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Retain the Natural Resource Board Policy and Regulatory Making Authority

Whereas, the 2015-17 State Budget Bill proposes eliminating the Natural Resources Board's (NRB) policy and regulatory making authority, and giving it to the DNR secretary.

Whereas, giving the policy-making authority solely to the DNR secretary would potentially allow for important natural resource decisions to be made behind closed doors without proper public vetting. Any potential gains in efficiency that may result from this proposal do not justify the loss of an open and transparent government.

Whereas, natural resource policy decisions are currently made in full view of the public, broadcast online, and with ample opportunity for citizens to provide testimony or written comments.

Whereas, renowned conservationists Aldo Leopold, William Aberg, and Haskell Noyes helped forge the Conservation Act of 1927, creating the Conservation Commission (predecessor of the NRB). With great foresight, these pioneers forged a unique system to keep conservation and politics separate by forming an independent board, beholden to no one.

Whereas, the NRB has successfully operated with its policy-making authority uninterrupted for the past 88 years during which time Wisconsin has been a leader in environmental protection and wildlife conservation efforts.

Whereas, nowhere else in state government do the people of this state have such a direct avenue for input as through the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) and the NRB.

Whereas, eliminating the authority of the NRB and making it advisory to the DNR secretary would undermine this proven system of citizen engagement and would irreparably mar the legacy we leave for future generations.

Be It Resolved, the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Polk County on April 13, 2015, opposes the 2015-17 State Budget proposal that makes the Natural Resources Board advisory to the DNR Secretary and request that it be removed from the budget and that the Natural Resource Board retain their policy and regulatory making authority for the DNR, and that the Wisconsin Conservation Congress remains advisory to the NRB.

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