



## MANITOWOC COUNTY LAKES ASSOCIATION

*"The Manitowoc County Lakes Association will protect and enhance the quality of area lakes and watersheds for the benefit of all."*

5 March, 2015

To: Representative Alvin Ott  
Representative Paul Tittle  
Senator Devin LeMahieu  
Representative André Jacques

Re: Environmental and Conservation Governance

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Greetings Gentlemen;

As you review the proposed State budget, and especially the policy changes concomitant to that document, we respectfully ask that you give full consideration to the points below. Manitowoc County Lakes Association is dedicated to preserving water quality for all in the area, and we remain convinced that public policy initiatives play a critical role towards attainment of the goal.

### **Effect of Public Trust Doctrine: Maintain State Competency**

Waterways and Lakes within the state are unique in that the State of Wisconsin has assumed ownership and management of these features. Citizen initiatives and public review of policy are critical to the assurance that these public amenities are controlled, managed, and protected according to the ideals of a democratic society. Limnology is a specialized field of study, working with data requiring decades of accumulation. Expertise in this area is not readily transferred among agencies, and cannot be generalized from other regions and areas. It is essential that the State maintain a strong commitment to the enlightened administration of the state waters, and that it maintain a core competency in those assigned that task. If the scientific and research role of the DNR is to be reduced, then the assumption of those responsibilities must be clearly re-allocated to university research departments or other contracted entities. A reorganization of this scope is likely not within the budget negotiations, and the DNR role should be maintained until another program has been thoughtfully implemented.

### **Support and Engage Citizen Groups**

Manitowoc County Lakes Association, and many other groups, have an established history of coordinating with the DNR and other public agencies on water quality initiatives. The use of locally knowledgeable volunteers and the administrative coordination of public service organizations can actually represent a significant relief to the state budget. Any cuts in funding to non-profits must be weighed against the required increase in DNR staff and the logistics of their maintaining a diffuse presence across the state. We have great respect for a majority of DNR personnel, but have noticed recently that these individuals are, frankly, stretched too thin. Enforcement of regulation is demonstrably diminished. The state's environment can only suffer when program cuts occur simultaneously across alternative options.

Both issues above demonstrate that policy decisions regarding environmental and conservation issues should be handled in an issue specific forum, not addressed ad hoc in a budget document. We trust you will be a champion of the state's waters and lands, and insure that these areas retain their protection through the budget process.

Thank you very much!

John Durbrow; President Manitowoc County Lakes Association; for the membership