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Wisconsin Conservation Congress Opposes Proposed Legislation That Would Again Lengthen Rule Making Process for Fish and Game Laws

Racine - The Conservation Congress is calling on the state's conservation community to contact their state legislators and voice their opposition to SB 168 and AB 251, which are rapidly moving through the legislature. These proposed bills would make changes and additions to the rule making process for state agencies like the Department of Natural Resources, which would lengthen the amount of time it takes to promulgate administrative rules by at least six months.

The Department of Natural Resources uses administrative rules to create seasons and bag limits for Wisconsin's fish and wildlife. With the passage and implementation of 2011 Act 21, the administrative rule process was modified and lengthened from 12-18 months to promulgate and implement rules to 2-3 years. These proposed changes would add additional steps and lengthen that process further.

"Fish and game regulation changes that go through the Conservation Congress and the Spring Hearing process have already been extensively reviewed by the public," stated Rob Bohmann, Chair of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC), "The changes these bills are proposing would be arduous and duplicative of the current public input process already in place. Most of these rule changes are vetted at annual public hearings in each of the 72 counties. It just isn't necessary or efficient to add additional steps, especially for those proposed hunting, fishing, and trapping rule changes that are relatively minor in nature, have little or no economic impact, or are overwhelmingly supported by the public."

Though fish and game rules rarely have any significant economic impact on businesses, additional steps proposed by these bills would still be applied to these rules causing a delay in time-sensitive rulemaking. In addition, extensive governor and legislative oversight of fish and game laws that are implemented pursuant to a federal framework serves no purposeful role.

"This legislation will further slow down the process that is necessary to manage the sustainable use of public trust resources. It is impossible to anticipate all of the unforeseen factors such as sudden habitat degradation, winter severity, inclement weather events, or disease outbreaks that play into wildlife population dynamics so that biologists can properly manage the use of sensitive resources three years into the future. Wildlife and fisheries managers need to have the flexibility to change seasons or bag limits to protect our important natural resources. I urge citizens to contact their legislators and share with them your concerns about the negative impact this could have on Wisconsin's fish and wildlife populations."

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