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Conservation Congress commends State's efforts to keep public lands, waters accessible

Madison – The Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) applauds the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for its efforts to identify areas that are still available for the public to use during the federal government shutdown while keeping open public lands and water accesses.

“The sportsmen and women of Wisconsin truly appreciate the DNR taking a stand to keep open those areas that are partially funded by federal dollars during this shutdown,” stated Rob Bohmann, WCC chair from Racine. “The Department has also done a great job of identifying public land and water accesses that are owned or managed by state or local municipalities which are still available for the public to use. DNR officials have gone the extra mile trying to get the word out about that.”

The federal government shutdown, which began on October 1, 2013, led to the closing of federal properties in Wisconsin, such as the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, some national wildlife refuges, and various areas within the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests. The feds ordered the closure of state properties that receive federal funding, but the DNR declined to close those areas where the state has management authority through existing agreements.

“I respect the gravity of the situation the federal government is dealing with, but there are a lot of Wisconsinites that wait all year for the fall season to come around--for hunting, bird watching, and viewing the spectacular foliage,” Bohmann said. “It would be really unfortunate if they were unable to participate in these activities because they were denied access to public land.”

State, county and local recreational areas remain open throughout Wisconsin.

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As established by Wisconsin State Statutes, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is officially recognized as the only natural resources advisory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to represent their interests on natural resources issues on a local and statewide level to the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources. Their mission is to represent the citizens of Wisconsin by working with the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources to effectively manage Wisconsin's greatest asset, our abundant natural resources, for present and future generations to enjoy.