



For more information, please contact:
 Jennifer Giegerich, Legislative Director at 608-208-1130,
 jennifer@conservationvoters.org

Analysis of Conservation Impacts in Governor Walker's Proposed State Budget 2015-2017 (Updated March 6, 2015)

DNR GOVERNANCE

Kneecapping the Department of Natural Resources Board

Governor Walker's proposed budget would convert the Natural Resources Board (NRB) into a purely advisory entity, an action that would strip citizen oversight of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The NRB is a citizen-led board that sets policy for the DNR. The seven member board represents a diverse geographic and professional cross-section of people. They help direct the agency and are responsible for providing public input on natural resource decisions. By eliminating the Board's ability to oversee and set policy for the DNR, the Governor-appointed DNR Secretary would alone set natural resource policy for the agency. Reducing the role of the Board will have no direct fiscal impact. If enacted, this change would also:

- Give the DNR Secretary sole discretion over the sale of public lands.
- Demote the role of the Conservation Congress to one that is advisory to the advisory NRB.
- Allow DNR to set all policy directives internally, rather than with the input of Wisconsin citizens.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's proposed budget directive to turn the DNR Board into a solely advisory council.*

Eliminating Science, Education, and Communication Staff at the DNR

Governor Walker's proposed budget would reduce Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff by 66 fulltime positions, directly targeting the Bureau of Scientific Services and Communication and Education. The DNR requires staff scientists to make sound natural resource management decisions. If enacted, this change would:

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
 info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

- Require a 31% cut in budgeted positions in the Bureau of Scientific Services, impacting the DNR's capacity for prudent, scientific analysis needed to oversee management of natural resources.
- Require cuts to DNR staff devoted to environmental education and communications. These roles are critical to engaging citizens with and educating citizens about Wisconsin's natural resources and the threats they face.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to specifically target DNR staff cuts among scientists, educators, and communications specialists.*

Eliminating DNR Capacity Grants for Non-Profit Organizations

Governor Walker's proposed budget would sever all partnerships between the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and non-profit entities by eliminating capacity grants. The Wisconsin DNR has a long history of contracting with non-profit conservation organizations. Capacity grants have gone to conservation non-profit organization that work on a wide range of conservation-related issues from maintaining the Ice Age Trail to urban land conservation. These cost-effective partnerships have increased the DNR's capacity for water quality protection, land management, forestry certification, and education and outreach. If enacted, this change would:

- Sever productive and lasting relationships between conservation non-profit organizations and the DNR.
- Reduce the DNR's capacity for natural resource management.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to eliminate capacity grants to conservation groups.*

Eliminating Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE) and Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB)

Governor Walker's proposed budget would eliminate the program and funding for two important environmental education programs. The Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE) and Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) were established in 1990 to provide environmental education programs in pK-12 schools and in communities across the state. Education is essential to building understanding about the role of the environment in our economy, our quality of life, and our survival, as well as appreciation for Wisconsin's natural resources. If enacted, this change would:

- Limit environmental education opportunities for Wisconsin's youth.
- Limit environmental education opportunities in Wisconsin communities.

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

- Reduce resources for environmental education.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to eliminate the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education and Wisconsin Environmental Education Board.*

LAND USE

Freezing The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

Governor Walker's proposed budget would place a moratorium on new land purchases through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program until 2028. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is used to purchase and protect Wisconsin lands treasured by residents and visitors alike. The Stewardship Program also protects many of the natural resources on which Wisconsin's \$13 billion tourism industry, \$22 billion forestry industry, and \$4 billion hunting and fishing industry depend. The proposed budget would simultaneously freeze assets to this valuable program for 13 years and allocate \$14 million to fish hatcheries, which pose no environmental risk. If enacted, this change would:

- Redirect stewardship funds to serve as a slush fund for other programs that provide no conservation benefit.
- Undermine the intended purpose of the Stewardship Program to protect and maintain public lands in Wisconsin.
- Put our most critical lands at risk of being lost forever by failing to provide needed protections.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to place a moratorium on the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and divert funding away from the mission of the program.*

Undercutting the Forestry Program

Governor Walker's proposed budget would limit the Division of Forestry's authority to oversee cutting notices for timber harvests on land enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) Program and would direct the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to develop a plan to relocate the Division of Forestry to northern Wisconsin, separating it from the rest of the DNR. Wisconsin's 16 million acres of forest lands and millions of urban trees significantly enhance quality of life, providing ecological, economic, and social benefits to all citizens. The Wisconsin DNR is responsible for the sustainable management and protection of these valuable natural resources. In addition to moving the Division of Forestry away from related divisions, limiting the staff's ability to easily collaborate with other divisions, Governor Walker's budget also removes the Division of Forestry's

