



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #583

Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (DNR -- Water Quality)

[LFB 2009-11 Budget Summary: Page 476, #4]

CURRENT LAW

The Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN) is a statewide network of volunteers that conducts water quality sampling and provides information to DNR, including information regarding the detection of new or recurring aquatic invasive species infestations. Under current law, DNR is authorized to use up to 10% of the amount provided under the lake protection and planning grants appropriation for CLMN-related costs.

GOVERNOR

Allow DNR to use up to 10% of the total funding provided under the lake protection and planning and the aquatic invasive species control grant programs for Citizen Lake Monitoring Network expenses.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Formed in 1986, the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (formerly "Self-Help Lake Monitoring") is a network of citizen volunteers who monitor water quality in Wisconsin lakes at over 800 stations statewide. Each volunteer is registered with DNR and trained in the collection, reporting, and interpretation of lake data. Volunteers collect basic water clarity data as an indicator of water quality as well as temperature, chlorophyll, phosphorus, and dissolved oxygen data, which is used to assess the state of nutrient enrichment in the lakes. CLMN volunteers also identify and map plants, and watch for the appearance of aquatic invasive species infestations. All equipment and volunteer training is provided by DNR or by UW-Extension staff under contract with DNR. Volunteers collect data during a sampling season from May to September and submit the

information to DNR. At the end of each sampling season, volunteers receive reports from DNR that outline their lake's data from the past year of sampling. Reports are also available for each prior year that lake has been sampled. Information collected by CLMN volunteers is utilized by DNR lake biologists, fisheries experts, and water regulation and zoning staff, as well as by UW-Extension, lake associations, and other interested individuals. During the 2008 sampling season (May, 2008, to September, 2008), 978 volunteers participated in CLMN monitoring.

2. 2003 Act 275 authorized DNR to award contracts to public groups or persons for the creation and support of a statewide lake monitoring network and authorized DNR to provide funding for support of the network of up to 10% of the amount provided under the lake protection and planning grant program appropriation. Contracts may be awarded for costs including, but not limited to, training citizen monitors, equipment and supplies related to the collection, preservation, and recording of samples or specimens and observations, laboratory analysis and identification costs, and developing and operating database systems for registering and tracking network information. In 2008-09, most funds were awarded for two contracts. One is with UW-Extension, which provided approximately \$80,000 for a full-time lake monitoring coordinator and approximately \$105,000 for CLMN equipment, supplies, and volunteer training workshops. The other is with the state lab of hygiene (approximately \$60,000) where CLMN volunteers send their samples to be analyzed. A total of \$267,500 in contracts was awarded in 2008-09.

3. Lake protection grants may be awarded for a variety of purposes, including management projects that will improve or protect the quality of water in lakes, flowages, or natural lake ecosystems. A grant for a lake management project may be made for up to 75% of the cost of the project, up to \$200,000 per grant. Counties, municipalities, non-profit conservation organizations, qualified lake associations, town sanitary districts, certain school districts, and public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts are all eligible to apply for grants for lake management projects. Eligible activities include: (a) the purchase of land or conservation easements (if the purchase will substantially contribute to the protection or improvement of a lake or natural ecosystem's water quality); (b) wetland restoration; (c) restoration of shoreline habitat; (d) development of local regulations or ordinances that will protect or improve the water quality of a lake or natural lake ecosystem; and (e) an activity that is approved by DNR, and that is needed to implement a recommendation made as a result of a plan to improve or protect the quality of water in a lake or natural ecosystem. Lake protection grants may also include lake classification activities for: (a) lake classification project grants of up to \$50,000 per county for up to 75% of the costs for the development and implementation of lake classification and subsequent protection program; and (b) lake classification technical assistance grants of up to \$200,000 to nonprofit corporations to provide educational and technical assistance to local units of government and lake management organizations that will participate in a lake classification project.

4. In fiscal years 2003-04 through 2006-07, the lake protection and planning grants appropriation also provided funding for aquatic invasive species grants. Under 2003 Act 33, funding for the lake protection grant program was increased by \$500,000 annually (from \$2,675,400 to \$3,175,400). DNR was directed to provide at least \$500,000 annually for grants to local units of government for up to 50% of the costs of projects to prevent or control aquatic invasive species, and

for education and inspection programs at boat landings. 2005 Act 25 increased the funding for the lake protection grant program to \$3,175,400 in 2005-06, and \$3,675,400 in 2006-07. The Act provided that \$1,000,000 in 2005-06 and \$1,500,000 annually beginning in 2006-07 be made available for cost-sharing grants to local governments for the control of aquatic invasive species.

