

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Testimony Regarding the 2015-2017 State Budget

By Ralph Fritsch, Chair, WWF Wildlife Committee and Past President

Chairman Cole, Members of the Board, Secretary Stepp:

The WWF appreciates the fact that you are going to review the proposed state budget at your meeting on, February 25, 2015. Since it has been placed on the Board agenda as an informational item and therefore we will not be able to present information under Citizen's Participation, we are forwarding this information to you in advance of the meeting.

You have previously received information from the Federation noting our great concern over several aspects of the budget including: 1. Changes in the authority of the NRB, 2. The 13 year elimination of the Stewardship Fund, 3. The major cuts in the DNR's Education programs and the 4. Elimination of the state-wide Environmental Education programs. However today, we would like to focus on the cutting of the 18.4 Research Scientists positions.

Some have stated that the research scientists are not core to the mission and purpose of the Department of Natural Resources. In fact it is just the opposite. The foundation for everything that the Department has the responsibility to do is based on sound professional science. Whether it be environmental regulations or land management or conservation policies, the basic building block is scientific information.

The Department is blessed with an outstanding staff of research scientists who are extremely productive and nationally recognized for their work. Sportsmen and women see this information as the basis for all of the fish and wildlife management plans, the basic information needed for property management plans and necessary to obtain the Federal funding under the Pittman Robertson program, the State Wildlife Grant program and the Sports Fishing Restoration program.

I have attached the list research work done by the Bureau of Science Services for the 2013-2014 biennium for the Wildlife and Forestry Research Program and the Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences Research Program. The listing is 36 pages long and affects virtually every aspect of fish and wildlife management. These are only the research projects and does not entail all of the other work done by these staff.

The long-term loss of these positions would be extremely damaging to fish and wildlife management in Wisconsin.

These positions are not funded by General Purpose Revenue dollars, rather through Conservation Segregated funds such as Pittman-Robertson, Sports Fishing Restoration, Fish and Wildlife Licenses and Forestry Seg.

In addition, this type of applied research will not be replaceable to any significant degree for several reasons. There is not the capacity for the University system to replace all of the work, secondly, much of this research is the type of applied research that is not sought out for by university researchers and lastly, the university would charge at least 30% in overhead which would mean it would be far too costly to replace the work done by the DNR research scientists.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is calling on the Natural Resources Board to go on record that the work done by the DNR research biologists is important and core to the mission and purpose of the Department of Natural Resources.