



Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 331
Assembly Committee on Environment
September 28, 2023

Chairman Oldenburg, Vice Chair Kitchens, and members of the Assembly Committee on Environment, I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 331, legislation to address and control the spread of wild parsnip in communities throughout Wisconsin. Wild parsnip is a non-native plant that often grows in patches or as scattered plants along roadsides and in unmanaged grassland areas such as fields, pastures, or prairie restorations. Currently, wild parsnip is restricted under the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources invasive species rule (NR-40), meaning it is an established invasive species that causes or has the potential to cause significant harm to our environment, economy, and human health. Without a permit, no person may transport, transfer, or introduce it into an un-infested area.

While wild parsnip is a detriment to our environment, it is most known for the dangers it poses to the health of humans and wildlife. Wild parsnip sap can cause severe rashes, blisters, chemical burns, and discoloration, also known as phytophotodermatitis, when people get it on their skin and are then exposed to sunlight. Due to the risks, more education, awareness, and control efforts are needed to help mitigate its spread across Wisconsin.

In Central Wisconsin, both Portage County and Wood County have declared wild parsnip as a noxious weed and have designated John Eron, a standout farmer and leader, as their weed commissioner. When John became aware of the prevalence of wild parsnip in our area and the threat it poses to public health, he organized a small work group of local officials and stakeholders to help address the issue, which I was glad to participate in. Although the plant spreads quickly and its seeds remain viable in the soil for up to four years, several management options exist, including mowing, herbicides, grazing, fire, and biological control. When you map and schedule your routes to mow or spray based on when it goes to seed, you can control its spread.

As some of you may recall, earlier this year, I invited John and other leaders working to address the spread of wild parsnip to the Capitol to present on their efforts. In addition to our weed commissioner for Portage and Wood Counties, we also had Pete Arntsen, the Deputy Town Weed Commissioner, Ken Schroeder, a UW-Extension Agriculture Educator, and Dan O'Connell, the Portage County Senior Conservation Technician brief us on wild parsnip, teaching legislators and staff about the plant and related mitigation techniques. We also worked together to draft and introduce this legislation, Assembly Bill 331, which creates a new grant program for local governments or tribes that have declared wild parsnip a noxious weed. The funds would



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Katrina Shankland

71st ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

support efforts to map, control, and mitigate the spread of wild parsnip and other invasive species throughout the state.

John has spent considerable time and money out of his own pocket to help our counties map wild parsnip and mitigate its spread. He has also dedicated significant resources to raising awareness of the hazards of wild parsnip and best management practices. Our community is stronger because of John's leadership, but he shouldn't have to pay out of pocket for these efforts to control the spread of wild parsnip. That's why we introduced this legislation—to assist communities with proactively addressing the spread of invasive species that can cause serious damage to our health.

The bill aims to bolster existing efforts by state agencies, local governments, and conservation groups by requiring the DNR to award up to \$100,000 per biennium in grants to local units of government or tribes that have declared wild parsnip to be a noxious weed. These grants can be used to help map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip. Grant recipients can collaborate with regional conservation organizations, and local weed commissioners can apply on behalf of their local government. The bill also appropriates \$50,000 per fiscal year to the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation to assist in their efforts to control invasive species.

This legislation will help protect unsuspecting Wisconsinites from injury and our environment from the spread of wild parsnip and other invasive species. Because of the prevalence of wild parsnip in Wisconsin, this is also a worker safety issue, from farmers to utility workers. Supporting this legislation will support workers. Assembly Bill 331 enjoys bipartisan co-sponsors and has support from agricultural, environmental, and electric cooperative groups. This bill is identical to the version that passed the Senate unanimously last session, with one caveat: there are even more bipartisan cosponsors from across the state this session. I encourage you to support this commonsense bill and look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.