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

authority for approving timber harvest plans on lands in the MFL Program. This important oversight helps ensure that public benefits from the over 3 million acres of land enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program are protected. If enacted, these changes would:

- Undermine the integrated work that Division of Forestry staff accomplishes by working closely with other critical DNR programs.
- Reducing oversight of timber harvesting, putting private forest lands at risk for overharvest.
- Jeopardize Wisconsin's status as the largest group forest certification in the nation.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's proposed budget directive to study moving the Division of Forestry and removing DNR's responsibility for approving cutting notices for the Managed Forest Program.*

Jeopardizing the State Parks System

Governor Walker's proposed budget would cut funding to the state park system by 28 percent and increase fees for people using the parks. Wisconsin's park system includes 46 state parks, 14 state trails, four recreational areas, eight state forests, and two national scenic trails. State park visitations have increased by 12 percent since 2002, while the state's share of funding has continued to decrease. Currently, the state only covers 21 percent of the funding for state parks, which has led to staffing cuts and elimination of some natural resource projects. In addition to further cutting funding to the state parks, Governor Walker's proposed budget would remove all taxpayer support for the parks. The proposed budget would increase fees for an annual state park pass from \$25 to \$28 and camping fees by \$2 per night, as well as impose an additional fee of \$9.70 to make reservations. If enacted, these changes would:

- Put smaller state parks and trails at risk of being closed or privatized as has been done in other states when they are unable to be self-sustaining.
- Reduce hours of park operation and require the state to scale back services at state parks.
- Undermine local communities' whose economies depends on the \$230 it is estimated each family spends when a family visits a state park.
Reduce hours of park operation and require the state to scale back services at state parks.
- Impose an additional financial burden on residents who use parks for recreation.

► *Pro-Conservation Position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's proposed budget directive to cut funding and support for state parks while increasing usage fees.*

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

WATER

Controlling Aquatic Invasive Species

Governor Walker's proposed budget would continue the practice of collecting fees from ships discharging ballast water. Thirty percent of invasive species in the Great Lakes have been introduced through ballast water carried in ocean-going ships and released into the lakes. Controlling the water discharged by ocean-going vessels is critical to Wisconsin's uphill battle against aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes. The 2009 Wisconsin State Budget authorized the creation of a discharge permit fee program for ships discharging ballast water into Wisconsin Great Lakes waters. The fee was estimated to generate enough revenue to support three full time DNR positions charged with monitoring the impacts of ballast water discharge. This program is designed to closely mirror Minnesota's program and provide uniform management across the region. Wisconsin has not yet promulgated this rule.

► *Pro-conservation position: **SUPPORT** Governor Walker's directive to eliminate the sunset on collecting ballast water fees to ensure the program's future.*

Polluted Runoff: Implementing Non-Point Pollution Programs

Governor Walker's proposed budget would reduce staff funding to county Soil and Water Conservation Departments by an additional \$800,000, falling well short of the program's required \$9,379,800. County soil and water conservation departments provide essential testing and monitoring services across Wisconsin. These departments assist farmers with designing and constructing manure storage facilities, help establish conservation cropping practices, and aid in nutrient management planning. The county departments also help landowners find cost-share funds for conservation work. These services result in management practices that reduce non-point pollution runoff.

Wisconsin Statute Chapter 92 states a goal for state funding of an average of three positions in each county's conservation department with the state paying rates of: 100% of the cost of the first position, 70% of the second, and 50% of each subsequent position. The state's share of this commitment has never been realized and has decreased in recent budgets. However, state-authorized responsibilities for County Conservation staff have continued to grow. If enacted, this change would:

- Reduce the number County Conservation staff providing soil and water conservation services.
- Limit County Conservation Departments' ability to support local conservation efforts.

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

- Reduce the state’s ability to monitor soil and water pollution.

► *Pro-conservation position: **REJECT** Governor Walker’s directive to reduce the state’s share of the County Conservation staffing grant. Establish funding at the original base of \$9,379,800 annually.*

Polluted Runoff: Funding Nutrient Management Plans

Governor Walker’s proposed budget would reduce funding for nutrient management plans by \$500,000. Nutrient management plans limit the amount of nitrogen and phosphorous pollution in agricultural runoff, reducing deterioration of our surface waters, fish kills, and groundwater contamination.

