



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #570

### Limited-Term Employee Compensation (Natural Resources -- Departmentwide)

[LFB 2023-25 Budget Summary: Page 432, #2]

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#### CURRENT LAW

Limited-term employees (LTEs) perform jobs that are short-term in duration, up to 1,039 hours within a 12-month period. LTEs may work part- or full-time, or seasonally. Because of the limited nature of their employment, LTEs may have more flexible work schedules and often do not receive the same level of benefits such as health insurance or retirement coverage as full time employees. DNR uses LTEs extensively in a variety of program areas due to their flexible, hourly schedules.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. As of August, 2022, DNR employed 1,545 LTEs. While LTEs are hired across program areas, DNR uses them extensively for seasonal positions in technical fields, such as foresters, forestry technicians, fisheries technicians, biologists, and customer services representatives. Some applicants may seek LTE positions for their flexible schedules and part-time nature. Additionally, applicants may seek LTE positions to develop skills or to learn about career paths in state employment.

2. While some applicants may prefer the flexibility of state LTE employment, private sector employees typically earn more for the same job responsibilities. For instance, according to the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics report from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, in 2021, the statewide mean wage for forestry and conservation technicians was \$23.28 per hour. The mean wage for DNR LTE forestry technicians as of August, 2022, was \$14.54 per hour.

3. Amid a tight labor market, DNR has had to raise LTE wages to continue to attract workers. DNR reports that the Department has provided general wage adjustments for LTE salaries. Additionally, the Department has raised other LTE wages to be competitive with market rates. Table

1 compares the number and average hourly wage for LTEs by bureau. As shown in the table, the average hourly wage has increased by 10.4% since 2019.

**TABLE 1**

**LTE Wages and Headcount**

	2019		2022	
	<u>LTEs</u>	<u>Average Hourly Wage</u>	<u>LTEs</u>	<u>Average Hourly Wage</u>
<b>Division/Bureau</b>				
<i>Fish, Wildlife and Parks</i>				
Fisheries Management	159	\$13.64	125	\$16.00
Natural Heritage Conservation	77	18.55	54	19.84
Parks and Recreation	357	12.18	277	13.20
Recreational and Property Management	44	14.43	52	15.96
Southern Forests	61	12.25	61	14.15
Wildlife Management	161	15.58	129	18.36
<i>Forestry</i>	306	18.50	257	19.88
<i>Public Safety and Resource Protection</i>	18	19.70	10	20.91
<i>Environmental Management</i>				
Remediation and Redevelopment	25	17.67	17	18.76
Water Quality	73	17.72	54	18.72
<i>External Services</i>				
Customer Service	33	14.84	13	17.13

4. DNR calculated the increase in average wages by position title in 2019 and 2022. DNR then multiplied the change in the hourly wage by the number of hours worked by LTEs in each position title to determine the total change in LTE wages since 2019. As introduced, Assembly Bill 43/Senate Bill 70 would provide DNR with \$1,510,600 each year, including \$59,000 GPR, \$34,300 environmental SEG and \$1,417,300 conservation SEG) to increase funding for LTEs. \$1,205,000 would be used to increase the allotment for LTE salaries and \$305,600 would be added to the allotment for fringe benefits. Table 2 compares base-level funding and increased funding under the bill. The Committee could consider increasing the allotments for LTE salary and fringe benefits by \$1,510,600 [Alternative 1].

**TABLE 2**

**Limited-Term Employee Compensation**

	<u>Base Salary</u>	<u>Increase</u>	Percent Increase
<b>GPR</b>			
<i>Environmental Management</i>			
Water Quality	\$13,000	\$47,100	362%
<b>SEG</b>			
<i>Fish, Wildlife and Park</i>			
Wildlife Management	799,800	249,600	31
Southern Forests	853,900	69,600	8
Parks	2,792,600	180,700	6
Natural Heritage Conservation	76,900	82,200	107
Fisheries Management	1,183,900	314,200	27
Property and Recreation Management	594,300	66,600	11
<i>Forestry</i>	2,060,600	116,900	6
<i>Public Safety and Resource Protection</i>	888,100	8,100	1
<i>Environmental Management</i>			
Remediation and Redevelopment	10,100	27,300	270
<i>External Services</i>			
Customer Service	<u>443,900</u>	<u>42,700</u>	10
SEG Subtotal	\$9,704,100	\$1,157,900	12%
Total	\$9,717,100	\$1,205,000	12%

5. As shown in the table, the funding provided in the bill represents a 12% increase over base funding for LTEs for the fund sources and program areas shown. It should be noted that the base funding amounts shown in the table do not necessarily reflect actual expenditures. Agencies may reallocate funding from other allotments such as supplies and services or permanent and project positions salaries attributable to vacancies to fund LTE wages and benefits.