SCOTT KRUG

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Rep.Krug@legis.wi.gov

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Environment
FROM: Rep. Scott Krug
RE: AB 331, Eradication and Remediation of Wild Parsnip
DATE: September 28, 2023

Chairman Oldenburg and Members of the Committee:

I write today to thank you for hearing 2023 Assembly Bill 331 (AB 331), which would create a grant program in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to support mapping, control, eradication, monitoring, and containment of Wild Parsnip in Wisconsin.

Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) is an aggressive member of the carrot family native to Eurasia. It thrives in sunny environments and can adapt to a wide range of soil conditions. Wild Parsnip is often found alongside highways, in prairies, or on the fringes of cultivated fields. Its primary mode of propagation is through seeds.

Wild Parsnip is not merely an aesthetic concern. This plant injures people and it is a public health hazard. Wild Parsnip sap contains a phototoxic substance that can cause severe skin burns, blisters, and rashes when exposed to sunlight. This poses a significant risk to everyone who hikes, works on utilities, does construction, or does other outdoor activities such as gardening, farming and land management.

Wild Parsnip will not “just go away.” It is an invasive species and has been very successful in Wisconsin. We need to control it. The best defense is prevention. AB 331 would assist in this.

Beyond the direct harm this plant does to people, the unchecked spread of Wild Parsnip has serious environmental consequences. This invasive plant outcompetes native species, disrupts local ecosystems, and reduces biodiversity. Its rapid proliferation can lead to long-term damage to our natural habitats, impacting our state's wildlife and the overall health of our environment.

MORE

It is imperative that we take proactive measures to combat the spread of Wild Parsnip in Wisconsin. 2023 AB 331 would require the Department of Natural Resources, as part of its comprehensive program aimed at managing invasive species, to provide grants for control of Wild Parsnip totaling up to \$100,000 per fiscal year during the 2023-25 fiscal biennium.

These grants are designated for local governments or American Indian tribes or bands in Wisconsin that have officially categorized Wild Parsnip as a noxious weed. The funds are intended for projects on public or private land that are focused on mapping, controlling, eradicating, monitoring, and reducing the spread of Wild Parsnip.

Local government applicants for a grant would be required to have declared Wild Parsnip to be a noxious weed (either by ordinance or resolution). AB 331 states that a weed commissioner may apply for a grant under the programs on behalf of a county, city, village, or town.

AB 331 would permit grant applicants / recipients to collaborate with regional conservation organizations on projects funded by the grant. Each individual grant would be capped at \$10,000, and a single grantee is not eligible to receive more than one grant within a given grant cycle.

AB 331 would allocate the \$100,000 annually that would be given out as grants, and the bill also allocates \$50,000 per fiscal year to administer the grant program. The Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation within DNR would run the program and would receive the funding for support of the new grant program.

DNR has filed a fiscal note on AB 331 which is available for review.

AB 331 is supported by a wide range of groups including the Wisconsin Towns Association, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, the Wisconsin Farmers Union, the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the Customers First! Coalition, the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association, the Oneida Nation, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited, and Dairyland Power Cooperative (per the Wisconsin Ethics Commission).

A number of legislators have added themselves as co-sponsors since the bill was first introduced.

AB 331 has a companion, 2023 Senate Bill 269. On September 20, 2023, the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy recommended SB 269 was for passage by on a vote of 5-0.

I ask that the committee consider AB 331 and that you will each support passage of this bill in the Assembly Committee on Environment and eventually (we hope) on the Assembly floor. Thank you.



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: September 28, 2023

RE: **Testimony on 2023 Assembly Bill 331**

TO: The Assembly Committee on Environment

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you Chairman Oldenburg and members of the committee for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 331 (AB 331).

Picture a summer drive through Wisconsin's countryside. You're probably visualizing green pastures, clear streams, blue skies, and an array of colorful wildflowers. There is one sight, however, that doesn't belong - a yellow flowering plant called the wild parsnip. Passing by at fifty-five miles per hour, the wild parsnip looks harmless - but up close, this invasive species has the ability to inflict great pain.

