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DATE: May 27, 2015  
TO: Natural Resources Board  
FROM: Rob Bohmann, Chair  
SUBJECT: Congress Matters: 2015 Conservation Congress Advisory Question Summary and Annual Convention Report

First, I would like to thank Chair Cole for his presentation at our convention, and the attendance of sitting and outgoing Board members Jane Wiley, Christine Thomas, Greg Kazmierski, Bill Bruin, Terry Hilgenberg and Gary Zimmer at our meeting. I cannot remember a convention in recent history when all of the sitting Board members were in attendance. It was a privilege to have you at our convention interacting with our delegates. Your involvement and attendance speaks volumes to your commitment to the role of the Congress as an advisory body to this Board.

Second, I would like to welcome Julie Anderson to the Board. I look forward to working with you on important conservation issues.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to review the business conducted by the Congress at our annual meeting. The Wisconsin Conservation Congress convened for its 81<sup>st</sup> annual convention on May 14, 15, and 16, 2015, in Wausau. Our statewide delegation voted on the proposed DNR rule changes, Board advisory questions, and each of the proposed congress advisory questions from the 2015 spring hearing questionnaire (Attachment 1).

### **WCC Advisory Questions**

There were 41 Congress advisory proposals presented for public comment at this year's Spring Hearings. Thirty six of these proposals were recommended for advancement to the Department, Natural Resources Board, and Legislature for consideration as possible future rule changes or legislation. The four proposals that were not supported by the delegation for advancement were also not supported by the public vote. However, the Congress supported and advanced WCC question 7 (#78 on results sheet) regarding allowing County Deer Advisory Councils to recommend the hunting of white deer in their county. WCC question 29 (#100 on the results) regarding delisting the Winnebago System as federal waters was referred back to committee. Included in the recommendations advanced to the Department, Board, and Legislature for further consideration are the request for strengthening wanton waste laws for game, changing deductibles for crops damaged by wildlife, changing the definition of attended lines, limiting watercraft on spring spawning marshes of the Fox and Wolf Rivers, and utilizing new funding sources for to support warm water habitat initiatives.

### **Congress Business**

This is also the third year we have had the Youth Conservation Congress and you'll recall, we came before you in January to report on the more robust efforts we are making to expand the program and better engage our youth delegates. We now have 21 students involved as youth delegates and 10 of them were able to attend the convention and participate in the discussion and breakout sessions arranged specifically for them.

### **Awards**

Again this year the Congress recognized a number of DNR employees for their outstanding service. Nathan Roberts, Research Scientist, received the wildlife award for his commitment to working cooperatively with citizens, sharing information, and expanding knowledge. Fisheries biologist Ryan Koenigs received our fisheries

award for his dedication and excellent work with the sturgeon fisheries. Michael Hirschboek (Racine County), was recognized for his outstanding law enforcement efforts, his well-rounded program, and his work to involve the community in protecting Wisconsin's resources. Kyle Dilley (Dane County) was awarded the Waterfowl Officer of the Year by the WCC Migratory Committee for his leadership within his community and commitment to waterfowl education. Former chair, Ed Harvey, Jr. from Sheboygan County received the WCC's David A. Ladd Delegate of the Year Award. Ed has been on the Congress for 37 years and he is always willing to step up to the plate when called upon.

The WCC also inducted two former Congress members, Wilhelmine LaBudde and Henry Liebzeit, to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress Hall of Fame.

We handed our years of service certificates and pins to those delegates who have served the congress for 15, 20, 25, 30 and over 35 years. Impressively, we have 16 delegates that individually have 35 or more years of service to the Congress.

Rounding out our awards, the 2014 Statewide Conservation Organization of the Year Award went to Shadows on the Wolf, the Outstanding Local Organization was awarded the Southwestern Wisconsin Chapter of Quality Deer Management, and the 2014 Educator of the Year was awarded to Chuck Strysick.

### **DNR Rule Change Proposals**

The full delegation reviewed and registered their support for all of the questions that the Department presented, both from wildlife and fisheries.

The Congress did not support the NRB's advisory question number 70 relating to allowing stands and blinds overnight on DNR managed land; however, the delegation did support question 71 concerning the subdividing of Bear Management Zone C.

### **Officer Elections**

On Friday, May 15 the delegates from our twelve districts elected their 2015-16 Executive Councilors. I would like to thank each of the councilors from 2014-15 that will not be returning this year as councilors and also congratulate those that have been elected or reelected. I have included a list of this year's Executive Council with this memo for your information (Attachment 2).

As recommended by the strategic plan and implemented for the first year in 2013, our Executive Committee now includes five members. The public relations and outreach coordinator position will be held by Lee Fahrney (Iowa County) and Joe Weiss (Washburn County) will act as historian. Dale Maas (Dodge County) was elected as the secretary, Larry Bonde (Manitowoc County) was re-elected to vice-chair, and I was honored to be re-elected to serve another year as Chair.

In closing, I want to reiterate our appreciation for the support of this Board and we look forward to working closely with you this year on important resource management issues.