6. Table 3 shows actual expenditures on LTE salaries in 2018-19 and 2021-22, by the subprograms that would be affected by the bill. As shown in the table, actual LTE salary expenditures have increased by approximately \$1.8 million since June, 2019. It should be noted that the expenditures in the table reflect both the wage increases described above and administrative decisions that have affected staffing levels. For instance, as shown in the table, LTE expenditures in the Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection (PSRP), which includes DNR law enforcement officers, have declined by about half since 2019. This is partially attributable to a management decision to phase out LTE conservation warden staffing.

**TABLE 3**

**LTE Salary Expenditures**

<u>Program Area</u>	<u>2018-19</u>	<u>2021-22</u>
<b>Fish, Wildlife and Parks</b>		
Fisheries Management	\$356,700	\$1,232,300
Natural Heritage Conservation	165,700	165,500
Parks and Recreation	2,516,800	2,655,600
Recreational and Property Management	546,800	514,200
Southern Forests	852,000	875,600
Wildlife Management	474,400	1,390,600
<b>Forestry</b>	1,878,400	1,552,700
<b>Public Safety and Resource Protection</b>	630,200	301,800
<b>Environmental Management</b>		
Remediation and Redevelopment	36,800	144,800
Water Quality	67,300	167,500
<b>External Services</b>		
Customer Service	<u>151,500</u>	<u>500,500</u>
Total	\$7,676,600	\$9,501,100

7. The Committee could consider increasing the allotment for LTE salaries by \$1,824,500 (\$100,200 GPR and \$1,824,500 SEG) and increasing the allotment for fringe benefits by \$462,900 (\$25,400 GPR and \$437,500 SEG), a total increase of \$2,287,400 (\$125,600 GPR and \$2,161,800 SEG) to fund the increase in LTE wages paid since 2019 [Alternative 2].

8. Since June, 2019, the Legislature has provided full-time employees with four 2% general wage adjustments. Cumulatively, these would have increased an employee's wage by 8.2%. It could be argued that wage increases beyond these general wage adjustments were administrative decisions made by DNR that should be absorbed within the agency's budget. The Committee could consider increasing LTE salary allotments by \$804,500 (\$1,100 GPR and \$803,400 SEG) and the fringe benefit allotments by \$204,200 (\$300 GPR and \$203,900 SEG), a total increase of \$1,008,700 (\$1,400 GPR and \$1,007,300 SEG) to fund 8.2% in general wage adjustments for LTEs [Alternative 3].

9. If the Committee takes no action [Alternative 4], DNR would either continue to absorb LTE wages within the agency's budget, hire fewer LTEs, or reduce wages. This could impact the Department's ability to recruit well-qualified employees and fulfill program responsibilities.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Provide \$1,510,600 (\$59,000 GPR and \$1,451,600 SEG), including \$1,205,000

(\$47,100 GPR and \$1,157,900 SEG) for LTE salaries and \$305,600 (\$11,900 GPR and \$293,700 SEG) for fringe benefits.

<b>ALT 1</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$118,000
SEG	<u>2,903,200</u>
Total	\$3,021,200

2. Provide \$2,287,400 (\$125,600 GPR and \$2,161,800 SEG), including \$1,824,500 (\$100,200 GPR and \$1,724,300 SEG) for LTE salaries and \$462,900 (\$25,400 GPR and \$437,500 SEG) for fringe benefits.

<b>ALT 2</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$251,200
SEG	<u>4,323,600</u>
Total	\$4,574,800

3. Provide \$1,008,700 (\$1,400 GPR and \$1,007,300 SEG), including \$804,500 (\$1,100 GPR and \$803,400 SEG) for LTE salaries and \$204,200 (\$300 GPR and \$203,900 SEG) for fringe benefits.

<b>ALT 3</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
GPR	\$2,800
SEG	<u>2,014,600</u>
Total	\$2,017,400

4. Take no action.

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