A person or animal who comes in contact with wild parsnip on a sunny day could experience a response that varies from a mild rash to a severe burn. That reaction is known as phytophotodermatitis, and it is caused by the interaction between the plant's sap and sunlight. Wild parsnip's proliferation impacts a variety of people, including hikers, bikers, and utility workers. This bill directs the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allocate \$100,000 annually from SEG C to local and tribal governments working to control the spread of this unwanted invader. SB 269 also allocates \$50,000 annually from SEG A to the DNR's Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation to aid their efforts to eliminate invasive species.

This bill passed unanimously through both the Senate last session and has earned support from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, the Wisconsin Electrical Cooperative Association, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Dairyland Power Cooperative, and the Oneida Nation. Please join them and add your support.



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**Assembly Committee on Environment
September 28, 2023
Testimony on Assembly Bill 331**

Good afternoon, Chair Oldenburg and members of the committee:

My name is Rob Richard and I'm the Vice President of Government Relations and External Affairs for the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA). I am before you today to speak in favor of Assembly Bill 331, relating to grants to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip; funding for the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation; granting rule-making authority; and making an appropriation.

Included with my testimony today is a white paper we put together for our members to share with their representatives/senators when we had our last Education and Lobby Day event back in February. It may look familiar to most of you because we've been advocating on this issue for almost five years now.

It's no secret that on any given rural road in many parts of the state, you will find wild parsnip along most fence lines. You will often find it under electric power lines, including lines within the service territory of our 24 distribution cooperatives.

While we are thankful there aren't a great number of our lines people and field operations staff that have not been exposed to wild parsnip, it remains a safety concern for these individuals. Within our organization we are certainly talking about it more and making people more aware, and I think these educational efforts have helped a great deal in minimizing exposure to the plant.

We made some good progress on this bill last session when it passed the Senate 33-0, but we were unable to secure passage in the Assembly before session adjourned.

WECA strongly supports Assembly Bill 331 with the hope that more resources can be devoted to mapping and ultimately eliminating this invasive and harmful plant species.

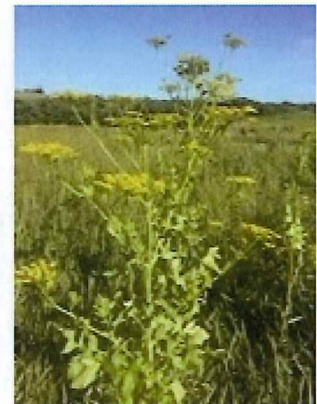
Thank you, Chair Oldenburg and committee members.

Please Support the Mapping and Eradication of Wild Parsnip

Wild parsnip is a dangerous non-native plant found throughout Wisconsin, typically growing in patches or as scattered plants along roadsides and in unmanaged grassland areas such as fields, pastures, or prairie restorations. It's been present in Wisconsin for over a hundred years but its proliferation in recent decades throughout the countryside is becoming a significant problem.

This plant is regulated in Wisconsin by DNR invasive species rule (NR-40) as a restricted species. Due to this designation, it is required that plants and reproductive propagules cannot knowingly be spread into un-infested areas. Although the plant spreads relatively easily, several management options exist, including mowing, herbicides, grazing, fire, and biological control.

This plant is becoming a serious threat to electric linemen in their field of operation. While wild parsnip causes a variety of impacts to the environment, it is most known for the rashes and burns it can cause on human skin when people come into contact with the plant's chemicals and are exposed to sunlight or other UV light.



Sen. Patrick Testin, Rep. Scott Krug and Rep. Katrina Shankland are working on legislation that would supplement existing efforts by state agencies, local governments, and conservation groups by requiring the DNR to award up to \$100,000 per fiscal year (SEG, Conservation Fund) in grants to local units of government or American Indian tribes which have declared wild parsnip to be a noxious weed to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip. Individual grants are capped at \$10,000.

