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# ROB SUMMERFIELD

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 67<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

May 28, 2019

Representative Mursau, Chair  
Representative Krug, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks, & Outdoor Recreation

**Testimony on 2019 Assembly Bill 134**

***Relating to: amounts obligated under the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship 2000 Program for water infrastructure projects in state parks and making an appropriation***

Dear Chairman Mursau, Vice-Chairman Krug, and Committee Members:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify at today's public hearing on Assembly Bill 134. I appreciate your time and consideration of this legislation.

From our statewide *Fall Color Report*, to our extensive northwoods ATV trails, to our Great Lakes, Wisconsin has always been known for its natural beauty and outdoor recreation. We outperform our Midwestern neighbors in these areas, in large part, due to our State Park System. In 2017, over 17 million people visited state parks across Wisconsin; with over 6 million visiting the parks listed in this bill alone. That same year, tourism dollars across the state rose to \$12.7 billion. A 2013 study by the DNR and UW-Madison Department of Urban and Regional Planning found state parks to contribute \$350 million to Wisconsin's economy. Lake Wissota, located in Chippewa Falls in my district, is a driver of local tourism; especially during the hot summer months. However, nothing would be more disappointing than taking a trip to Lake Wissota with my family, and finding the toilets and other plumbing unusable.

AB 134 builds on past successful bipartisan parks revitalization legislation by requiring the DNR to spend up to \$5.2 million in authorized but unobligated Stewardship funds to complete critical health and safety-related water infrastructure projects at State Parks; providing \$300,000 in increased expenditure authority from the segregated State Parks System account for operations; and prioritizing State Parks with the highest visitor demand to receive those funds.

Based on this criteria, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicates these projects will receive funds:

- \$250,000 to replace 50 water fountains in Parks throughout the state;
- \$1,000,000 for 13 four-unit vault toilet replacements in campgrounds and high-traffic day-use areas at Black River State Forest and Devil's Lake, Harrington Beach, Hartman Creek, High Cliff, Kohler-Andrae, Pattison, and Yellowstone Lake State Parks;
- \$150,000 to replace 5,100 feet of water lines at Yellowstone Lake State Park;

- \$3,300,000 to replace several toilet and shower facilities at Lake Wissota, Mirror Lake, and Peninsula State Parks; and
- \$500,000 to replace facility plumbing fixtures in Parks throughout the state

Clean water is a big concern for Wisconsin. Making sure our State Parks' water infrastructure is up-to-date is critical for the overall health and experience of millions of visitors to our great state each year. Thank you again for listening.

## Testimony on 2019 Assembly Bill 134

Senator Robert Cowles

Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation – May 28, 2019

Thank you, committee members, for allowing me to testify on 2019 Assembly Bill 134. This bill provides \$5.2 million in authorized, but unobligated Stewardship bonding from prior fiscal years to complete necessary water infrastructure upgrades in our State Parks System. This legislation also provides an additional \$300,000 in spending authority from the segregated Parks account to further serve the needs of our public lands.

Our State Parks System is a treasure for residents and the Park's 17 million annual visitors. Showcasing everything from woodlands and dunes to waterfalls and cliffs, our pristine natural resources in the State Park System are not only a treasure we should be proud of, but are economic drivers in communities throughout the state. While the natural landscape of these properties is still picturesque, some of our basic water facilities and infrastructure are not.

Assembly Bill 134 provides \$5.2 million in authorized but unobligated Stewardship funds from prior fiscal years to complete critical health and safety and high priority water-related facility and infrastructure projects in State Forests and Parks. This legislation builds on the progress from 2017 Wisconsin Act 71 which passed with broad, bipartisan support to provide \$4.5 million in authorized but unobligated Stewardship bonding for water infrastructure upgrades in other high-traffic properties by completing some of these crucial backlogged projects. Despite the significant progress made last session in addressing these needed upgrades, a substantial backlog of water-related facility and infrastructure projects still remains.

