partnership Bill (SB 617) – This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources to prepare a report that identifies opportunities for partnering with the private aquaculture industry for increased stocking of desirable sport fish in lakes and streams.

Public-private partnerships can take advantage of the aquaculture expertise that exists in Wisconsin. The successful Walleye Initiative can be used as a model to partner with private fish farms to stock popular game fish and increase angling opportunities and enhance native fish populations.

Thank you again to the chairman and committee for holding this hearing. This package of legislation is about simplifying the DNR rules and regulations, so whether you're a seasoned hunter, angler or new to the sport, you can be sure that you purchased the right licenses, permits or tags to be part of the sporting culture in Wisconsin.

The Sporting Freedom package of bills is very timely as hunters return to the fields, set-up their stands and harvest wild game all over Wisconsin. I am proud to be a part of this effort to protect and defend our sporting freedoms and heritage. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this legislation.



GAE MAGNAFICI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 28th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues

FROM: Representative Gae Magnafici

DATE: October 19th, 2021

SUBJECT: Written Testimony in Support of SB 615

Senator Stafsholt and members of the Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues, thank you for holding a hearing on Senate Bill 615, which requires the Department of Natural Resources to prepare a report that identifies public access opportunities for publically accessible lands.

Maintaining a strong sporting heritage in Wisconsin is a top priority of mine. As an avid supporter of outdoor recreation, and an advocate for transparency, I understand the importance of Wisconsinites knowing what public land is accessible to them.

Senate Bill 615 requires the DNR to report public land access opportunities to the Legislature. This includes lands owned and managed by the DNR, land acquired under the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson stewardship program, and publically accessible managed forest land.

The report will detail access points to the land, miles of roads open or closed, seasonal restrictions, and whether motor vehicles are able to access the land.

The public should be confident the DNR is reflective of the public's desire to access public lands for hunting and other sporting opportunities.

Thank you to Senator Marklein for co-authoring this bill, and thank you to Hunter Nation for supporting our proposal. I'm happy to take any questions.



Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues

2021 Senate Bill 615

Report on Access to Public Lands Owned or Managed by the DNR

October 19, 2021

Good morning Chair Stafsholt and members of the Committee. My name is Jim Lemke, Real Estate Section Chief for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Joining me to assist with questions is Skya Murphy, Forestry Tax Law Policy Specialist. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 615 (SB 615), related to a report identifying public access opportunities on all lands owned or managed by the department.

The department currently produces the Public Lands Atlas, a comprehensive publication covering much of the information required for reporting under SB 615. The atlas is available to the public for free online and can also be purchased in a printed format or on CD. The publication contains over 460 pages of maps identifying publicly accessible lands owned, managed, or leased by the department. The atlas also includes public access lands owned by towns and counties, the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, Managed Forest Law lands, and all federal lands within the state of Wisconsin. Within this publication, road access points, parking lots, and boat landings are all identified for easy identification and use by the public. A comprehensive review would be necessary to meet the requirements of SB 615, including an analysis of over 890 DNR-owned properties.

Currently 3,475,373 acres of lands are enrolled in Managed Forest Law (MFL) lands, of which 1,029,893 acres are enrolled and designated as open to public access. Open designation allows public access to the property for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing and cross-country skiing. As per statute, the department publishes and maintains online maps indicating the location of MFL lands open for public foot access, and further identifies a specific access point to these lands. Each MFL parcel must be accessible by either foot, by public road, or from other land which is also open to public access.

Since the department does not require landowners to report the presence or status of roads on Open MFL, consistent with foot-only access being provided for in statute, producing the report called for under the bill would necessitate collection of new information and creation of records the department does not currently maintain.

Requiring landowners to provide additional information about how to access Open MFL at more than one point and about roads on MFL would require changes to the application process to gather this information from approximately 5,542 landowners, and the department would need additional authority to require landowners to provide this information. Further, the effect of requesting additional information about Open MFL could dissuade landowners from choosing to enroll their land as open to public access.

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