



RACHAEL A. CABRAL-GUEVARA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 55TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Representative Cabral-Guevara

February 9th, 2022

Chairman Mursua and committee members,

Thank you for holding a Public Hearing on Assembly bill 543, relating to grants for navigational buoys in the Lake Winnebago Pool system.

Being one of the largest recreational bodies of fresh water in the United States, Lake Winnebago and the greater Winnebago Pool system incurs a heavy financial burden for local municipalities and in turn their respective communities. Under current law, the DNR administers the recreational boating facilities program that provides financial assistance to governmental boating facilities, and other initiatives, including lock improvements and navigational aids.

This bill will ease the financial burden of the respective municipalities by expanding the current eligible reimbursement for navigational aids along the Winnebago Pool for up to a 100% reimbursement. AB543 would also provide a modification to the current subprogram list of eligible projects, specifying that the placement and removal of navigational aids are eligible for reimbursement under the recreational boating facilities program.

This legislation would allow municipalities to continue to budget at an appropriate level of funding for the Winnebago Pool system, without having to decide to postpone community engagement initiatives. Effectively, creating a more welcoming atmosphere for those who reside in the area, as well as local and out-of-state tourists looking to spend a weekend getaway in the area.

I appreciate your consideration of Assembly bill 543 and am hopeful you are able to support this great piece of legislation.



Winnebago County

Office of the County Executive

The Wave of the Future

Public Hearing Testimony on Lake Winnebago System Buoys

County Executive Assistant Ethan Hollenberger

Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 544. This bill is the idea of local residents who are looking to optimize financial resources for the betterment of the Lake Winnebago System. The system has about 17% of Wisconsin's inland surface water and within Winnebago County borders is 10% of the state's inland surface water.

For years, Winnebago County and our neighbor counties have been using property tax levy or boat launch fees to fund the buoys. Because the buoys are essential for boater safety, we will continue to do so. This bill would allow the county and our neighboring counties to submit for reimbursement under the recreational boating facilities grant program.

Similar programs and cost sharing grants work quite well for multi-use recreational trails and snowmobile trails.

The Lake Winnebago System is quite shallow in spots requiring navigational buoys to ensure safety by marking the safest path through the upper lakes and river. Spots in Lakes Winneconne and Poygan are a foot or two deep. It is easy for boats to get lost and hit these dangerously shallow spots. In addition, it makes night navigation possible through the river system.

Winnebago County is thankful for all of the resources and partnerships the state provides. Utilizing state resources through a grant program would allow us to make necessary improvements to our boat launches. The county's goal is to provide lake access to as many Wisconsinites as possible. The vast majority of Wisconsin's residents are within two hours of the Lake Winnebago System. There are fifty-eight lake access launch sites in Winnebago County. Permit fees for seven fund the placement of buoys.

Under current practice, the county spends about \$70,000 per year on buoy placement and maintenance. In 2019, we spent over \$144,000 for capital improvements to the buoys. Because of the Wolf and Fox Rivers, we spend the most in the system. Utilizing a state grant would ensure boaters who use private launches and slips assist in the payment of the buoys.

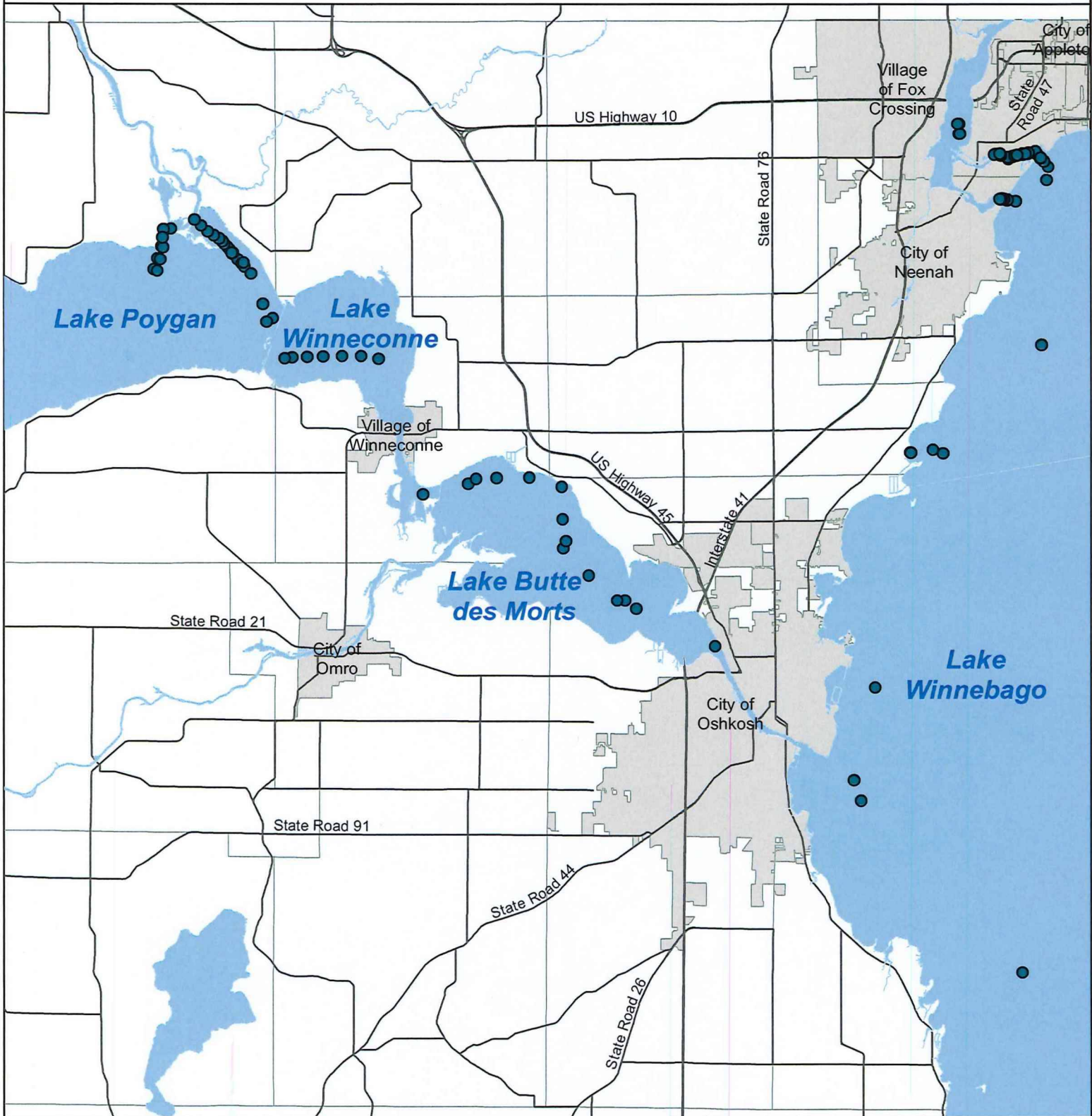
Again, Winnebago County is committed to placement of the buoys and the legislation does not increase the RBF allocation or earmark money to our efforts.

Winnebago County is proud of our water resources. We are investing millions, with state assistance, to preserve and conserve the resource. We have dozens of community partner organizations who assist in the recreational opportunities of our lakes and rivers. This legislation will provide more partnership for the benefit of millions of Wisconsin residents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Winnebago County Buoy Map



Winnebago County,
Wisconsin

- Winnebago County Buoys
98 Navigation and
Navigation Pencil Buoys

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