The bill also appropriates \$50,000 per fiscal year (SEG funding) to the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation to assist in their efforts to control invasive species. Grant recipients can collaborate with regional conservation organizations, and local weed commissioners can apply on behalf of their local government.

Wisconsin's Electric Cooperatives ask that you please support legislative efforts to bring greater awareness and funding resources to the fight against wild parsnip.

Threats

Wild parsnip

- Displaces native vegetation
- Decreases biodiversity
- Can cause painful blisters

History

Wild parsnip was brought to the United States by settlers who valued its edible taproot. Wild parsnip is the same species as cultivated parsnip, but it escaped from the garden long ago. Now wide-spread, wild parsnip is often found where people hike, work, garden and play, making encounters more frequent.

Range & Habitat

Wild parsnip grows in sunny areas: fence rows, roadsides, uncultivated fields, meadows, woods edges, pastures, prairies and restorations. It is found nationwide, except for a few southeastern states. Wild parsnip prefers rich alkaline soils, but adapts to almost any open upland habitat.

Warning! Skin Irritant

Be cautious around wild parsnip. Keep away from juices from cut or broken leaves, stems or flower heads. Furocoumarins in the plant juice cause skin to become hypersensitized to sunlight, leading to a painful sun-induced burn-like reaction called phytophotodermatitis. Wild parsnip can be

touched safely as long as the stems are not broken, and don't release the sap. Wild parsnip sap is harmless when dry.

Unlike poison ivy, (which causes an allergic reaction) you don't need a previous exposure to be sensitized. People vary in the intensity of their reaction to parsnip, depending on skin color and other factors. Moist, sweaty skin can intensify the reaction. Animals with bare light-colored skin or thin fur may also be affected. Covering exposed skin immediately will prevent the reaction, but the area will remain sensitized for about eight hours.

The 'burn' reaction usually appears a day or two after exposure, and only in places touched by the sap and exposed to the sun. In mild cases, affected skin turns red and feels like a sunburn. In more typical cases, skin reddens, often hurts and forms large blisters. Unlike blisters caused by poison ivy, wild parsnip blisters do not spread.

If blisters develop, cover them with a cool, wet cloth to help relieve pain. Avoid rupturing the blisters for as long as possible, allowing the skin beneath to heal. You can also cover the affected areas with bandages. Keep blistered skin out of the sun to avoid further pain and redness. When blisters rupture, keep the area clean, and if desired, apply an antibiotic cream to prevent infection. If blistering is severe, see a physician. A topical or systemic cortisone steroid may relieve discomfort. As blisters heal, a reddish-brown discoloration will mark the site. These telltale marks can persist for months to several years.



Wild parsnip blisters. Photo by David J. Eagan



Blisters acquired while using a weed whip. Note the lack of blisters where skin was protected by socks. Photo by Steven Zoromski

Printed References

BOOKS

Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest: An Illustrated Guide to Their Identification and Control, by Elizabeth J. Czarapata, University of Wisconsin Press, 2005

Websites

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www.ipaw.org

Univ. of Wisc. Extension — Wild parsnip factsheet
www.uwex.edu/ces/whort/gardenfacts/x1083.pdf

Wisconsin DNR — Wild parsnip factsheet
dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/parsnip.htm

Wisconsin DNR — Invasive plants photo gallery
dnr.wi.gov/invasives/photos

Wisc. Natural Resources magazine — Wild Parsnip
www.wnrmag.com/stories/1999/jun99/parsnip.htm
www.wnrmag.com/stories/2000/jun00/parsnip.htm

Wisc. State Herbarium — Vascular plants search
www.botany.wisc.edu/wisflora/search.asp

Illinois Nat. Hist. Survey - Wild Parsnip Management
www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cnf/outreach/VMG/parsnip.html

Minnesota DNR — Wild parsnip factsheet
www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/herbaceous/wildparsnip.html

The Nature Conservancy Wild parsnip management
<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/pastati.html>

NOTE: Use pesticides wisely. Always read the product label carefully. Follow all mixing and application instructions. Wear all recommended protective gear and clothing. Follow directions exactly to protect the environment and people from pesticide exposure. Failure to do so violates the law. References to pesticides and other products are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of one product over similar products.

