

Making Decisions

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- identify controversial issues involving Wisconsin's aquatic ecosystems
- describe how natural resources decisions are made in Wisconsin
- detail how they can be involved in natural resources decision making

METHOD: Students will brainstorm ideas together about natural resources controversies or *Hot Topics*. Students will work in pairs to craft a resolution on how they would like to see a natural resources policy changed. Students will present their resolutions to each other, and, if the class finds a resolution compelling, introduce that resolution at the annual spring hearing.

MATERIALS: Internet access during class, and/or Internet accessibility after class for students to do research.

● See Appendix J for Sample Resolutions for each pair of students.

SETTING: Indoors

DURATION: Two 45-minute sessions if research and writing done outside of class

VOCABULARY: Natural Resources Board, Conservation Congress

STANDARDS:

Science: C 8.1, 8.2; F 8.10; G 8.5, 12.1, 12.5; H 8.1, 8.2, 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 12.7.

Environmental Education: A 8.1, 8.4, 8.5, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5; C 8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 12.2, 12.3; D 8.1, 8.4, 8.7, 8.8, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.7, 12.9.

Social Studies: C 8.3, 8.7, 8.8, 12.8, 12.9, 12.10.

Language Arts: F 8.1, 12.1.

BACKGROUND: State statutes define the Wisconsin Conservation Congress as the Natural Resources Board's (NRB) official citizen advisory body on all natural resource issues of local and statewide significance. Wisconsin citizens elect delegates to serve on the Conservation Congress and help the NRB and DNR effectively manage the state's natural resources for current and future generations. The Congress meets with local citizens to hear their

opinions about Wisconsin natural resource management, consults with local and statewide organizations, and works with organizations, educators and citizens to increase outdoor opportunities for all. The Congress further participates in the science and politics of decision making by considering all reasonable resolutions submitted to it and recommending to the NRB support or opposition to rule changes on natural resources management.

Citizens resolutions can be found under the Spring Hearings page of the Conservation Congress Web page (dnr.wi.us/org/nrboard/congress). Some of the issues and suggestions are often controversial and involve a mix of science and compromise to solve.

OPENING: Have students suggest aquatic resource management issues that are currently in the local news. Begin keeping a class list of potential topics for resolutions.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Direct students to *How to Write a Resolution* and *Hot Topics* in their booklet. ● Hand out the Sample Resolutions from the CD. Divide the students into pairs and have each pair select a topic on which to write a resolution. Let students know the resolution will be a combination of the information they find on the issue and their own views on how current policy should change. This should not be merely a report, but an attempt to persuade the Conservation Congress that the author's position is the correct one. In devising their resolutions, students should keep both science and politics in mind.

Students should be given time in class to decide on their issue and begin outlining possible places to get information on their topics. Most of the research will be done outside of class.

CLOSING: Students will give short presentations about their resolutions that include the reason for the needed policy change. If a pair has written a compelling resolution, encourage them to introduce it to the Conservation Congress at the annual spring hearing in April. If the resolution is accepted in the county where the students introduced the resolution, students can track it as it moves through the approval process.



ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS: What is the function of the Natural Resources Board? How is this different than the function of the Conservation Congress? How do people become members of each?

ANSWERS: The Natural Resources Board makes policy decisions for the DNR. It is composed of members appointed by the governor. In the Conservation Congress, citizens propose and vote on rule changes they would like to see

happen. Their recommendations are brought to the Natural Resources Board and the DNR. Anyone over 18 can be a member of the Conservation Congress.

EXTENSIONS:

Service Learning: Encourage students to attend the county's Conservation Congress hearing in April and introduce resolutions.

• If you have downloaded this booklet, please see the appendix that follows for additional materials.

