



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #447

### **Lands Master Planning (DNR -- Departmentwide)**

[LFB 2013-15 Budget Summary: Page 320, #9]

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#### **CURRENT LAW**

Public conservation land throughout the state of Wisconsin is estimated to include approximately 5.9 million acres (or 17% of the state's land area). The federal government holds approximately 1.86 million (or 31.5%) of the 5.9 million acres (the majority of which constitutes national forests), and county ownership (in the form of county parks and forests) is estimated at approximately 2.5 million acres (or 42% of the total). As of June 30, 2012, DNR owned approximately 1.49 million acres in fee title, and held easements on an additional 240,000 acres, for a total of approximately 1.73 million acres managed by the Department on approximately 1,100 properties.

#### **GOVERNOR**

Provide \$55,600 in 2013-14 and \$72,500 in 2014-15 with 1.0 program and policy analyst advanced position in the Bureau of Facilities and Lands to develop master plans for DNR properties primarily administered by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation including state parks, state trails and southern state forests, but also for fishing areas, state natural areas, and state recreational areas. Funding would be provided as follows:

	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2014-15</u>
Conservation Fund		
Fish and Wildlife Account	\$27,000	\$35,200
Forestry Account	24,700	32,200
Parks Account	<u>3,900</u>	<u>5,100</u>
Total	\$55,600	\$72,500

## **DISCUSSION POINTS**

1. Of the approximately 1,100 properties managed by the Department, 313 properties are required to have master plans developed in accordance with the process outlined in chapter NR 44 of the administrative code (certain very small properties such as a fire look-out tower site do not require master plans). Administrative rule NR 44.04(9) specifies that "a master plan establishes the authorized management and development on a property, and only those management and development activities identified in the master plan may be pursued by the Department". The Department is required under administrative rule NR 44.04(12) to review master plans every 15 years and make recommendations to the Natural Resources Board, which then determines whether the plan is to be amended, revised or extended for another 15-year period. DNR staff have completed 34 projects covering plans for 93 properties that are now NR 44-compliant, leaving 220 properties remaining that require NR-44 compliant plans (either new or revised/amended plans). Eight projects are currently underway covering 24 of these properties, leaving 196 properties outstanding which the Department plans to complete through 78 projects. One planner can be expected to lead one to three planning projects, in various stages of development, simultaneously. Active plan development, from the initial public meeting to the production of a final draft plan, typically takes approximately 16 months. Currently, the Bureau of Facilities and Lands has 3.0 program and policy analysts working on master planning for a variety of property types including wildlife areas, fishery areas, parks, and natural areas. While the new position would primarily focus on development of master plans for parks properties, DNR indicates that the funding would be supported primarily by the fish and wildlife account and forestry accounts in part to alleviate some of the parks workload of other master planners and that the position would not be limited to working on parks properties in the future should demand for planning increase in other areas.

2. In addition to the position that would be authorized in the bill, the Department just filled a vacant position within the Bureau of Facilities and Lands to provide another program and policy analyst master planner (for a total of 5.0 planners including the one provided under the bill). DNR indicates that master planning is a priority for the Department for a number of reasons including accommodating public use needs, maintaining third party forest certification, managing timber sustainably, and identifying opportunities for increasing revenues, reducing costs, and improving customer service.

3. There are 19.10 vacancies in the Bureau of Facilities and Lands, including 16.25 conservation fund SEG positions. The fish and wildlife account has maintained expenditures below authorized levels over the past several biennia, largely through staff vacancies, in order to keep expenditures within available revenues. Both the parks and forestry accounts have also maintained substantial vacancy rates. Given the level of vacancies, an alternative could be to delete a vacant position in order to offset the additional program and policy analyst position in the bill (Alternative 2).

4. The Department indicates that 2.0 (1.0 park manager and 1.0 ranger) of these 16.25 conservation SEG positions were intended to be transferred from the Bureau of Facilities and Lands to the Bureau of Parks and Recreation under the transfers within appropriations budget item, but due to an error this was not included in the bill (a budget system modification could be included to

accomplish this transfer). Once this transfer is complete, the Department intends to fill those two positions. Of the remaining 14.25 vacant conservation SEG positions, the Department plans to hold 4.0 vacant to reduce expenditures in order to avoid a structural imbalance in the fish and wildlife account, and to fill the remaining 10.25 positions during the 2013-15 biennium. According to the Department, these positions are all high priority staff and the Bureau of Facilities and Lands has already reallocated positions for master planning from within the land management section responsibilities and created and filled a federally funded master planning position to address increased master planning workload. As the Bureau of Facilities and Lands is a service bureau to the other programs and has many other high-priority activities for the agency, such as engineering, capital development, real estate acquisition and management, and property management, the Department argues that re-allocating another position to master planning would have a negative impact on other Bureau priorities.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to provide \$55,600 in 2013-14 and \$72,500 in 2014-15 with 1.0 program and policy analyst advanced position in the Bureau of Facilities and Lands to develop master plans for DNR properties. In addition, include a budget system modification that would transfer 2.0 vacant conservation fund SEG positions from the Bureau of Facilities and Lands to the Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation as modified, but delete a corresponding \$55,600 SEG in 2013-14 and \$72,500 SEG in 2014-15 and 1.0 vacant conservation fund SEG position in the Bureau of Facilities and Lands.

<b>ALT 2      Change to Bill</b>		
Funding   Positions		
SEG	- \$128,100	- 1.00

3. Delete provision.

<b>ALT 3      Change to Bill</b>		
Funding   Positions		
SEG	- \$128,100	- 1.00

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