



# SCOTT KRUG

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TO: Members, Senate Committee on Natural Resources  
FROM: Rep. Scott Krug  
RE: SB 269, Eradication and remediation of Wild Parsnip  
DATE: May 10, 2023

Thank you for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 269, which would provide grants to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip in Wisconsin.

Wild parsnip (formally known as *Pastinaca sativa*) is a non-native wild plant. It's green and it thrives in our area but unlike so much of Wisconsin's flora, Wild Parsnip is actually NOT an asset or an attraction. (Nor is it an edible vegetable!)

The plant was apparently first found to be a problem in Minnesota in the 1990s. The largest concern Wild Parsnip is that is its ability to inflict burns to skin of people that come into contact with the sap from the plant. These burns can be painful and even severe. Parsnip burns can affect recreational visitors to wildlands and parks but are a real and unavoidable problem for people who work outdoors, including park staff, highway crews, timber cutters, wildlife technicians, and other outdoor workers.

Unfortunately Wild Parsnip is high invasive. It's a very successful colonizer of new territory and it is an invasive. It is often found in open places such as roadsides, pastures, and disturbed areas.

It's possible to avoid skin contact with the toxic sap of the plant by wearing gloves, long sleeves and long pants. When the juice of wild parsnip comes in contact with skin in the presence of sunlight it can cause a chemical burn which can look like a rash with blistering and discoloration of the skin.

SB 269 would assist in the fight against Wild Parsnip by funding and requiring the Department of Natural Resources (under its statewide program to control invasive species), to award grants of up to \$100,000 in each fiscal year in 2023-25 to local governments or American Indian tribes

***MORE***

or bands that recognize and are willing that have declared wild parsnip to be a noxious weed for projects on public or private land to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip.

The bill allows a grant recipient to collaborate with a regional conservation organization on a project funded by the grant. Under the bill, an individual grant may not exceed \$10,000 and a grantee may not be awarded more than one grant per grant cycle.

The bill appropriates \$50,000 in each fiscal year in the 2023-25 fiscal biennium. The Department of Natural Resources has of course filed a fiscal estimate and seems to indicate no particular issues or challenges with this proposal,

SB 269 has the support of a number of legislators who have cosponsored the bill. It is also supported by the Dairyland Power Cooperative, the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association, and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.

I am pleased to support SB 269. I ask for your support of this bill and I thank you for your consideration.



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 269**  
**Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy**  
May 10, 2023

Chairman Cowles, Vice-Chair Wimberger, and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, I appreciate this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 269, legislation to address and control the spread of wild parsnip in communities throughout Wisconsin. Wild parsnip is a non-native plant that often grows in patches or as scattered plants along roadsides and in unmanaged grassland areas such as fields, pastures, or prairie restorations. Currently, wild parsnip is restricted under the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources invasive species rule (NR-40), meaning it is an established invasive species that causes or has the potential to cause significant harm to our environment, economy, and human health. Without a permit, no person may transport, transfer, or introduce it into an un-infested area.

While wild parsnip is a detriment to our environment, it is most known for the dangers it poses to the health of humans and wildlife. Wild parsnip sap can cause severe rashes, blisters, chemical burns, and discoloration, also known as phytophotodermatitis, when people get it on their skin and are then exposed to sunlight. Due to the risks, more education, awareness, and control efforts are needed to help mitigate its spread across Wisconsin.

In Central Wisconsin, both Portage County and Wood County have declared wild parsnip as a noxious weed and have designated John Eron, a standout farmer and leader, as their weed commissioner. When John became aware of the prevalence of wild parsnip in our area and the threat it poses to public health, he organized a small workgroup of local officials and stakeholders to help address the issue, which I was glad to participate in. Although the plant spreads quickly and its seeds remain viable in the soil for up to four years, several management options exist, including mowing, herbicides, grazing, fire, and biological control. When you map and schedule your routes to mow or spray based on when it goes to seed, you can control its spread.

As some of you may recall, I invited John and other leaders working to address the spread of wild parsnip to the Capitol to present on their efforts, including Pete Arntsen, the Deputy Town Weed Commissioner, Ken Schroeder, a UW-Extension Agriculture Educator, and Dan O'Connell, the Portage County Senior Conservation Technician. They provided a fantastic briefing on wild parsnip, teaching legislators and staff about the plant and related mitigation techniques. We also worked together to draft and introduce this legislation, Senate Bill 269, which creates a new grant program for local governments or tribes that have declared wild parsnip a noxious weed. The funds would support efforts to map, control, and mitigate the spread of wild parsnip and other invasive species throughout the state.

John has spent considerable time and money out of his own pocket to help our counties map wild parsnip and mitigate its spread. He has also dedicated significant resources to raising awareness of the



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**Katrina Shankland**

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hazards of wild parsnip and best management practices. Our community is stronger because of John's leadership, but he shouldn't have to pay out of pocket for these efforts to control the spread of wild parsnip. That's why we introduced this legislation—to assist communities with proactively addressing the spread of invasive species that can cause serious damage to our health.

The bill aims to bolster existing efforts by state agencies, local governments, and conservation groups by requiring the DNR to award up to \$100,000 over the biennium in grants to local units of government or tribes that have declared wild parsnip to be a noxious weed. These grants can be used to help map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip. Grant recipients can collaborate with regional conservation organizations, and local weed commissioners can apply on behalf of their local government. The bill also appropriates \$50,000 over the biennium to the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation to assist in their efforts to control invasive species.