The water facility and infrastructure projects that would be completed in Assembly Bill 134 are prioritized for Parks with the highest visitor demand. While the projects are not specified in the bill, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicates that they would use the funding from this legislation to expend an estimated:

- \$250,000 to replace 50 water fountains in Parks throughout the state
- \$1,000,000 for 13 four-unit vault toilet replacements in campgrounds and high-traffic day-use areas at Black River State Forest and Devil's Lake, Harrington Beach, Hartman Creek, High Cliff, Kohler-Andrae, Pattison, and Yellowstone Lake State Parks
- \$150,000 to replace 5,100 feet of water lines at Yellowstone Lake State Park
- \$3,300,000 to replace several toilet and shower facilities at Lake Wissota, Mirror Lake, and Peninsula State Parks
- \$500,000 to replace facility plumbing fixtures in Parks throughout the state

This legislation also provides the DNR with \$300,000 in increased expenditure authority from the segregated State Parks System account for use in operations with a priority given to Parks with the highest demand. This authority will allow the DNR to hire limited term employees (LTE's) or project positions to address the maintenance backlog in our State Parks System and help them improve and maintain our public lands.

Most visitors will never notice that the drinking fountains, shower facilities, or vault toilets are up-to-date. But if that water infrastructure is run down or out-of-service, it will impact the visitor's experience in our State Parks and may impact their plans to come back or visit other State Parks in the future. An isolated illness or an outbreak of water-related disease at our State Parks would not only be devastating to those impacted and their loved ones, but could cause ripple effects and harm our entire outdoors-based tourism industry in Wisconsin.

The water facility and infrastructure upgrades in Assembly Bill 134 will help to improve visitor experience, promote parks-based tourism, and protect the health and safety of millions of State Park visitors for decades to come.



## Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

### *2019 Assembly Bill 134* *Water Infrastructure Projects in State Parks* *May 28, 2019*

Good morning Chairman Mursau and Committee members. My name is Missy VanLanduyt, and I am the Department of Natural Resources' Parks and Recreation Section Chief. I am joined today by Ben Van Pelt, who is the Legislative Liaison for the DNR. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes on Assembly Bill 134 and thank you to the bill authors, Rep. Summerfield and Sen. Cowles, for working with us while crafting this legislation.

The Wisconsin State Park System sees more than 17.5 million visitors across more than 100 properties statewide. These visitors engage in a variety of recreational opportunities from camping and hiking to boating and picnicking. Property facilities and infrastructure provide the foundation of elements required to serve the needs and ensure the safety of our visitors.

The Department has identified approximately \$5.2 million in water (drinking and waste water) infrastructure projects that would be eligible for funding under the provisions of Senate Bill 125. Under the bill, the agency would be authorized to utilize unobligated Stewardship bonding authority to address these previously identified property infrastructure needs.

The identified projects include replacing three toilet shower buildings in campgrounds at Mirror Lake, Lake Wissota and Peninsula State Parks for approximately \$3.3M; \$500,000 in plumbing fixture replacement at properties statewide; \$1.0M in vault toilet replacement statewide; and an additional \$400,000 in drinking fountain and waterline replacement, as well as \$300,000 in additional park spending authority to address critical maintenance and operational needs at large properties that serve significant numbers of visitors throughout the state.

In the 2017-2019 biennium, Act 71 was passed to address similar issues of water and waste water infrastructure at state parks across the state. Projects included infrastructure projects at Devil's Lake and Peninsula State parks as well as \$1.0M to replace drinking fountains. All of these projects are at different stages of completion including the installation of more than 500 new drinking fountains before Memorial Day of this year.

We appreciate the proactive and open approach the authors' offices have taken with us. With that said, we also recognize the challenges associated with the future of the Stewardship program and the implications Assembly Bill 134 has on the program's sustainability. Stewardship is an important program that helps to ensure the future of conservation and outdoor recreation in this state. The Governor, the Administration and the DNR are committed to making sure the Stewardship program continues and is funded at an appropriate level into the future. This bill draws upon the same funding

source that the Governor has proposed utilizing for Stewardship in his budget. If this bill were to become law, the DNR would need to work with the Governor and the Legislature to rectify the gap in funding that would occur.

On behalf of the Park and Recreation Management Bureau and the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



May 28, 2019  
<http://wicouncil.tu.org>

Contact: Council Chair Mike Kuhr  
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### **Wisconsin TU Supports AB 134 (SB 125)**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation, thank you for taking the time today to hear our comments on AB 134 regarding the funding of critical health and safety-related water infrastructure projects in our State Parks.

