**Public informational hearings on proposed statewide general permit for small scale dredging of waterbodies in Wisconsin**

1. **State Natural Resources Building (GEF 2), 101 S. Webster St., Room: G09
Madison, Wisconsin 53703 (Dane County)---1:00 pm on Tuesday, February 14**
2. **Green Bay DNR Service Center, 2984 Shawano Ave., Room: Lake Michigan Room
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54313 (Brown County)---1:00 pm on Thursday, February 16**
3. **Written Comments can be sent: until March 3, 2017, to** **dnrwywrzguidance@wisconsin.gov** **or by standard mail to: Waterway Policy Coordinator, Bureau of Watershed Management, DNR-WT/3,PO Box 7921, Madison WI 53707-7921**

**What does this General Permit for Dredging on Lakes Do:** The proposed statewide general permit, once in place, is valid forfive years and will allow applicants to apply for coverage under the permit for dredging up to 25 cubic yards from inland lakes and up to 100 cubic yards from the Great Lakes if the dredging meets all of the eligibility criteria and conditions of the general permit.

**How does a General Permit Work:** Once DNR adopts a general permit it applies state wide. Then a landowner can notify DNR that they believe they meet the standards in the general permit and unless they hear an objection from DNR, they can proceed with the project after 30 days. No notice of the project is given to adjacent landowners, the lake association, sports groups or other members of the public.

**What can a riparian owner do under this general permit:** They can dredge up to 25 cubic yards of material from the near shore area of an inland lake or 100 cubic yards of material from the Great Lakes for navigation or recreation purposes. They can do so out to five feet of water depth. If the dredging is for navigation they can remove naturally occurring sand, rock, cobble or gravel bottom or native vegetation. If for recreational purposes they must avoid such areas. They must use silt curtains. They can remove

coarse woody debris, trees or other fish and wildlife habitat structure except for those permitted by DNR, in other words, all natural woody, debris trees and fish and wildlife structure can be removes. The general permit may not be used in areas of possible hazardous pollution contamination. While the dredging cannot be done in areas of special natural resource areas or areas that have public right features, the great majority of lakes are not protected by those categories. Dredging cannot be done on lakes from March1 through June 15 because of spawning.

**Has this type of proposal been advanced before.** Yes, this proposal was advance in the last legislative session in Assembly Bill 600, the only difference being it was for 30 cubic yards in inland lakes but the same 100 cubic yards for Great Lakes. The legislative proposal was stopped by overwhelming opposition from anglers, trappers and waterfowl hunters along with lake shore landowners, lake associations and other conservation and environmental organizations. Then builders, realtors and marine dredging companies approached the DNR to issue a general permit for the same activity. A general permit issued by the DNR is not subject to approval by the Natural Resources Board or review by the Legislature. The only review is to bring a costly review in court.

**Why did hunters, anglers and trappers previously oppose this provision.** The near shore area of inland lakes and the Great Lakes, provides some of the best fisheries, furbearer and waterfowl habitat in Wisconsin. Alteration of the substrate and vegetation both from individual projects and cumulative projects can have significant detrimental impact on fish and wildlife habitat. Historically it is know that significant alteration of these near shore habitat areas has eliminated fish reproduction on many inland lakes which must now be stocked with game fish paid for by sportsmen and women’s purchase of fishing licenses. Stocking of lakes is very costly and the resulting fishery does is of lower fish density that natural reproducing lakes.

Under current law proposal to dredge bottom materials for inland lakes and the Great Lakes requires an individual DNR permit and application which provides more detailed information about the habitat value of the location. All such proposals must be scrutinized by DNR staff and work cannot occur until the DNR formally approves the project. Public notice is available so that adjacent landowners, lake associations and hunters, anglers and trappers can evaluate to see if fish and wildlife habitat will be damaged or if their private property rights will be harmed.

Landowners proposing to dredge in near shore areas may not be capable of identifying native vegetation or other valuable fish and wildlife habitat structures or may intentionally not disclose that information. The general permit does not take into account the diverse ecosystem and habitats of individual lakes including the major difference in the size of inland waters.

The general permit would allow several riparian landowners to contract with a marine dredging contractors to dredge large stretches of shorelines. It is known that with other lakeshore alteration projects, marine contractors often solicit multiple owners on a lake indicating a lower cost for multiple projects.

**What protections do anglers, trappers and hunters want for these dredging projects.** Sportsmen and women wants (1) to have each of the dredging project sites reviewed in some manner by a DNR biologist to identify and protect against the destruction of any significant fish and wildlife habitat that will be affected by the project (2) that the project cannot go forward until DNR has approved the project, (3) that notice be provided to adjacent landowners, sportsmen and women and the affected lake association and (4) that DNR assess the cumulative impact on fish and wildlife habitat if multiple approvals are granted on the waterbody