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Title: Use of Living Sandbar Willow (*Salix exigua*) on the Public Lands of the Lower Wisconsin River

The Problem: Current WI DNR regulations prohibit the cutting of any live vegetation on the public lands of the Lower Wisconsin River. Effectively, this prevents sportsmen from: 1) cutting willow in this area to make trap stakes; 2) cutting willow bait sticks while beaver trapping; 3) cutting willow for bank poles for fishing; and 4) cutting willow to construct hunting blinds.

If trappers, hunters and fishermen wish to cut and use sandbar willow in their outdoor pursuits, they must either seek it out on private property and secure permission, or travel elsewhere to cut it.

At present, sandbar willow is prolific in much of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway. In fact this plant may become weedy or invasive in some regions or habitats and may displace desirable vegetation if not properly managed. The WI DNR has, in the past, cut and burned this willow to stop its advancement.

The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in its Environmental Impact Statement allows for the following:

Vegetation --- Cutting, removing, or damaging any tree or other vegetation, standing or down, live or dead, is prohibited, without a written permit, except that willow may be used for trap stakes, commercial fishing gear, and hunting blinds on the refuge.

In my opinion, the laws governing the harvest of sandbar willow in the Lower Wisconsin River should be consistent with the Mississippi Refuge laws governing the same. There is no biological reason to restrict this prolific plant from sportsmen seeking to utilize it for recreational purposes.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Grant County on April 9, 2012 recommends that the Conservation Congress work with the Department to take action to correct this situation by introducing rule change allowing willow harvesting for hunting, trapping and fishing purposes along the public lands of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.

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