

Wisconsin Conservation Congress

Executive Committee

(CONFERENCE CALL)

Meeting Minutes



ORDER OF BUSINESS	2/22/16	12:30 PM	Conference Call
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I. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. CALL TO ORDER

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY	Vice Chairman Bonde at 12:30 PM
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B. ROLL CALL

ATTENDEES	Bonde, Maas, Fahrney, Weiss
EXCUSED	Bohmann
UNEXCUSED	
GUESTS	Kari Lee Zimmermann

C. AGENDA APPROVAL/REPAIR

DISCUSSION	No changes offered
ACTION	M/ Fahrney 2 nd / Maas to approve as published M/C

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS

DISCUSSION	None
ACTION	N/A

II. INFORMATION & ACTION ITEMS

A. FISH FARM BILLS (AB 640/SB 493)

BONDE

DISCUSSION	<p>Larry brought up the pending legislation (AB640) has been passed by the assembly and its companion bill (SB 493) is expected to be brought out the first week of March. Many Congress delegates are being contacted with questions on the proposed legislation.</p> <p>Some of the questions being asked are:</p> <p>Would this Legislation privatize our waterways?</p> <p>How the waste discharge be managed and by who? As it stands according to the proposal regulatory control c\goes to the Department of Agriculture and aquaculture are exempt from needing a pollution control discharge permit. They also are not required to institute “best practices” to control pollution unless there is government cost sharing, this puts the public on the hook so to speak.</p> <p>Will this impede navigation?</p> <p>Many other side issues were mentioned such as the 24 hour notice of public hearing right after the bill was introduced and some contacted us that there was little information available prior to the hearing. Lee will draft a press release and work with Larry on a letter to the legislature on our concerns. Any concerns on draft edits of the letter and press release need to be sent to Larry only.</p> <p>The final drafts read as follows:</p>
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02-23-2016

Contacts: Rob Bohmann, 262-498-4605

For Immediate Release

Racine WI

Conservation Congress asks legislature to slow down on fish legislation

In a letter to Wisconsin legislative leaders in the both the Assembly and the Senate, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress asked that a hold be placed on AB 640 and SB 493 to allow for further public input.

The Conservation Congress Executive Committee held an emergency meeting Monday, Feb. 22, 2016, to address growing concern about fast track legislative action currently underway that would open up navigable waters to commercial fishing operations. The committee concluded that this proposal should be held in abeyance until a more thorough vetting process has occurred.

“We keep hearing from our constituents that we are moving too fast on opening up our public waters to commercial fish farming operations,” said committee member Joe Weiss of Spooner. “We need to slow this down until the public has a greater opportunity to weigh in.”

The bill expands the category of natural bodies of water that may be used as part of a fish farm. A “natural body of water” as defined in the bill includes: a spring, stream, pond, lake, or wetland that was historically present in a natural state but may have been physically altered over time.

The bill also creates an exemption to the general prohibition on using a natural water body as a fish farm for a person who previously held a permit from the Department of Natural Resources to use a natural water body as a fish farm and who takes no action in the water body other than maintaining the fish farm facility.

The committee cites a number of important issues that have not been given enough scrutiny, including the impact on public access if there is a body of water that will no longer be available for other uses. If some sort of impoundment or netting system is involved, will the public then be obliged to portage around the structure or avoid using the water way entirely.

Another issue is the release of nutrients that could have a negative impact on downstream resources. “These fish ponds can contain a lot of nutrients that could be a problem,” warns Dale Maas of Beaver Dam. He also expresses concern about a private individual claiming public waters as his own. “Could I then go out on Beaver Dam Lake and create a commercial operation and claim it as my own private entity?”

The committee also concluded that the public needs to have more specifics regarding what actual activities could take place, what agency or agencies would be in charge of establishing criteria and who would monitor the commercial operations.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress asks that the Senate put a hold on SB 493 to allow for further public input.

Based on the response we have gotten from our constituency around the state, we believe it is in the best interests of the users of state’s water ways to wait until we have received further public input.

The Congress Executive Committee held an emergency meeting Monday, Feb. 22, 2016, to address growing concern about this fast track legislative action that would open up navigable waters to commercial fish farming operations. The committee concluded that this proposal should be held in abeyance until a more thorough vetting process has occurred.

We are concerned that the bill expands the category of natural bodies of water that may be used as part of a fish farm, e.g. “natural body of water” as defined in the bill including: “a spring, stream, pond, lake, or wetland that was historically present in a natural state but may have been physically altered over time.”

Perhaps more importantly, the bill also creates an exemption to the general prohibition on using a natural water body as a fish farm. The committee cites a number of other important issues that have not been given enough scrutiny, including the impact on public access if there is a body of water that will no longer be available for other uses. If some sort of impoundment or netting system is involved, will the public then be obliged to portage around the structure or avoid using the water way entirely.

Other issues include the release of nutrients that could have a negative impact on downstream fisheries and concern about a private individual claiming public waters as his own. The committee also concluded that the public needs to have more specifics regarding what actual activities could take place, what agency or agencies would be in charge of establishing criteria and who would monitor the commercial operations. Committee member Joe Weiss of Spooner summaries our concern:

“We keep hearing from our constituents that we are moving too fast on opening up our public waters to commercial fish farming operation. We need to slow this down until the public has a greater opportunity to weigh in.”



Rob Bohmann, Chair
Wisconsin Conservation Congress

ACTION	M/ Maas 2nd /Weiss that the Congress requests the proposed legislation be held in abeyance till the issues are fully vetted and the public has been made aware of the total ramifications of this bill. M/C.	
PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE	
Fahrney	ASAP	

III. MEMBERS MATTERS

DISCUSSION	Weiss asked about when the committee list will be available he has his District meeting tonight. Kari will send out the committee lists when available. Mass Asked for an updated membership roster to the Wisconsin Fisheries advisory Council, Kari will try and provide
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ACTION	M/Weiss 2nd /Fahrney to adjourn M/C
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IV. ADJOURNMENT

MEETING ADJOURNED	1:09 PM
SUBMITTED BY	Dale Maas
DATE	2/22/16