This legislation will help protect unsuspecting Wisconsinites from injury and our environment from the spread of wild parsnip and other invasive species. Because of the prevalence of wild parsnip in Wisconsin, this is also a worker safety issue, from farmers to utility workers. Supporting this legislation will support workers. Senate Bill 269 enjoys bipartisan co-sponsors and has support from agricultural, environmental, and electric cooperative groups. This bill is identical to the version that passed the Senate unanimously last session, with one caveat: there are even more bipartisan cosponsors from across the state this session. I encourage you to support this commonsense bill and look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.



# PATRICK TESTIN

## STATE SENATOR

DATE: May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023

RE: **Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 269**

TO: The Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

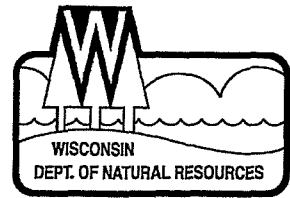
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Thank you Chairman Cowles and members of the committee for accepting my written testimony on Senate Bill 269 (SB 269).

Picture a summer drive through Wisconsin's countryside. You're probably visualizing green pastures, clear streams, blue skies, and an array of colorful wildflowers. There is one sight, however, that doesn't belong - a yellow flowering plant called the wild parsnip. Passing by at fifty-five miles per hour, the wild parsnip looks harmless - but up close, this invasive species has the ability to inflict great pain.

A person or animal who comes in contact with wild parsnip on a sunny day could experience a response that varies from a mild rash to a severe burn. That reaction is known as phytophotodermatitis, and it is caused by the interaction between the plant's sap and sunlight. Wild parsnip's proliferation impacts a variety of people, including hikers, bikers, and utility workers. This bill directs the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allocate \$100,000 annually from SEG C to local and tribal governments working to control the spread of this unwanted invader. SB 269 also allocates \$50,000 annually from SEG A to the DNR's Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation to aid their efforts to eliminate invasive species.

This bill passed unanimously through both this committee and the full Senate last session; I ask that you once again support this legislation.



## Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

### 2023 Senate Bill 269

### *Grants to Map, Control, Eradicate, Monitor and Minimize the Spread of Wild*

### *Parsnip*

*May 10, 2023*

Good morning, Chair Cowles, and members of the Committee. My name is Drew Feldkirchner, and I'm the Director of the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. I'm also the department's representative on the Wisconsin Invasive Species Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 269, related to grants to map, control, eradicate, monitor, and minimize the spread of wild parsnip:

Wild parsnip is both ecologically damaging, and it can cause serious burns. This plant is abundant in the southern part of the state, common in the central part, and sporadic in the north. The existing Administrative Rule NR 40, which outlines the identification, classification, and control of invasive species, lists wild parsnip as a restricted invasive plant statewide, meaning it cannot be deliberately transported or introduced to new areas, and reasonable precautions must be taken to prevent unintentional transportation or introduction. Populations continue to spread through much of Wisconsin, often following roadside mowing.

Senate Bill 269 (SB 269) would fund treatments for some wild parsnip populations and provide funding to administer a new statewide program. This would help control some existing populations and limit some spread of this invasive species.

Many highway departments, local units of government, land managers, and landowners have worked hard to control parsnip, but success also requires control on adjacent properties. SB 269 would require local units of government and tribes to list wild parsnip as a noxious weed to be eligible for grants; this means they would also have authority to require control on all lands in their jurisdictions.

SB 269 would allow grant recipients to collaborate with regional conservation organizations. This is important as it would allow more efficient use of the funds, so each municipality or tribal nation does not have to create their own landowner contact and control program. Regional invasive species management groups could assist eligible local governments and tribes.

One consideration for the implementation of this bill is the time and resources needed to promulgate necessary rules to disperse the grant. Department staff, the Wisconsin Invasive Species Council, and many stakeholders are currently completing ongoing work needed for the next NR 40 revision, which would update the list of prohibited and restricted species. Grant dispersal could be added to NR 40 during the upcoming revision to streamline rulemaking, but it will likely be three years before the rule is final.

Additionally, developing and administering a new grant program and providing outreach and notification to all the counties, cities, villages, towns, and tribes in the state would require significant staff time. Best management practices have already been developed to help roadside managers, landowners, and others take reasonable precautions to minimize spread. However, many county and town highway departments lack the herbicide application equipment needed to control parsnip. Contracting with regional invasive species management groups or with herbicide applicators would be necessary. It would also be critical that they use the most effective herbicides at the correct time of year. In some cases, this may require training of local staff or their contractors.

Finally, wild parsnip is one of many regulated invasive plants in the state. It is unique and of concern to many because it can cause burns. However, it is already widespread and abundant in much of the state. About half of the regulated invasive plants are listed as “prohibited” because they are not yet widespread or abundant, and most have not yet been found in the state. Funding to control these populations early, as they are first documented, would help avoid future problems of invasive plants in Wisconsin. Currently, there is no funding source designated for the control of terrestrial invasive plants. Providing ongoing funding for partner organizations, like Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas would be another effective option for preventing the spread of wild parsnip and other invasive species in the state.

In closing, the bill authors could consider providing an allowance for DNR to disperse the funds before a final rule is in place. They could also consider expanding the suite of invasive plant species eligible to be controlled with the funding to all regulated invasive plants, or at least to wild parsnip plus all regulated prohibited invasive plants under NR 40.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we thank you for this opportunity and would be happy to answer any questions.