



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: April 18, 2017
RE: Testimony on 2017 Assembly Bill 230
TO: The Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Good morning Chairman Mursau and members of the Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry. Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of Assembly Bill 230, a bill related to fences on closed managed forest land.

As many of you know, this committee worked for several sessions to overhaul our Managed Forest Law program. Those efforts paid off a year ago when a bill updating Wisconsin statutes was signed into law by Governor Walker.

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) encourages sustainable forestry practices to ensure a constant stream of fiber for the second largest industry in Wisconsin. Each enrollee has an approved plan that sets the schedule for specific forestry practices that landowners must complete and in exchange they pay a much lower amount in local property taxes.

There are three beagle clubs currently enrolled in the MFL program that have faithfully adhered to their management plans. I represent one of those clubs, the Central Wisconsin Beagle Club based out of Wisconsin Rapids. They are in jeopardy of losing their eligibility when they come up for renewal this summer because of changes adopted last session.

Under the current law, if a parcel has a fence that prevents the free and open movement of wild animals across any portion of the parcel, it is ineligible for participation in the MFL program. The fencing used by the beagle clubs is very low to the ground and used to contain rabbits for training purposes. It doesn't prohibit the free and open movement of most animals, most notably deer.

When changes to the MFL bill were discussed last session, it was my understanding, the authors' intent was to provide an exemption for the beagle clubs. Unfortunately, it is the conclusion of the Department of Natural Resources that the language in the bill wasn't clear

and the legislation before you today is necessary to keep the clubs in good-standing for renewal.

Assembly Bill 230 is a joint effort between the beagle clubs, the DNR, and the authors of last session's MFL bill. The language is very narrowly crafted and only applies to the 3 nonprofit beagle clubs.

I would appreciate the committee's support for the bill and thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share my testimony on AB 230.

PUBLIC HEARING for Assembly Bill 230 (April 18, 2017)

Representative Mursau and members of the Environment & Forestry Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Jerry Knuth and I live in Plover, WI.. I am a 2nd generation AKC Beagle enthusiast and a life member of the Central Wisconsin Beagle Club which is one of the 3 beagle clubs subject to AB 230.

Central Wisconsin Beagle Club is located between Kellner and Wisconsin Rapids. We were the first of the 3 clubs to enroll in MFL with our current enrollment scheduled to expire at the end of 2017.

Each club recognizes that the MFL program is a "property tax deferral" and we work very hard to manage our forestry plan on these properties. Each club has worked well with their local State and County Foresters in keeping with the spirit of the program.

George Meyer has done a good job of providing the background information as to what we will need to do to grandfather our current deal and allow for a renewal MFL plan moving forward. We have visited with legislators, attended legislative hearings & meetings and reached out to a variety of resource people within the WDNR – Forestry Division as well as WDNR Wildlife and the Forest Industry. Throughout the process, we have always referred to our clubs as "cottontail enclosures"; so we were taken back when the recent MFL changes indicated that we had this "fence / enclosure" issue. We also recognized that there were many pieces to this set of MFL changes and from our perspective we were always a rather small part of the bigger picture.

Given the timing of our MFL contract, our club has been working with a local certified forestry consultant to develop the next MFL plan utilizing many of the tools that we implemented with the last plan. I'm confident that both plans are in keeping with the intent of the MFL. As such, the remaining issue is the fact that each club property is fenced. My father's generation had to foresight to fence our 72 acres with 5 foot woven wire to keep the cottontails inside and also limit the training area for our hounds and thereby keep our neighbors happy and free of wider ranging training or trial runs. The need for our enclosures is also recognized in the rules for "Captive Wildlife Law", the first Hound Dog Training & Trial Permit Program in the U.S... It's worked well for a decade and is a complement to our sporting dog heritage.

We have a variety of free-roaming wildlife on our club grounds and each club works hard to maintain year-round wildlife habitat. In addition to the cottontails, we observe deer, turkeys, grouse, squirrels, woodchucks, birds of prey and a variety of song birds who come-&-go as they please.

I commend our legislators who have worked with the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the DNR to merge this proposed amendment into a legal format. Again, thank you for allowing us to spend this time with you on this issue. I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have.

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