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To: Natural Resources Board

Subject: Deer Management – Discussion on Science

The Department of Administration announced on October 3, 2011, that Dr. James Kroll would fill the “Deer Trustee” position which was created September 23, 2011, by an executive order of the Governor. The Conservation Congress immediately reached out to Dr. Kroll on October 4, 2011, and offered our assistance in any way possible. From the moment Dr. Kroll’s feet hit Wisconsin soil, the Congress has been working with him and his team on their charge to review Wisconsin’s deer management program.

The leadership of the Congress met with Dr. Kroll and his team a number of times before our delegates from around the state assisted in facilitating six town hall meetings held throughout Wisconsin in April of 2012.

We were pleased with the outstanding job Dr. Kroll and his team, Dr.’s Guynn and Alt, did of involving the citizens of the state in this review and listening to their concerns. We were extremely honored that Dr.’s Kroll, Guynn, and Alt specifically noted as a recommendation that the Conservation Congress must have a more active role in deer management at the local level, and we were ready to take on that challenge. We worked with the Department of Natural Resources as they reviewed the recommendations and assisted them where ever possible in the implementation process.

The Congress’ Big Game Committee reviewed Dr. Kroll’s report at their committee meeting held August 18, 2012, and supported his report in its entirety. The Big Game Committee then asked the Executive Committee do the same. The Executive Committee met via conference call on August 21, 2012, and supported the Big Game Committee’s recommendation to support Dr. Kroll’s report in full. The Big Game Committee, after reviewing the reports from the Action Teams, also voted to support the change of establishing counties as deer management units, and the Executive Committee supports that recommendation.

The Congress was excited to kick-off the Deer Trustee Report (DTR) implementation process in March of this year. Since the release of the DTR, many individuals have reviewed the report and have focused great attention on developing a collaborative effort with the combined intent to enhance

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.

Wisconsin's white-tailed deer program for the future. In the Deer Trustee Report, there were over 60 specific recommendations for modifying the future of deer management in Wisconsin. Action Teams were formed to take the DTR recommendations and transition them into action on the ground. The purpose of the Action Teams was to review each of the DTR recommendations and assist in developing specific actions needed to enact each one of the recommendations.

I'm fully aware of the recommendations that came from the Action Teams. However, the DTR Action Teams were tasked with how to implement the DTR, not to develop alternatives or defend the status quo; the status quo is what we are trying to improve on. To suggest that we go back to fighting over numbers; numbers that so many of Wisconsin's citizens question; is not a path forward. We can't be afraid of trying something different and involving the public (a tenant of the WCC's purpose) is NEVER a bad thing; with public participation, comes public acceptance.

A number of years ago we challenged the science when it came to bear numbers, science rose to the occasion, and with stakeholder support and involvement, a better measure was developed. To say that we can't challenge and adapt science to better answer our questions and gain buy-in from the public is simply wrong.

Unlike previous efforts where only parts and pieces of action plans were selected to be implemented, the public is expecting the state to act on implementing all aspects of the DTR. Too much time, effort and money has been expended to get where we are today, and to not implement the DTR in its entirety would be a waste. The DTR will not work in Wisconsin if we only implement bits and pieces of it. We must implement the whole plan or we will be back here again in the future trying to figure out what to do next.

The public will voice their opinions in the next couple of weeks, let's let that happen.

I would like to close with a statement from the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, *Democracy in Wildlife Regulations* from 1941; a statement that is just as relevant today as it was 72 years ago. "In the final analysis, no matter what the commission or the department believes to be in the best interest of the state, if the citizenry are not in accord, any program set up would eventually be doomed to failure. The birds, animals and fish belong to the people of the state."

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rob Bohmann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rob Bohmann, Chair
Wisconsin Conservation Congress