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This brochure was produced by Lisa Johnson, Dane County UW-Extension Horticulture Educator and David J. Eagan, UW-Madison. This brochure was produced under the auspices of the Environmental Working Group of the UW-Extension Urban Horticulture Team.

Copies are available from your county Extension office and the Wisconsin DNR.

Reviewed by: Kelly Kearns, Wisconsin DNR; Dr. John Stier, UW-Horticulture

Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*)



A Major Threat to Wisconsin's Prairies, Fields and Roadsides

HT 2007 (UWEX Horticulture Team)
PUB-ER-647 2007 (WI DNR)

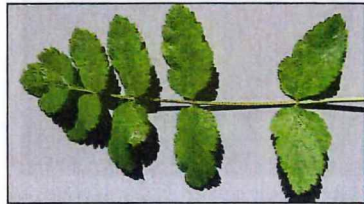
Identification

Forms. Wild parsnip has two growth stages: non-flowering leafy rosettes at ground level and four- to five-foot-tall flowering plants.

Non-flowering rosettes. Germinating seeds produce low-growing non-flowering rosettes of leaves the first year. Each rosette is a cluster of spindly, compound leaves that resemble celery leaves.



Rosette of leaves. Photo by David J. Eagan



One compound leaf. Photo by Lisa Johnson

Compound leaves consist of a central stem bearing several pairs of toothed leaflets. A mature rosette has five to 15 leaves, and each leaf is six to 12 inches long. During the first year, the plant develops a large taproot. It may take two to three years for the root to store enough energy to produce a flowering stalk.

Flowering plants. A tall, branched flowering stalk appears in the second or third year.

Flowers. The flowers are tiny, five-petaled and yellow-green, borne in umbels (flat clusters) atop four- to five-foot-tall leafy stems. Stems are stout, grooved and hollow. Most flowering occurs from early June to mid-July. Umbels are two to six inches across. Primary umbels, the largest, bloom first atop the main stem, followed by secondary and tertiary umbels, blooming 10-14 days later on side branches. With different bloom times, plants can produce seed for a longer period than if all the flowers matured at once. This gives plants a competitive advantage. When flowering ends, plants start to wither and die.



Primary and secondary umbels. Photo by Lisa Johnson



Umbel. Photo by David J. Eagan

Seeds. Wild parsnip seeds are oval, one-quarter-inch long and smooth on one side with four horizontal curved "ribs" on the other. They mature in about three weeks, changing from yellow-green to tan in color. Most seeds fall by October in southern Wisconsin. About 1,000 seeds are produced per plant. They require a cold period to germinate, so most sprout in spring. Seeds are viable for about four years.



Wild parsnip seeds. Photo by David J. Eagan

Spread

Wild parsnip reproduces only by seed. It is spreading in Wisconsin for several reasons. Delaying the regular mowing of roadsides or fields (to accommodate the nesting cycles of grassland birds) allows seeds to mature before mowing occurs. Seeds are also spread inadvertently to new locations on mowers, trucks and other machinery, and in soil used for landscaping and construction and in hay.

Wild parsnip prefers weedy, sunny, disturbed areas. Dense, well-established prairies are less likely to be invaded. However, wild parsnip can infest prairie edges or disturbance areas within prairies. Control methods such as burning and mowing can actually favor the spread of wild parsnip, depending on the treatment and timing. Apply these methods carefully.

Control Methods

The best way to control wild parsnip is by early detection and eradication. Removing a small or new infestation early will prevent a much larger problem from developing. Regardless of the method used, the goal is to prevent the plants from seeding.