My name is Mike Kuhr, I'm a small business owner and a stay-at-home father. I live across the lake, in Monona with my family. I do a lot of volunteer work for Trout Unlimited and I currently serve as Chair for the Wisconsin State Council.

Trout Unlimited is the nation's leading coldwater conservation organization, and here in Wisconsin, we have over 5,200 members working to ensure that future generations have access to cold, clean, fishable water. Last year, our members volunteered over 50,000 hours of their time working on 56 conservation projects, 91 education events, and running 3 veterans service programs at the VA hospitals in Milwaukee, Madison, and Green Bay.

We applaud the Sponsors and co-sponsors of AB 134 and its counterpart, SB 125, for showing this commitment to improving our State Parks. These places are a vital part of our tourism industry and greatly add to the quality of life that we as Wisconsinites enjoy. We believe facilities in our State Parks should enhance the pristine lands and waters they encompass, not threaten or degrade them. Investments like the ones being proposed today will help ensure that our Parks will be there to serve the public for generations to come.

The Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited ("WITU") is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization which consists of approximately 5,200 volunteer members in 21 chapters in Wisconsin working to ensure that future generations have access to cold, clean, fishable water. Last year, WITU and its Chapters reported over 50,800 volunteer hours, working on 56 conservation projects, 91 youth education events, and operating 3 veterans service programs.

Our members value the recreational opportunities that the woods and waters of Wisconsin offer. After a day of fishing, many of us will retreat to a campground in one of our State Parks. We've grown accustomed to finding clean campsites, with a place to picnic, share stories around the fire, a bathroom that works, and maybe even a hot shower. The quality of our parks adds greatly to the outdoor experiences we crave.

We'd like to bring your attention to the economic impacts that trout fishing in particular, and outdoor recreation in general, provide to our state. A 2016 study of anglers in the Driftless Area found that trout fishing generates 1.6 billion dollars of economic activity annually in that region alone! And recent studies by the Outdoor Industry Association shows that outdoor recreation in Wisconsin generates 17.9 billion dollars in direct consumer spending annually. This spending supports about 168,000 direct jobs right here in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited understands that we all live, work, and play downstream. We are encouraged to see the proposed upgrades in the facilities at our State Parks. We look forward to working with the Legislature and State Agencies to continue making the necessary investments in these public lands, and to ensure that future generations will have access to cold, clean, fishable water in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to public service.

Mike Kuhr  
Wisconsin Trout Unlimited  
Council Chair  
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Trout Unlimited's 2016 report entitled "The Economic Impact of Trout Fishing in the Driftless Area" can be viewed here:

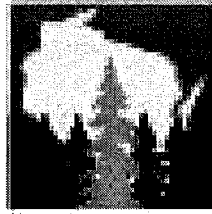
<http://www.darestoration.com/documents/Economic%20Impact%20Summary%20of%20Trout%20Angling%20in%20the%20Driftless%20Area.pdf>

The Outdoor Industry Associations data for Wisconsin can be viewed here:

<https://outdoorindustry.org/state/wisconsin/>

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### **Testimony for Support of House Bill AB 134**

Friends of WI State Parks (FWSP) is a 501c3 organization that represent WI residents that use state lands. There are approximately 80 Friends Groups that provide thousands of volunteer hours and have delivered approximately \$100M dollars to help support the mission and activities of the Wisconsin state parks, forests, trails, and recreation areas.

State Parks are an economic engine that have an \$18B annual impact overall. Tourism is a key driver to Wisconsin's economy and state parks are in the middle of it. The State Parks system counted 17 million visits in 2018. Improving water infrastructure through House Bill AB 134 is very important to keep parks and tourism strong.

The loss of GPR revenue is causing the gradual deterioration of state park infrastructure and operations. The citizens of Wisconsin have a significant investment in State Parks. AB 134 and previous bills will help remedy part of this problem. And 50% of WI residents use parks, trails and recreation areas according to the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). WI residents love their parks.

The state and national park ideas are amongst the best ideas we've ever had. To put aside the most beautiful areas of WI to connect families and kids to natural resources is important. These lands open people's minds, get them out of their box and make people feel good. It can profoundly change people and their lives. It inspires new generations to keep natural resources available for everyone.

FWSP urges the Legislature and Governor to support AB 134.

Michael McFadzen  
Friends of Wisconsin State Parks  
Policy Committee Chairperson