



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May 15, 2001

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #647

Wildlife Management Staffing (DNR -- Fish, Wildlife and Recreation)

[LFB 2001-03 Budget Summary: Page 469, #2]

CURRENT LAW

A central responsibility of the DNR is to protect and manage the wildlife populations and habitats of the state. Wildlife biologists and technicians manage and regulate various species, including deer, bear, elk, geese, turkey, and waterfowl. Wildlife personnel also manage urban and captive wildlife programs, rehabilitation issues and educational efforts.

DNR also operates the state game farm at Poynette, which raises approximately 32,000 pheasant roosters and 8,000 hens annually for stocking on public hunting grounds and provides almost 65,000 day-old rooster chicks annually to 83 conservation and sports clubs under cooperative agreements. In addition, DNR also administers the wild pheasant restoration program and is currently in the process of reintroducing elk herds in northern Wisconsin.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$307,800 in 2001-02 and \$235,000 in 2002-03 for 3.0 wildlife biologists and technicians from the fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. DNR indicates that \$66,000 (in 2001-02 only) would be used for equipment replacement (such as tractors and mowers). Approximately \$87,500 in 2001-02 and \$76,000 in 2002-03 would be used to replace radio equipment, and \$50,000 annually would be for supplies and services, as well as partnership efforts (such as funding for shared positions with state and federal partners for the Wetlands Reserve Program).

2. The fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund is estimated to have a closing balance of approximately \$11.3 million on June 30, 2003. The main source of revenue to the fish and wildlife account is fees paid by hunters and fishermen for approvals and licenses authorizing them to hunt, fish, or trap.

3. It may be argued that given the prominence of wildlife management issues in Wisconsin, and the financial support that the fish and wildlife account has received from individuals purchasing hunting and fishing licenses and approvals, additional field staff beyond the Governor's provision may be desirable. In its budget request, DNR identified 18,200 hours of highest-priority work that was not being addressed statewide. These projects include management activities on the Brillion, Killsnake, and Collins wildlife areas near Appleton, and urban wildlife work in the Fox River Valley. In addition, staffing needs in the Florence/Crandon area were cited – wildlife management staff was requested for Spread Eagle Barrens and the Pine-Popple Wild River areas, as well as to assist with deer herd management activities. Staffing for grassland prairie habitat restoration in Lafayette County was cited, as were wildlife management projects in Wood and Marathon County Forests. Finally, habitat maintenance and restoration in the Kettle Moraine State Forest was identified as a priority. Nine of DNR's highest priority wildlife management staffing requests are described in the Attachment. The order of the positions is consistent with the Department's hiring priorities; however, further review may be undertaken before actual staff would be assigned to a specific location. To the extent that the fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund is able to support additional wildlife management field staff positions, additional priorities could be addressed under this initiative. An entry-level wildlife biologist would cost \$24,200 in 2001-02 and \$42,200 in 2002-03. An entry-level wildlife technician would cost approximately \$19,600 in 2001-02 and \$32,900 in 2002-03. These costs include salary, fringe benefits, initial supplies, and ongoing supplies and services funding. Providing the DNR's original request for nine staff (two wildlife biologists and seven wildlife technicians) would cost \$122,200 in 2001-02 and \$206,700 in 2002-03 (in addition to funding provided under the bill).

4. The Department has argued that reductions in field staff have complicated their efforts to provide a level of field support adequate to appropriately manage the state's wildlife resources. However, few of the documentable reductions in field staff in recent years have taken place because of legislative action. Under 1995 Act 27, 7.8 FTE wildlife management field staff positions were removed, including 1.8 positions associated with the Poynette game farm and 6.0 long-term vacancies were deleted. Between 1993-94 and 1999-2000, DNR received 5.0 FTE wildlife management field staff and 2.0 project positions for bureau central office activity related to wildlife management through the budget process. Between 1993 and 1997, however, approximately 21.25 FTE field staff were transferred away from wildlife management field work to a variety of activities, including 15 positions to lands division management, 2.25 staff to customer service and licensing, and a position transfer to the bureau of endangered resources. It could be argued that the current difficulties being experienced within the bureau of wildlife management are more directly the result of changes in DNR departmentwide priorities. As such, they could be addressed through a reallocation of staff from administrative or management priorities back to positions emphasizing wildlife management field work.

ALTERNATIVES TO BASE

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$307,800 in 2001-02 and \$235,000 in 2002-03 with 3.0 wildlife biologists and technicians from the fish and wildlife account of the conservation fund.

<u>Alternative 1</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill</i>	\$542,800 \$0]
2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill</i>	3.00 0.00]

2. Approve the Governor's recommendation. In addition, provide \$122,200 in 2001-02 and \$206,700 in 2002-03 for 1.0 wildlife biologist and 5.0 wildlife technicians to address DNR wildlife management priorities statewide. (A total of 9 staff would be provided.)