► *Pro-conservation position: **REJECT** Governor Walker’s directive to reduce the state’s share of funding levels for nutrient management plans in the budget.*

Clean Water Programs

Governor Walker’s proposed budget includes bonding authority for critical programs that mitigate risks that waterways damaged by polluted runoff and flooding pose to communities and to the environment. The following critical programs are being funded at the same levels as they were in the last state budget:

- **Urban Water Management Programs** work with municipalities to meet mandatory storm water management requirements, reduce delivery of sediments and pollutants to lakes, rivers, and streams, and protect communities by reducing flood hazards. Governor Walker’s proposed budget provides \$5 million in bond revenue for the program.
- **Targeted Runoff Management Bonding** provides cost-share to farmers investing in tools that prevent non-point source water pollution. Governor Walker’s proposed budget provides \$7 million in bond revenue for the program.
- **Contaminated Sediment Removal Bonding** is used to clean up contaminated sediment in Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Governor Walker’s proposed budget provides \$5 million in bond revenue for the program.
- **Dam Safety Programs** provide matching grants to local communities to repair or remove dams that have been abandoned or pose public safety threats. Governor Walker’s proposed budget provides \$4 million in bond revenue for the program.

► *Pro-conservation position: **SUPPORT** Governor Walker’s directive to maintain bonding for the Urban Nonpoint Source, Targeted Management Runoff, Contaminated Sediment Removal, and Dam Safety programs.*

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
 info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

RECYCLING

Reducing Recycling

Governor Walker's proposed budget would cut Recycling Grants to local communities by \$4 million – an approximately 22% reduction – leaving what could be a self-sustaining program financially unsustainable. Wisconsin communities provide residents with recycling collection services, recycling enforcement programs, recycling education, and yard waste collection services. Wisconsin's recycling programs supply the recyclables that many Wisconsin businesses, such as paper mills and foundries, reuse to produce new products. Funding for the Recycling Grant comes from the \$7 per ton recycling fee charged at Wisconsin landfills. Annually, the recycling fees net an average of \$34.1 million. This amount is adequate to sustain the program, but cuts since 2008 have left the Recycling Grants with just \$19 million. An additional \$4 million cut would leave the program with only half of the funding needed. If enacted, this change would:

- Limit key recycling services that communities provide to citizens.
- Divert funds away from recycling to be used as a slush fund for unrelated programs.

► *Pro-conservation position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to cut \$4 million in funding to the Recycling Grants program and restore all recycling fees to sustainably fund Recycling Grants.*

ENERGY

Duplicating Study of Health Impacts of Wind Power

Governor Walker's proposed budget would allocate \$250,000 for the Public Service Commission to continue studying the human health effects of wind turbines. In an era dominated by fossil fuel energy – well documented to have negative human health impacts from exposure to soot, mercury, and other toxins – wind power has been proven to be a safe and reliable source of clean and renewable energy in Wisconsin. In a 2014 report, the Wind Siting Council did *not* conclude that wind turbines have a direct and negative effect on human health. If enacted, this change would:

- Divert money away from programs that contribute to conservation, clean energy, or monitoring pollution and contamination.
- Allocate funds to duplicate a study that has already recently been conducted.

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
 1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
 633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

► *Pro-conservation position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to earmark \$250,000 for the Public Service Commission to study wind energy.*

TRANSPORTATION

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program

Governor Walker's proposed budget eliminates the requirement to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities in new highway construction projects. Wisconsin has worked to create and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities for the benefit of citizens who use these options for transportation or for recreation. Ongoing and past funding to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program have had positive impacts on the state's ability to provide safe and quality bicycling and walking options. In the past, Wisconsin has provided \$3.7 million per year towards that effort. If enacted, this change would:

- Reduce safe bicycling and walking options for Wisconsinites who use these modes of transportation to get to work or school, or for recreation.
- Alter policy to eliminate options for alternative transportation support in highway projects.

► *Pro-conservation position: **REJECT** Governor Walker's directive to repeal the requirement that bicycle and pedestrian facilities be included in new highway construction.*

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to electing conservation leaders, holding decision makers accountable and encouraging lawmakers to champion conservation policies that effectively protect Wisconsin's public health and natural resources.

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

133 S. Butler Street #320 • Madison, WI 53703 • (608) 661-0845 • Fax (608) 661-0835
1642 Western Avenue • Green Bay, WI 54303 • (920) 429-9008
633 West Wisconsin Avenue • Milwaukee, WI 53202 • (414) 921-0084
info@conservationvoters.org • www.conservationvoters.org