

# Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

## Press Release

Contact: George Meyer, Executive Director, 608-516-5545

## Worst Conservation Budget in Twenty Years

**Columbus:** After a thorough review of the state budget, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Board of Directors voted unanimously to oppose a number of seriously damaging conservation measures contained in the proposed 2015-2017 state budget. The Federation is the largest hunting, fishing and trapping organization in the state with over 190 member sports and natural resource organizations. Among the many damaging conservation and environment measures in the budget drawing strong opposition from the WWF are:

1. **Stripping Decision-making Authority from the Natural Resources Board.** Sportsmen and women fought in 1928 to create the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, the predecessor to the Natural Resources Board. Their major objective was to provide increased citizen management of Wisconsin's natural resources and to reduce politics and cronyism in managing state's fish and wildlife management. The Natural Resources Board provides an open avenue for all individuals to have direct input into the important conservation and environmental decisions facing the state.
2. **Ending any conservation land purchases until 2028.** The Federation recognizes the need for fiscal responsibility and the state's debt load but strongly believes that there needs to be a more balanced approach to the State Stewardship Fund than ending all state and local Stewardship purchases until 2028. Annual Stewardship funding has been reduced from \$87 million to \$32 million in recent years. It is important to have a reasonable level of Stewardship funding for recreational lands in the highly populated areas of Southern Wisconsin and to maintain recreation and timber production on the large blocks of lands being sold by industrial forest owners.
3. **Major reductions in DNR science research positions.** The Federation, because of its representation of hunters, angler and trappers, strongly opposes the proposed state budget reduction of 18.4 DNR Bureau of Science and Research scientists who do the basic studies of fish and wildlife and their habitat in the state. This research is fundamental for virtually all of the species and land and water management that is done by the Department. This research, from a practical and financial standpoint, cannot be done by others. This research is largely funded by sportsmen and women and not through general purpose revenue. The loss of these positions will have serious adverse long-term impact on the future of hunting, fishing and trapping in this state.
4. **Major cuts in Conservation and Environmental Education.** The proposed state budget makes major reductions in conservation and environmental education in the state. Within the DNR, education positions at risk include those focused on fish and wildlife, park naturalists and educators at Crex Meadow, Horicon Marsh and Mead Wildlife Area. In addition, the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board, the Wisconsin Center for

Environmental Education, the lead Environmental Educator for the Department of Public Instruction are eliminated. These latter programs provide support for teaching environmental education for K-12 private and public schools in the state. It is critically important to have our future generations fully educated about their environment and these programs need to be maintained.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is the state's largest conservation organization representing 194 hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry-related groups in Wisconsin. The Federation is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of sound conservation policies.