

February 1, 2016

Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature:

While AB 600 and SB 459 present many serious and problematic impacts to water protection, the treatment of lake dredging in these bills is especially troubling, and substitute amendment 2 does not go nearly far enough to address these concerns. The amendment does not go far enough in protecting against the spread of invasives, diminished water quality, release of toxics and habitat loss, and we ask that you remove the language that deletes current safeguards with respect to dredging.

When done carefully, dredging can be an effective tool for increasing access to waterways. When dredging is not done properly it can lead to:

- Decline in fisheries and ecosystem health
- Destruction of wetland nearshore habitat
- Reduced water quality
- Release of potentially toxic materials
- Spread of invasive species
- Harm to neighboring properties

For these reasons, lake dredging requires an individual permit issued by the DNR. AB 600/SB 459 allow dredging in lakes to be conducted with a much more relaxed general permit that does not offer adequate scrutiny for the unique characteristics of a lake and its shoreline. Additionally, the bills allow up to 30 cubic yards to be dredged – equaling 3 dump trucks worth of material with little review. On the Great Lakes, the amount is 100 cubic yards, or 10 dump trucks. With 15,000 lakes of various sizes and population densities around Wisconsin, the impacts of such dredging could add up quickly.

Unfortunately, the amendments do little to address the natural resources harm that could be done to a lake through dredging. As just one example, the bills eliminate the DNR's ability to require soil sampling to show that toxic materials are not present in the area to be dredged – a key component to ensuring an entire lake is not exposed to hazardous contaminants. Toxic and hazardous substances like mercury and arsenic can remain in lakebed sediment from past application of chemicals historically used to treat lakes. These substances are released when an area is disturbed by dredging or excavation. It is incumbent on DNR to ensure that the dredging activity is done in a safe and responsible manner that does not threaten public health. By dredging in areas that may have contaminated sediment, dangerous toxins can enter our waterways that threaten public health, impair water quality and harm our fisheries and ecosystems.

Once the damage is done, habitat loss, water quality degradation, and invasive species proliferation are very difficult and costly to reverse. The current individual permit process gives careful consideration of unique local characteristics and allows for appropriate limitations to be put in permits so that our lakes remain healthy.



Wisconsin's waters are already facing serious problems – algae that chokes our beaches in the summer, a dead zone in Green Bay, well contaminations and groundwater and lake level drawdowns are on the minds of Wisconsinites who value our water resources. We can't keep degrading our water protections without expecting these problems to continue to get worse.

The undersigned lakefront property owners and organizations that represent tens of thousands of individuals that value the health of our lakes ask that you remove the dredging language from AB 600 and SB 459 and maintain current protections on this critical issue.

Clean Wisconsin

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Wisconsin Wetlands Association

River Alliance of Wisconsin

Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter

Wisconsin Shoreland Initiative

Crawling Stone Lake Association, Vilas County

Douglas County Association of Lakes and Streams

Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, Vilas County

Tuttle Lake P&R District, Marquette County

Rock Lake Improvement Association, Jefferson County

Sanitary District #1, Town of Schleswig, Manitowoc County

Spring Brook Watershed Lake Management District, Waukesha County

Pipe & North Pipe Lakes Protection & Rehabilitation District, Polk County

Spring Lake Management District, Waukesha County

Upper St. Croix Lake Association, Douglas County

Lauderdale Lakes Improvement Association, Walworth County

Lauderdale Lakes Management District, Walworth County

Catherine Frohnert, Loveless Lake, Polk County

Peter Frohnert, Loveless Lake, Polk County

David Leifheit

Mary Weber, Dane County

Michael, Jan, & Sara Samarzja, Willow Springs Lake, Waukesha County

Paul Kipping, Rooney Lake, Burnett County

Fred E. Patrick, Railroad Lake (Spread Eagle Chain), Florence County

Scott Mason, Lauderdale Lakes, Walworth County

Sandy Gillum, Vilas County

Dennis Wentland

Kay Wentland

Eric Anderson, Oneida County (also property owner in Marathon, Forest, and Oconto Counties)

Wisconsin Lakes

The Nature Conservancy

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

Clean Lakes Alliance

Friends of the Central Sands

Washburn County Lakes & Rivers Association

Marquette County Lakes Association

Northwest Wisconsin Waters Consortium

Plum Lake Association, Vilas County

Bone Lake Management District, Polk County