

Resolution to Fully Fund the Forestry Account in the 2019-2021 Budget

Whereas, Wisconsin's woodlands were cut over and burned in the late 1800's and early 1900's; and

Whereas, in 1927 the Wisconsin legislature decided it was time to provide a stable source of funding to restore, acquire, preserve and develop the forests of the state and to promote sound forestry practices and did so by amending the Wisconsin Constitution to create the Forestry Mill Tax; and

Whereas, that Constitutional provision provides that two tenths of a mill on all taxable property in the state must be used for "the purpose of acquiring, preserving and developing the forests of the state and for other specified forestry purposes"; and

Whereas, because of the availability the Forestry Fund created by the mill tax, Wisconsin's forests have been restored to cover about 16 million acres or 46 percent of Wisconsin's land base; and

Whereas, the Forestry Mill Tax has provided a stable source of funding to provide for DNR services like the private forestry program, fire protection, managing the county forest program, insect and disease control, invasive species control, urban forestry, forest tax administration, the Managed Forest Law and the acquisition and management of the State Forests; and

Whereas, Wisconsin's forestry industry is very important economically, adding about 6.4 billion dollars annually to the economy and supporting 60,000 jobs each year; and

Whereas, Wisconsin's forests are critically important for the provision of fish and wildlife habitat, outdoor recreation, the tourism industry, protection of water quality and quantity and flood protection; and

Whereas, in the 2017-19 State Budget (2017 Act 59), the Governor and the Legislature replaced the constitutionally authorized Forestry Mill Tax funding of the Forestry Account with an equivalent amount of general purpose revenue; and

Whereas, 2017 Act 59 also specified that, "In fiscal year 2017-18, and in each fiscal year thereafter, an amount equal to 0.1697 mills for each dollar of the assessed valuation of the property of the state as determined by the department of revenue under s.70.57 shall be transferred from the general fund to the conservation fund" for the purposes that had been funded by the Forestry Mill Tax; now

Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation at its annual meeting in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin on April 12 and 13, 2019 respectfully requests that the Wisconsin Legislature and Governor fund the State Forestry Account with the general purpose revenue equivalent to what would have been generated by the Forestry Mill Tax, as specified by Wisconsin State Statute 70.58(3).

Submitted by the WWF Forestry and Parks Committee
Jerry Knuth, Chair