Making Decisions

Who is responsible for making sure that our fisheries stay healthy? We all are—through our daily actions and the power of our vote. We choose the legislators who create laws that affect natural resources. But who actually determines, for example, whether a bottled water business can be built at the headwaters of a trout stream? That would be the **Natural Resources Board (NRB)** based on input from DNR staff and citizens. The NRB makes policy decisions for the Department of Natural Resources. The governor appoints the board's seven members, whom the state Senate must approve. After hearing from scientists and citizens, the NRB members make environmental and natural resource decisions, within the confines of law.

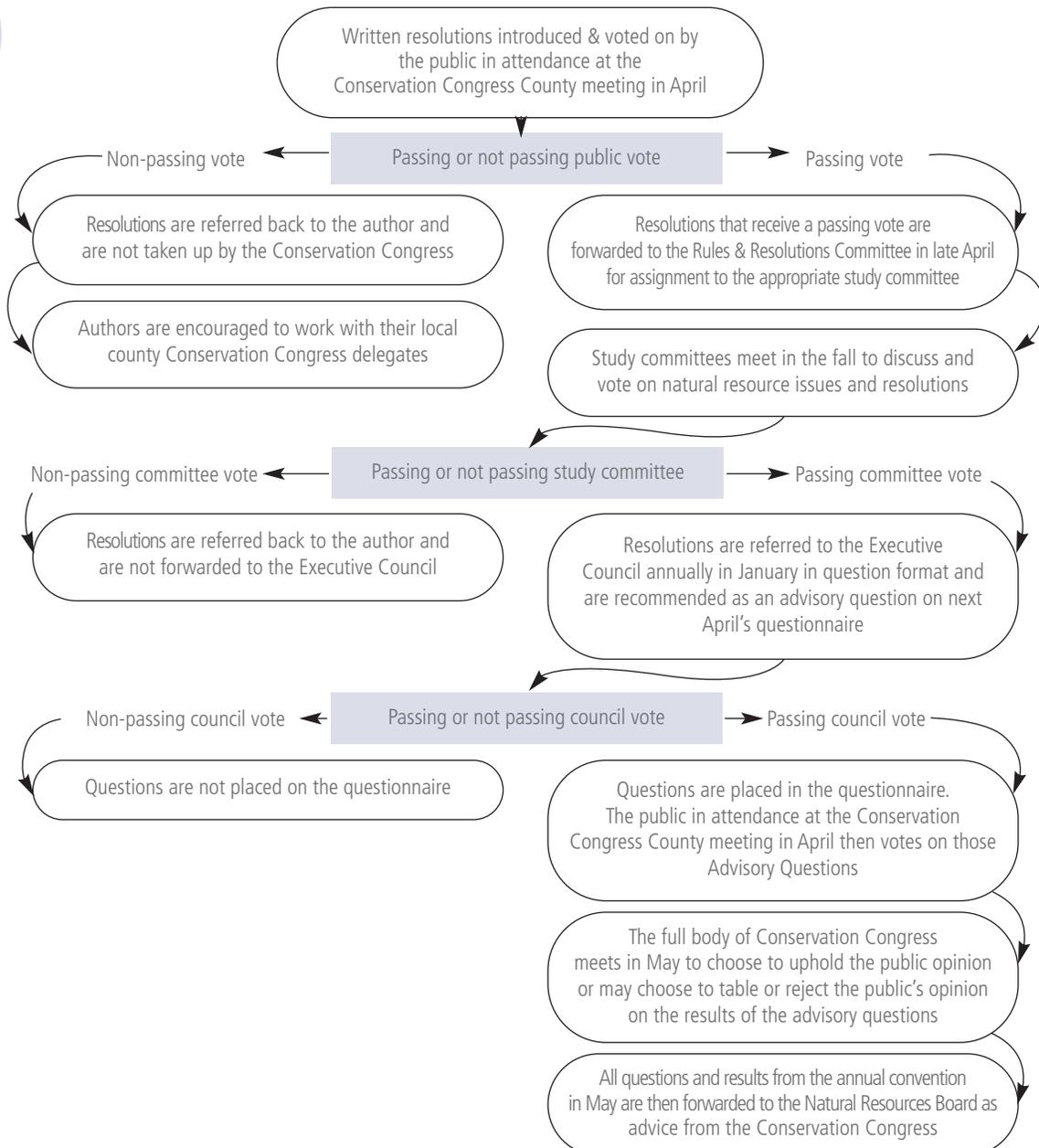
Policy Process

The **Wisconsin Conservation Congress**, an independent citizen advisory body defined in state statutes, advises the NRB on natural resource issues. Wisconsin citizens elect delegates to serve on the Conservation Congress. You must be 18 years old to be a delegate or to vote for a delegate to the Congress, but people of any age may propose and vote on rule changes. Hearings where these proposals are brought to a vote occur the second Monday in April in every Wisconsin county every year. If you feel strongly about a natural resource issue, use Wisconsin's citizen input opportunities to help the NRB make a decision to present to legislators!

PLEASE
SEE APPENDIX J

Making Decisions:
Sample
Resolutions

The Conservation Congress Resolution Process





How to Write a Resolution

Each year the Conservation Congress accepts written resolutions from the public in each county regarding natural resource issues of statewide concern. The public introduces these resolutions during the Conservation Congress county meeting held annually in conjunction with the DNR Spring Fish and Wildlife Rules Hearings in April.

1. Resolution Content

In order for a resolution to be accepted for further consideration by the Conservation Congress and for public vote at the annual Conservation Congress county meeting, all resolutions introduced must meet the following requirements:

1. The concern must be of statewide impact.
2. The concern must be practical, achievable and reasonable.
3. The resolution must have a clear title.
4. The resolution must clearly define the concern.
5. Current state statutes and laws must be considered, with reasonable cause for change being presented.
6. The resolution must clearly suggest a solution to the concern and a description of further action desired.

NOTE: If the resolution defines an unresolved concern at the local county level, or district level within your Congress district, please make sure to indicate whether or not you have already spoken with local department staff and your local county congress delegates.