Management practices should be based on the quality of the area, the degree of infestation, and use by people or livestock. In high quality natural areas, eradicate wild parsnip promptly to help preserve the native plant community. Long-term monitoring is a crucial part of any control method used, as seeds in the 'seed bank' will continue to germinate for several years.

Caution. To avoid getting plant juice on bare skin, wear gloves, long sleeves, long pants, safety glasses and other protective clothing. If contact occurs, immediately wash or cover the area. Working at sundown may be the safest option.

Hand-digging and pulling. This method will kill the plant, but is not practical for large infestations. Flowering plants have stout stems and may be pulled, especially when soil is moist after a rain. If seeds are ripening, remove pulled plants from the area to avoid spreading the seeds; they may still ripen even after the plant is uprooted! To dig out wild parsnip, use a narrow shovel, spade or trowel to loosen and uproot them. You may also slice the taproot with a sharp shovel an inch below the root crown and pull up the top of the plant. It should not resprout.



Digging parsnip roots. Photo by Sam Thayer.

Prescribed burns Burning will not kill established plants; they will resprout from their taproots. However, fire often kills newly sprouted seedlings. A spring burn clears the

ground and encourages early and vigorous rosette growth as well as seed germination. This allows wild parsnip to be easily spotted, as they are among the first plants to reappear after a fire. Follow all state, county and local ordinances when using fire.

Mowing. Mowing flowering plants must be properly timed, or it may lead to a worse infestation. Mowing tends to favor plants in the rosette stage by allowing more sunlight to reach them. It also reduces the density and reproduction of other species that compete with wild parsnip. To control flowering plants, mow after the first umbels flower (usually late June to early July), but before seeds enlarge. At this time, plants have used up most of their energy and often die when cut. Some plants will resprout or flower late, so follow-up mowing or spot-cutting is necessary. Continue mowing for at least five years to exhaust the seed bank. Be especially careful when using mowers, weed whips, mechanical string trimmers and other such devices. They tend to spray users with juice and bits of the plants, leading to redness and sometimes hundreds of blisters on exposed skin. Wear goggles and protective clothing when mowing.

Chemical controls. Apply a broadleaf herbicide product to the rosettes, such as one containing triclopyr or 2,4-D. Add a surfactant, if one is not already present, to improve herbicide adherence. Ideally, spray in fall on a warm day after the first frost. This reduces the possibility of harming desirable species. Spray each year until all missed plants and newly germinated plants are eliminated. Always follow herbicide label directions. Use proper personal protective equipment, and keep people and animals out of treated areas as directed.

Testimony on Assembly Bill 331

September 28, 2023

Chair Oldenburg and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 331 to address the spread of wild parsnip.

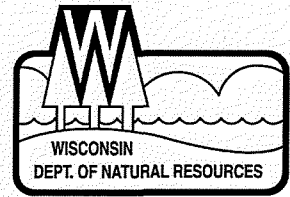
The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation (WFBF) is the state's largest general agriculture organization with over 47,000 members. WFBF represents farms of different sizes, commodities and management styles. WFBF appreciates Representatives Krug and Shankland and Senators Testin and Cowles bringing this legislation forward to help control and eradicate an especially dangerous invasive species that can cause serious injury to humans and animals.

Wild Parsnip, like many invasive species, is believed to have been introduced to North America by European settlers who cultivated it for its edible root. While the roots are indeed edible, the plant's sap poses a severe threat to human health. Commonly referred to as poison parsnip, this plant forms dense clusters and produces sap containing chemicals that can trigger severe skin reactions upon exposure to sunlight, resulting in painful burns, rashes, or weeping blisters.

This bill seeks to augment the ongoing efforts of state agencies, local governments, and conservation groups in combatting this invasive weed by allocating up to \$100,000 annually for a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) statewide grant program. In addition, the bill appropriates \$50,000 per year to the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation to further their work toward the same goal.

