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Testimony for Assembly Bill 598 Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry February 2, 2016

I would like to thank Chairman Jeff Mursau and the entire Assembly Committee on the Environment and Forestry for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 598.

Assembly Bill 598 was drafted to continue Wisconsin's commitment and progress to eliminating and treating Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) on Wisconsin waterways. For years, AIS has proven to be a significant problem for local businesses and tourism economies. Under current law, \$2 million dollars in grant funds are distributed annually from the Department of Natural Resources to local governments and lake associations. Although these efforts have combated AIS and in some cases eradicated the invasive species, there is still more work to be done.

Assembly Bill 598 includes the following aspects:

- Acknowledges early detection aquatic plant and AIS surveys and watercraft inspections as core lake protection activities
- Encourages the department to streamline the ability for lake associations and lake districts who are managing AIS under an approved DNR plan to be reimbursed for annual monitoring and prevention activities
- Acknowledges the role of counties providing technical assistance to AIS grant recipients and encourages the department to streamline their ability to be reimbursed for that work.

This legislation expands the lake management network to included watercraft inspections and lake surveys to be eligible for grant funding. For example, known AIS transporters are "dirty boats" entering a lake on a boat launch. Volunteers will check boats and other watercraft for AIS while leaving and entering lakes. Providing funding for these activities will help prevent the spread of AIS into un-impacted Wisconsin waterways. Additionally, including grants for lake surveys under the lake monitoring network will allow local governments and lake associations to locate and treat effected areas of the lake quickly and efficiently.

Other provisions of the bill include streamlining the DNR grant process to allow local units of government and the DNR to quickly treat identified AIS. Moving quickly to contain an AIS outbreak has proven successful in many local projects around Wisconsin.

I am hoping for strong bipartisan support for this legislation.



TOM TIFFANY

STATE SENATOR • 12TH SENATE DISTRICT

Senator Tom Tiffany
Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry
Testimony on Assembly Bill 598 – relating to Aquatic Invasive Species Grants

Thank you Chairman Mursau and members of the Assembly Environment and Forestry for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 598.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) make their way into our lakes through many different avenues, such as boat hulls, to ballast water, and bait buckets. AIS can cause severe damage to local lakes affecting local businesses and tourism. This is especially true in Northern Wisconsin where the presences of AIS can choke a lake, killing native species and ruining businesses that depend on a vibrant fishing industry.

Currently the Department of Natural Resources provides around \$2 million annually in grant funds to local qualified organizations and governments to control and treat established populations of AIS. Assembly Bill 598 would stream line the grant process allowing those local organizations to continue their work on containing an identified AIS breakout. When an AIS is identified, it is important that local volunteers and DNR experts move quickly to contain the outbreak. Streamlining the grant process will allow resources to quickly flow to an identified AIS with the hopes of containing the outbreak before it spreads.

Assembly Bill 598 expands the management tools available to volunteers that are available for grant funding. Lake surveys and watercraft inspections would now be covered under Lake Management Planning grants. The best way to stop AIS is finding it before it has a chance to enter un-impacted bodies of water. Watercraft inspectors are the front line of lake protections and this bill would make those efforts available for funding.

Again, I want to thank the committee for allowing me to testify on AB 598. Aquatic invasive species ruin lakes, destabilize ecosystems, and diminish property values. It is vitally important that we remain vigilant and grant volunteers the tools to prevent and isolate outbreaks. AB 598 will help in our fight against aquatic invasive species.

Tom Tiffany
Wisconsin State Senator
12th Senate District



STATE OF WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE
BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY
TESTIMONY PRESENTED IN THE MATTER OF AB 598
Tuesday February 2, 2016

Good morning, Chairman Mursau and members of the committee. I'm Carroll Schaal, Lake and Rivers Section Chief in the DNR Bureau of Water Quality. I oversee the grant programs that are the subject of this proposal and I'm here to testify for information only. The department supports locally-led lake and stream protection and AB 598 expands a 2006 law that recognized citizen volunteers monitoring lakes and inspecting watercraft for aquatic invasive species (AIS) needed dedicated support that isn't dependent on the success of a grant application.

The Department currently uses this authority to contract with a defined network of over 1,000 participants allowing us to deliver more efficient funding for basic protection activities that are needed for all lakes such as water quality and AIS early detection monitoring. Contracts pay for training, supplies, and laboratory analyses and data management services matched by donated volunteer time. It has allowed us to make sure that funding is going to where it is needed and that these services don't overlap or are duplicated.

This bill expands the network to rivers and watersheds by allowing contracts to support stream-based volunteer monitoring programs such as the Water Action Volunteers and Riverine Early Detectors. The bill expands opportunities for county and regional coordination and participation in the Healthy Lake Initiative, stream and watershed protection and AIS prevention. It also allows the Department to expand and replace a current grant program that annually reimburses lake organizations for some of the cost of controlling aquatic invasive species if they are operating in compliance with an approved plan.

Our lake, river and AIS grant programs are already paying for these essential activities. This bill simply helps streamline the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide further information to the committee and its members.



Representative Jeffery Mursau
Chair, Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry
Room 328 Northwest
State Capitol

February 2, 2016

RE: Assembly Bill 598

Good morning Representative Mursau and members of the Committee,

My name is Allison Werner and I am with the River Alliance of Wisconsin. I would like to speak today on behalf of our 2,500 individual, organizational and business members statewide.

Since the inception of the River Protection Grant program, we have worked with the Department of Natural Resources to assist citizen groups in the application process to ensure good proposals are submitted. We have a concern about the changes AB598 will make to this grant program.

As written, we think it is unclear that AB598 allows the Department of Natural Resources to allocate funds to stream monitoring work in addition to lake and aquatic invasive species monitoring.

In LRB 3638 the intent of the bill includes this language, "Expands the network to include stream monitoring volunteers." However, we cannot find specific language in the bill that authorizes funds to be used for stream monitoring volunteers.

However, the Legislative Reference Bureau analysis states, "This bill also allows DNR to use a portion of the funding currently appropriated to DNR only for river protection grants to pay the costs incurred for activities conducted under lake monitoring contracts."

Without specific language authorizing funds to be allocated for stream monitoring, we are concerned that River Protection Grant funds will only be spent on lake monitoring instead of stream monitoring work.

The River Protection Grant program is already the smallest of the three of DNR's Surface Water Grants, at \$289,500 annually. This bill authorizes 25% of this grant program to be removed from the competitive grant program to contracts for the first time ever. This is a big change for a small grant program. However, we understand the need to support the stream monitoring program.

We respectfully ask for the bill to be amended to clearly state that stream monitoring work is an eligible activity.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning.

Sincerely,

Allison Werner
Local Groups Director