2. Resolution Format

- Resolutions must total 250 words or less and be typed or legibly hand-written on one side of an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of white paper. No attachments or additional sheets will be accepted for the same resolution.
- The author's name, mailing address, county, telephone number and signature are required at the bottom of the resolution.
- Only the individual author or designated representative may present the resolution within the county. The author or designated representative must be present at the time the resolution is introduced.

- No one may introduce more than two resolutions during the Congress portion of the Spring Hearings.
- Written resolutions not meeting the above criteria and/or verbal resolutions will not be accepted.
- Provide the Congress County Chair with TWO COPIES of the resolution for submission at the beginning of the evening, one to be part of the official record and the other to be posted for public viewing.
- Individuals attending the meeting may vote on the resolution being introduced within the county.

3. Sample Resolution

Title: Spring Dinosaur Hunting Season

The Problem: Dinosaurs are a threat to agriculture across the state, especially in April and May, because they make deep footprints in newly planted farm fields, damaging the emerging crops. The problem is aggravated in southern Wisconsin, because dinosaurs are migrating across the state line to avoid hunting pressure in Illinois. There is already an overpopulation of dinosaurs in Wisconsin. At present, state law does not permit dinosaur hunting at any time during the year. We feel that Wisconsin law should be consistent with Illinois, which permits dinosaur hunting in the spring. Wisconsin farmers are suffering significant crop damage because of dinosaur incursions.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Buffalo County on April 16, 2007 recommends that the Conservation Congress work with the Department to take action to correct this situation by introducing rule change allowing a spring dinosaur hunting season.

Name of Author: Fred Flintstone

Name of Organization (optional): Private Citizen

Address: W12345 State Road 3

City, State, Zip Code: Bedrock, Wisconsin 54231

Name of the County Introducing In: Buffalo

Telephone Number (including area code): 123-456-0789

4. DNR Rules Process

A lengthy internal process begins at this point that includes an environmental analysis, legal review, public hearings, a public comment period, review by the Natural Resources Board, and finally, action by the Legislature where it is made law or rejected.

