



For Immediate Release  
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**Proposed DNR Reorganization and Regulatory Privatization Threatens  
Wisconsin's Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage**

MADISON –Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Secretary Cathy Stepp announced plans for extensive changes to the agency on Wednesday, including shifting regulatory responsibilities to private contractors, curtailing the powers of the state park rangers, and altering science and research programs. State Representative Nick Milroy (D-South Range) offered the following comments in response to Stepp's remarks:

"I am deeply troubled by the changes described by Secretary Stepp. This is a direct assault on Wisconsin's sportsmen and the enforcement mechanisms that protect our state's natural resources," Milroy said. "The DNR has a long history of bipartisan support as an advocate for Wisconsin's natural areas, yet Secretary Stepp remains committed to systematically dismantling the agency that she was tasked with leading."

Milroy continued, "It is unbelievable that Secretary Stepp has proposed handing over pollution permitting duties to private consultants hired by the very businesses affected by permitting. This is especially troubling given that the DNR has been criticized by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for failing to adequately enforce the Clean Water Act. Hundreds of Wisconsin residents have undrinkable, contaminated wells as a direct result of concentrated agriculture operations, and Secretary Stepp feels that self-regulation is an appropriate response. Any time you privatize permitting responsibilities, you open the door for abuse."

In addition to announcing plans to privatize permitting, Stepp revealed that the DNR will decertify the DNR's 163 park rangers who currently hold law enforcement duties. The DNR also intends to concentrate control over the agency's research in the hands of upper management and to eliminate the remaining 19 positions in the already diminished Bureau of Science Services.

"Over the course of the last legislative session, Democrats fought unsuccessfully to prevent a range of damaging rollbacks of environmental protections, and this latest announcement from the DNR is a sign that the upcoming session will likely be just as bad, if not worse, than the last. Whether you are a sportsman, an environmentalist, or a citizen who appreciates having clean drinking water, Secretary Stepp's proposal for the DNR is a recipe for disaster," Milroy concluded.

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