

June 3, 2009

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Press Statement

Joint Finance Committee Votes to Take Away Public Access Rights for Hunters, Anglers and Trappers

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress are jointly issuing this press statement to express our great concerns and opposition to an amendment to the state budget that was passed by the Joint Finance Committee early last Friday morning as the committee completed its actions on the state budget bill.

The above organizations represent over 169 hunting, fishing and trapping groups and hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin sportsmen and women. The groups are united in their request to the Wisconsin Legislature to remove the Stewardship amendment to the state budget.

The Joint Finance Committee budget amendment removed the current requirement in the Stewardship law that lands purchased with Stewardship grants be required to be open for hunting, fishing, trapping and other public recreational uses. This requirement was part of the legislative compromise that reauthorized the Stewardship Fund in the last state budget.

Sportsmen and women worked hard in the 2007-2009 budget process to extend the Stewardship Fund for the years 2010-2020 at \$86 million a year. These funds are used to purchase lands for wildlife, fishery, forest, park and natural area purposes. The key provision for sportsmen and women in the carefully constructed compromise that reauthorized the Stewardship Fund in the last budget was that land purchased with Stewardship funds, would, with limit exceptions such as public safety, be open to hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor recreational activities.

The middle-of-the-night Joint Finance Committee amendment breaks the legislative agreement with sportsmen and women that the lands purchased with Stewardship funds will be open to hunting, fishing and trapping and other outdoor recreational activities.

Our organizations have been part of a year-long rulemaking process including other conservation organizations, local units of government, and land trusts established by the

Department of Natural Resources to implement the public access requirements of the Stewardship fund. DNR is proposing to bring the public access rules to the Natural Resources Board at its June meeting. The budget amendment adopted by the Joint Finance Committee eliminates that whole public involvement process.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress call on the Wisconsin Legislature to keep its commitments to Wisconsin's sportsmen and women and remove the Stewardship amendments that have been added to the current state budget bill.