Wild Parsnip is frequently found in ditches along roadsides, open yards, dumps, meadows, and untilled grasslands. If left unchecked, it rapidly displaces native grasses and pollinators, propagating itself through prolific seed production, with a single plant capable of yielding up to 1,000 seeds annually. One of the most effective management strategies involves regular mowing to prevent seed maturation, but this incurs additional personnel and equipment costs for local governments with limited resources.

We extend our gratitude to Senators Testin and Cowles and Representatives Krug and Shankland for their persistent advocacy on this issue. We strongly urge your support for the bill.



Assembly Committee on Environment

2023 Assembly Bill 331

Grants to Map, Control, Eradicate, Monitor and Minimize the Spread of Wild

Parsnip

September 28, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Oldenburg, and members of the Committee. My name is Drew Feldkirchner, and I'm the Director of the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. I'm also the department's representative on the Wisconsin Invasive Species Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 331, related to grants to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip.

Wild parsnip is both ecologically damaging and can cause serious burns. This plant is abundant in the southern part of the state, common in the central part, and sporadic in the north. The existing Administrative Rule NR 40, which outlines the identification, classification, and control of invasive species, lists wild parsnip as a restricted invasive plant statewide, meaning it cannot be deliberately transported or introduced to new areas, and reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent unintentional transportation or introduction. Populations continue to spread through much of Wisconsin, often following roadside mowing.

Assembly Bill 331 (AB 331) would fund treatments for some wild parsnip populations and provide funding to administer a new statewide program. This would help control some existing populations and limit some spread of this invasive species.

Many highway departments, local units of government, land managers, and landowners have worked hard to control parsnip, but success also requires control on adjacent properties. AB 331 would require local units of government and tribes to list wild parsnip as a noxious weed to be eligible for grants; this means they would also have authority to require control on all lands in their jurisdictions.

AB 331 would allow grant recipients to collaborate with regional conservation organizations. This is important as it would allow more efficient use of the funds, so each municipality or tribal nation does not have to create their own landowner contact and control program. Regional invasive species management groups could assist eligible local governments and tribes.

Lastly, the department appreciates that the bill provides \$50,000 SEG for implementation costs; as developing and administering a new grant program and providing outreach and notification to all the counties, cities, villages, towns, and tribes in the state will require staff time.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we thank you for this opportunity and would be happy to answer any questions.



Thursday September 28th, 2023

Assembly Committee on Environment

Re: Assembly Bill 331: Relating to: grants to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip.

Michelle Ramirez-White – Policy Coordinator, Wisconsin Farmers Union

Chair Oldenburg and members of the committees, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 331.

Wisconsin Farmers Union's grassroots, member-driven policy reads:

“Wisconsin Farmers Union supports mandatory enforcement of noxious weed laws, on Conservation Reserve Program lands, and land owned by lending institutions, absentee landowners and the government including town, county and state road right-of-ways. We support the inclusion of multi-flora roses, purple loosestrife, European buckthorn, wild chervil, and wild parsnip on the state’s noxious weed list. Further, we support the creation of programs that would pay farmers to eradicate it.”

Wild parsnip is a non-native plant that can invade prairies, oak savannas and fens, roadsides, old fields, and pastures. It has broad habitat tolerance, growing in dry, mesic, or wet habitats, and when its sap contacts skin, can cause severe rashes, blisters, and skin discoloration. Because of the prevalence of wild parsnip in Wisconsin, this is also an agricultural worker safety issue for farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union supports legislation, AB 331, to address and control the spread of wild parsnip in communities throughout Wisconsin. WFU supports the bolstering of existing efforts by state agencies, local governments, and conservation groups by requiring the DNR to award up to \$100,000 over the biennium in grants to local units of government or tribes that have declared wild parsnip to be a noxious weed.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Wisconsin Farmers Union's thoughts on this issue.

Sincerely,

Michelle Ramirez-White

Policy Coordinator, Wisconsin Farmers Union