<u>Alternative 2</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill</i>	\$871,700 \$328,900]
2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill</i>	9.00 6.00]

3. Transfer \$89,400 in 2001-02 and \$108,000 in 2002-03 and 3.0 positions to provide for a wildlife biologist and two wildlife technicians. Specify that 2.0 positions and \$120,800 (\$55,000 in 2001-02 and \$65,800 in 2002-03) be transferred from Lands Division management, and 1.0 position and \$76,600 (\$34,400 in 2001-02 and \$42,200 in 2002-03) be transferred from Customer Service and Licensing. (This alternative could be adopted in addition to, or in lieu of, Alternative #1.)

4. Maintain current law.

<u>Alternative 4</u>	<u>SEG</u>
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill</i>	\$0 - \$542,800]
2002-03 POSITIONS (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill</i>	\$0 - 3.00]

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Attachment

ATTACHMENT

Position 1: Wildlife technician (Appleton)

This position would be active in Outagamie, Calumet, Brown and Manitowoc counties. Responsibilities would include property management for 17,000 acres of public land (consisting of the Brillion, Killsnake, and Collins wildlife areas, which require grassland and wetland management, land acquisition, and pheasant stocking); private land management in the region involving wetland and grassland restoration, as well as pheasant, turkey, and waterfowl management; and watershed and non-point source pollution issues affecting area wildlife management. The Fox River Valley is also experiencing increased demands for services associated with urban wildlife management issues.

Position 2: Wildlife technician (Peshtigo)

This position would be active in Oconto and Marinette counties. The technician would have job responsibilities in 11 units of the Green Bay West Shores Wildlife areas, the Peshtigo Brook Wildlife Area, Seagull Bar Natural Area, and the Bloch Oxbow Natural Area. In total, the position will have technical wildlife management responsibilities on approximately 60,000 acres of public land. Responsibilities may also include maintaining and marking approximately 25 miles of property boundary between DNR and private land in Oconto County (to address increasing trespass problems), maintaining service roads, dikes, and other property developments; wildlife management work in the Oconto County forest, as well as contacts and management efforts associated with private land; and wetland restoration along the west shore of Green Bay. The Department indicates that since reorganization in 1995, there has been no wildlife technician with a primary assignment in Oconto County.

Position 3: Wildlife technician (Kewaunee)

This position would be active in Door, Kewaunee, Brown, and Manitowoc counties. Responsibilities include property management on wildlife areas and natural areas in Door and Kewaunee counties, as well as wetland and grassland restoration on private land. These areas are also experiencing increasing requests for assistance in urban wildlife management planning. Currently, Kewaunee, Algoma, and Sturgeon Bay do not have DNR staff coverage to provide wildlife management assistance. The Buzz Besadny, Mud Lake, and Gardner natural areas as well as the Potowatomi, Newport, Rock Island, and Peninsula State Parks have unmet requests for wildlife management.

Position 4: Wildlife biologist (Florence or Crandon)

This position would be active in Florence and Forest counties. The Department indicates that a permanent wildlife management position has been lacking in Florence County for approximately 20 years. Responsibilities would include quota setting, deer management and

damage issues in five deer management units (DMUs); public lands management on the Spread Eagle barrens, Pine-Popple wild river, Nicolet National Forest, and county forest lands; wildlife surveys with special emphasis on ecologically sensitive species and habitats; and educational programs.

Position 5: Wildlife technician (Ashland)

This position would be active in Iron, Ashland, Bayfield, and Douglas counties. Responsibilities would include wildlife surveys for predator tracking, ruffed grouse drumming, sharptailed dancing ground, woodcock peeting, anuran, bear bait, furbearer carcass collection, deer registration and deer aging; wildlife habitat and development work on six state wildlife and fisheries management areas (covering 9,600 acres), as well as on approximately 162,800 acres of state owned land in the 4-county region, and would support wildlife work done on 642,200 acres of county forest land; and private wetlands and grassland restoration projects.

Position 6: Wildlife biologist (Darlington)

This position would be active in Green, Grant, southern Iowa, and Lafayette counties. Responsibilities would include restoration of grassland prairie habitat, wildlife management assistance to private land owners, as well as land and wildlife management activities on 13,800 acres of public land and 14,200 acres of leased public hunting grounds.

Position 7: Wildlife technician (Wisconsin Rapids)

This position would be active in Wood, Portage, and Marathon counties. Responsibilities would include land and wildlife management work at Dewey Marsh, Emmons Creek, Wood and Marathon county forests, and several other smaller fisheries and remnant properties. Other projects would include endangered and threatened resources surveys and habitat work as well as invasive plant surveys and eradication efforts.

Position 8: Wildlife technician (Baldwin)

This position would be active in St. Croix and southern Polk County. Responsibilities would include habitat work in the Western Prairie Habitat restoration area (which includes approximately 20,000 acres), land acquisition and management activities, and coordination of projects with federal, county, and private partners.

Position 9: Wildlife technician (Waukesha)

This position would be active in Walworth County. Responsibilities would include habitat and restoration work on approximately 4,000 acres of scattered wildlife areas, 5,500 acres of the Turtle Valley wildlife area, and 7,000 acres in the Kettle Moraine; private wetland restoration activities; and support and consultations regarding wildlife inquiries through the Waukesha service center.