

**NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM**

**SUBJECT:** Gene Mitchell Retirement Resolution

**FOR:** SEPTEMBER 2009 BOARD MEETING

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Matt Frank

**SUMMARY:**

WHEREAS, Gene Mitchell's dedication, professionalism, competence, work ethic, care for our environment, and service to thousands of people have earned him the respect of his co-workers, supervisors and associates throughout the Department as well as from the public he served:

NOW THEREFORE, the Natural Resources Board, at its September 2009 meeting in Sturgeon Bay recognizes the faithful service with due respect and gratitude, and hereby makes this commendation as part of its official records.

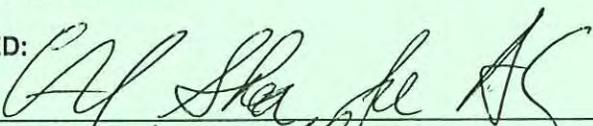
**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve resolution

**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:**

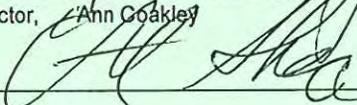
- No  Fiscal Estimate Required
- No  Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required
- No  Background Memo

- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached
- Yes  Attached

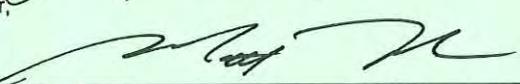
**APPROVED:**

  
Bureau Director, Ann Coakley

9/11/09  
Date

  
Administrator,

9/11/09  
Date

  
Secretary, Matt Frank

9/11/09  
Date

## *Retirement Resolution*

Gene (Geno) Mitchell retired from the Department of Natural Resources on September 4, 2009, after more than 32 years of dedicated service to the people of the State of Wisconsin and our environment. From the first Earth Day in 1970, Gene knew he wanted to work for a better environment. Gene began his career with the Department of Natural Resources as a Limited Term Employee Engineering Technician working on an industrial waste survey. Within a year, Gene was hired permanently as an Environmental Engineer, facing new challenges working on engineering plan review, county solid waste planning and serving as the lead worker for the municipal waste group. By 1984, Gene was promoted to Environmental Engineering Supervisor as the design and construction unit leader. In this capacity, he worked on the Governor's Low Level Radioactive Waste Committee, on incinerator ash rules, was invited to participate at the Keystone Center for development of national industrial waste rules, and as a UW-Extension instructor for sanitary landfill design. In 1989, Gene's supervisory responsibilities shifted and he became the beneficial reuse and land disposal policy unit leader. In this capacity, Gene co-wrote the NR 524 Operator Certification Rules, the NR 526 Medical Waste Rules, and the NR 500 series. He also worked on an Environmental Protection Agency industrial waste guidance and TSCA sediment agreement.

In 1996, Gene took leave of central office and became a Natural Resources Program Manager in the Waste Program at South Central Region. In this capacity, he did an amazing job assisting in the handling of the aftermath of the Watertown Recyclers tire fire (closing out the project with an environmentally acceptable option without expenditure of taxpayer dollars), chronic wasting disease animal carcass management and disposal (saving thousands of hours and dollars providing a disposal option at a licensed landfill), and the unprecedented landfill organic stability rule. Gene returned to his roots in 2008 as the recycling and solid waste section chief in central office, where he ended his career advising solid waste and recycling staff and mentoring a young leader in the program.

During Gene's career, he played a central role in the transition from hundreds of town dumps where waste was managed by digging a hole in the ground and dumping it (and sometimes lighting a match) in the fields, forests and wetlands of Wisconsin's landscape to the current, modern highly engineered landfills. As if this was not enough of an accomplishment for one career, Gene continued for many years to lead the program on emerging waste and materials issues such as waste reduction, diversion, recycling and reuse that form the basis for a more sustainable future.

Throughout Gene's long and illustrious career, he brought enthusiasm (always coupled with realism), a positive attitude, powerful analytical skills, and a strong work ethic to the job. Among his accomplishments, Gene was named Solid and Hazardous Waste Employee of the Year in 1990. As a supervisor, he created a relaxed and productive work environment and inspired great effort and loyalty from his staff. His balancing of productive, focused effort at work and a spirit of fun and enjoyment of life outside the DNR ought to be a model for everyone. Though Gene has been teased for working in waste his entire career, the idea that he 'wasted' his time is pure rubbish. Gene departs as a leader in a world-renowned waste program. His vast knowledge, patience and counsel will be dearly missed by his coworkers, stakeholders and friends. His professionalism, humanity and dedication to the State of Wisconsin have demonstrated that one person can make a difference.

WHEREAS, Gene Mitchell's dedication, professionalism, competence, work ethic, care for our environment and service to thousands of people have earned him the respect of his co-workers, supervisors and associates throughout the department as well as from the public he served:

NOW THEREFORE, the Natural Resources Board, at its September 2009 meeting in Sturgeon Bay, recognizes the faithful service with due respect and gratitude, and hereby makes this commendation as part of its official records.

*Natural Resources Board*

Christine Thomas, CHAIR