



**To:** Wisconsin State Legislature Joint Committee on Finance  
**From:** Wisconsin Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology  
**Date:** March 15, 2015  
**Subject:** Proposed Budget Cuts to the DNR Bureau of Science Services

The Wisconsin Chapter of the Society for Conservation Biology (WSCB) is the state chapter of an international professional organization committed to advancing the science and practice of conserving biodiversity. On behalf of WSCB and the Society for Conservation Biology's North America Section (SCB-NA), we submit the following comments on the State of Wisconsin's 2015-2017 Executive Budget.

In view of the urgent and ongoing threats to natural resources in Wisconsin, and in recognition of the benefits those natural resources provide to Wisconsin citizens and our State's economy, we request that the Joint Committee on Finance reconsider the budget cuts and staff reductions from the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Bureau of Science Services.

The mission of the DNR is to: "protect and enhance our natural resources; provide a healthy, sustainable environment and a full range of outdoor opportunities; ensure the right of all people to use and enjoy these resources in their work and leisure; work with people to understand each other's views and to carry out the public will; and, in this partnership, consider the future and generations to follow." (Executive Budget, p. 378) The DNR cannot fully meet this mission if the proposed budget cuts and staff reductions are implemented.

The proposed reduction of funding and nearly 19 staff at the Bureau of Science Services would significantly limit the DNR's ability to fulfill its mission. The management of Wisconsin's lands, waters, and wildlife is best accomplished using the best available science in decision-making. Eliminating over one-third of the science bureau's staff would significantly reduce DNR's ability to inform policy and natural resource decisions. Since none of those positions are state general revenue-funded, the reduction of staff positions does nothing to resolve the state's current budget deficit.

Americans have a strong interest in the sciences and support government spending on research, according to survey data. According to a National Science Board report, 83% of American citizens believe that the government should fund basic scientific research, and 58% believe that the government spends too little on environmental research, and should increase rather than decrease funding<sup>1</sup>. These statistics demonstrate that the proposed

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<sup>1</sup> National Science Board. 2014. Science and Engineering Indicators 2014. Arlington VA: National Science Foundation (NSB 14-01).



reductions to funding and staff for the DNR's Bureau of Science Services are in direct conflict with constituents' priorities for scientific research.

The integration of research, communication, and use of knowledge is essential to successful science<sup>2</sup>, and the Bureau of Science Services is directly responsible for fostering this integration and generating a wide range of scientific knowledge. In the 2012-2014 biennium, the Bureau had over 100 active projects ranging from white-tailed deer population monitoring to research supporting the Wisconsin Walleye Initiative. These efforts improved stakeholder awareness and knowledge on natural resources issues, and served to guide natural resources management decisions<sup>3,4</sup>. To fund these projects, scientists leveraged external grants totaling nearly \$3.6 million to support research on Wisconsin's natural resources. Additionally, the Bureau's staff published over 200 papers and made over 600 presentations during this time period, ensuring that its work reached the public, the scientific community, and policy-makers.

The proposed Executive Budget would significantly reduce the ability of the Bureau of Science Services to conduct actionable, applied science that informs management and policy for natural resources in the State of Wisconsin.

WSCB and SCB-NA urge the Joint Committee on Finance to reconsider the proposed budget cuts and staff reductions to the Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Science Services in light of the significant impacts this will have on the ability of the DNR to engage the public and inform policy with sound science.

Respectfully,

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<sup>2</sup> Sarewitz, D., and R. A. Pielke. 2007. The neglected heart of science policy: Reconciling supply of and demand for science. *Environmental Science & Policy* 10:5-16.

<sup>3</sup> Barton, M. and J. Hauxwell, eds. 2014. Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences Research Program. Bureau of Science Services Biennial Report 2013-2014.

<sup>4</sup> Kitchell, J. and K. Martin, eds. 2014. Wildlife and Forestry Research Program. Bureau of Science Services Biennial Report 2013-2014.