



# Warren Petryk

State Representative • 93rd Assembly District

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**TO:** Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Energy  
**FROM:** Representative Warren Petryk  
**DATE:** April 13, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** Senate Bill 140

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Thank you Chairman Cowles and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy for allowing me to submit testimony in favor of Senate Bill 140.

In the previous state budget the legislature provided more funding to the Municipal Dam Grant Program at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The program helps our local communities with the maintenance, repair and modification of municipal owned dams. The program also helps with the removal of dams as well.

Prior to the expansion of the program, local matching funds were required for the program, but not for any dam removals. This is because according to the DNR a dam removal is the greatest possible safety measure that an owner can undertake. However, due to a drafting error, a match is now required for dam removals.

This legislation simply reverts the program back to previous law and removes the match requirement only for dam removal projects while maintaining existing project cap limits.

Thank you again for your time and support of Senate Bill 140 and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.



## Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

### *2023 Senate Bill 140* *Financial Assistance Limits for Dam Removal* *April 13, 2023*

Good morning, Chair Cowles, and members of the Committee. My name is Wendy Soleska, and I am the Grant Manager for the Municipal Dam Grant Program for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. With me today is Tanya Lourigan, Section Manager for the Dam Safety and Floodplain Program. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 140 (SB 140), related to financial assistance limits for dam removal.

The department is charged with protecting life, health, and property from unsafe dams. Beginning in the 1989-91 biennium, the department has administered a competitive grant program to help counties; cities; villages; towns; tribes; and public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts; repair, reconstruct, or remove municipally owned dams. The program has committed over \$42 million in funding since 1990 and this has been a vital component of department efforts to improve the safety of dams.

Prior to the passage of 2021 Act 58 (Act 58), the grant program had project cap limits, a cost-share requirement for dam repair projects, and no cost-share requirement for dam removal projects. Act 58 increased the total amount allocated to the grant program from \$4 million to \$10 million and made changes to the cost-share and project cap limit provisions. Act 58 also included a cost-share requirement and a project cap limit for dam removal projects. This bill would eliminate the cost-share requirement but retain the project cap limit for dam removal projects while keeping the cost-share requirement and project cap limit for dam repair projects intact.

Removing a dam is typically the greatest possible safety measure that an owner can undertake. The department has not historically required a cost-share for dam removal as an incentive for implementing this great safety measure; however, a project cap on dam removals eliminates the potential for a single large removal project using up a large portion of the funds and limiting the number of municipalities receiving grant funding for required dam improvement projects. The project cap promotes a larger number of projects receiving grant funding and helps to determine how many projects can be funded in each biennium through a priority ranking list of projects.

In summary, the grant program is a crucial tool to improve resiliency of dams in Wisconsin. This bill provides important clarifying language about grant requirements that would eliminate potential confusion for dam owners who are considering applying for grants to assist with dam removal projects.

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