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June 30, 2016

Cathy Stepp, Secretary
101 South Webster Street
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Secretary Stepp,

At the May 24, 2016, meeting of the District Leadership Council of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC), the Council voted to support resolutions 020116 and 040616 regarding taking measures to bring the Les Voigt Bayfield Hatchery up to full production levels. These resolutions were introduced at the April 11 Spring Hearings in both Ashland and Bayfield counties and passed by votes of 48-5 and 24-3 respectively.

We understand that at this time, the Les Voigt Hatchery is a water-limited facility that is currently only operating at about 27% of production capacity. An increase in the available water or more efficient use of the water at the facility would result in an increase in fish production. It is our understanding that at this time there is no completed groundwater study to verify exactly how much water is available and how its use affects the local streams and neighboring wells. This would need to be done to determine if drilling an additional well is a viable option for increasing the water available for this hatchery.

Alternatively, Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS) have the potential to dramatically decrease the amount of water needed to maintain fish production. Use of RAS systems in a renovated facility would keep the amount of water needed for fish rearing at a very favorable ratio of fish per gallon of water pumped from the local aquifer.

Having the Les Voigt Hatchery producing at full capacity would increase the production of stocking fish for the great lakes and inland waters of Wisconsin and could have a favorable impact on the economy through both sport and commercial fishing. Therefore, the WCC requests that the Department of Natural Resources take the necessary steps to determine what actions (drilling additional wells, implementing RAS systems, or any other viable options) can be taken to get the Les Voigt Bayfield Hatchery operating at full capacity of production.

Sincerely,

Larry Bonde, Chair
Wisconsin Conservation Congress

As established by Wisconsin State Statutes, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is officially recognized as the only natural resources advisory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to represent their interests on natural resources issues on a local and statewide level to the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources. Their mission is to represent the citizens of Wisconsin by working with the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources to effectively manage Wisconsin's greatest asset, our abundant natural resources, for present and future generations to enjoy.