



Manitowoc County Lakes Association
2016 President's Letter

“There is no denying it – the 2015-2016 legislature was one of the most anti-conservation sessions in Wisconsin’s history.”

That statement is the assessment of the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters. The group goes on to laud the efforts of the thousands who lobbied their legislators with the consequent defeat of several of the more egregious provisions of some of the bills. The defeat of the lakebed dredging provisions, the maintenance of the Public Trust Doctrine, and the preservation of groundwater administrative options were all presented as significant “saves” by the conservation team, but as the groundwater protections were issued a severe counterblow through judicial actions, there are yet significant losses in the State’s environmental standards.

In his 2016 Legislative Update, Senator Frank Lasee claims to have led “the charge to help focus the DNR away from writing ticky-tack citations & focus on things which might actually protect the environment”. Given the elimination of scientific and research positions with-in the agency and the reduction of operating funds, the opportunities for real pro-active and protective initiatives have been seriously compromised. Ironically, legislative actions he sponsored have delimited DNR abilities to the more petty administrative enforcements he derides. Until we

elect our officials based on their credentials as botanists, limnologists, entomologists, etc., we need a robust environmental agency and cannot afford direct legislative management of the State resources. Manitowoc County Lakes would greatly benefit from increased DNR involvement in water quality initiatives, in lake and groundwater level research, in watershed management, and in the provision of aeration systems. These activities cannot be effectively initiated and managed by an ad-hoc consortium of Lakes and Fish and Game Associations.

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The political threat is not just with-in Wisconsin. George Meyer, the head of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, warned Wednesday (4/27/16) that there is an increasingly strong movement in the United States to sell off federal lands such as National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, Bureau of Land Management lands and National Monuments. He noted that when votes to sell off public lands have taken place in Congress, both Republican U.S. Senator Ron Johnson and fellow Republican Seventh District Congressman Sean Duffy have voted in favor of the proposals. “We are facing a very serious situation,” he said. “We are trying to get the word out to sportsmen and others, because this is bigger than sportsmen.”

Disturbing, yet hopeful, is the realization that many of these anti-conservation bills are being passed as blind partisan initiatives rather than as a thoughtful intent to degrade the environment. Many of the supportive legislators would be prone to consider more fully their vote if made aware of strength of the conservation mandate. Your voice has made an impact this year, and remains a potent force, if used. As every individual benefits from a higher environmental quality, it is inappropriate that environmental protection should have become a partisan position. Environmental quality should be a core plank for all parties. Were that to be the case, perhaps we could celebrate the passage of some well-intentioned, informed legislation next year, rather than express relief that the bills which passed were only half bad.