5. 2007 Act 20 transferred base level funding of \$1.5 million annually from the lake protection grant appropriation to a biennial appropriation solely for the distribution of grants for the control of aquatic invasive species. The Act also increased state grants up to 75% of project costs for public or private entities. However, Act 20 did not authorize the use of aquatic invasive species control grant funds for CLMN activities. In 2006-07, \$4,175,400 was authorized for lake protection and invasive species grants and \$417,500 was available for CLMN contracts, while in 2007-08 and 2008-09, \$2,675,400 was authorized for lake protection and planning grants and \$267,500 was available for CLMN contracts. Under the bill, \$2,648,600 annually is authorized for lake protection and planning grants and \$4,257,000 is authorized annually for aquatic invasive species grants. Therefore, under the bill, DNR could award contracts for CLMN support activities for up to \$690,600 annually in 2009-10 and 2010-11 as shown in the following table.

**Funding Available under Lake Protection and Aquatic Invasive Species
Grant Programs for Citizen Lake Monitoring Expenses**

	<u>2003-04</u>	<u>2004-05</u>	<u>2005-06</u>	<u>2006-07</u>	<u>2007-08</u>	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>
Lake protection and planning grants	\$2,675,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,648,600	\$2,648,600
Aquatic invasive species grants	<u>500,000</u>	<u>500,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,500,000</u>	---	---	---	---
Total lake protection and planning grants appropriation	\$3,175,400	\$3,175,400	\$3,675,400	\$4,175,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,675,400	\$2,648,600	\$2,648,600
Aquatic invasive species grants appropriation					\$3,300,000	\$4,300,000	\$4,257,000	\$4,257,000
Amount Available for Citizen Lake Monitoring Network	\$317,500	\$317,500	\$367,500	\$417,500	\$267,500	\$267,500	\$690,600	\$690,600

6. Given that the lake protection appropriation initially provided grants for aquatic invasive species control activities, and, as the CLMN provides information to DNR regarding the initial detection and recurrence of aquatic invasive species infestations, the administration argues that 10% of the total funding for both lake protection and aquatic invasive species control grants should be available for CLMN activities. DNR estimates that there are approximately 2,500 volunteers doing work related to aquatic invasive species between the CLMN volunteers, and volunteers working with the Clean Boats Clean Waters program (where volunteers perform boat and trailer checks for invasive species, distribute informational brochures and report new invasive

infestations).

7. When the initial contracts for the network were awarded in fiscal year 2003-04, \$3,175,400 was available in the lake protection and planning grants appropriation. Therefore, it could be argued that the maximum amount intended to be provided for the citizen lakes monitoring network was \$317,500. An alternative could be to provide up to \$317,500 from either the lake protection or aquatic invasive control grants appropriations (Alternative 2). Further, 2003 Act 275 does not refer specifically to aquatic invasive species; therefore, it is not clear whether funding was initially intended to be used for activities related to aquatic invasive species.

8. Providing funds from the aquatic invasive species grant appropriation for CLMN activities would reduce the amount available for those grants. In 2008-09, grant requests exceeded grant awards by approximately \$1.5 million. The average aquatic invasive species grant award was approximately \$65,000. Therefore, allowing 10% of grant funding to be used for CLMN contracts, or approximately \$427,500, would result in perhaps six or seven fewer aquatic invasive species grants awarded annually. However, DNR indicates that, since funding for CLMN contracts was reduced as a result of Act 20, applicants for aquatic invasive species grants have included volunteer-related costs as part of their grant applications. The Department argues that providing for volunteer needs on a statewide basis through the CLMN contracts is more efficient than providing for volunteer costs through each individual aquatic invasive species control grant.

9. In addition, the bill would expand the definition of eligible expenses under the lake monitoring contracts to include technical assistance to entities that have applied for or received aquatic invasive species control grants. Technical support includes activities such as developing and reviewing community-based aquatic invasive species prevention and control projects, guidance with applying chemical-based aquatic invasive species treatments, and evaluating and applying new and emerging prevention and control techniques. Currently, aquatic invasive species control grant applicants either request these types of technical assistance from DNR or pay for technical services from private sources. However, the Department's current technical assistance effort consists of 1.0 FTE statewide, and DNR is unable to provide technical assistance services for all grantees.

10. Even with the expanded eligible uses of lake monitoring contracts, the Department indicates that it would be unlikely to utilize the full 10% of the funding available from the lake protection and aquatic invasive species grant programs for CLMN contracts. DNR estimates that it would use up to approximately 5% of total funding available for CLMN contracts (approximately \$345,000) annually. Therefore, up to 5% of the lake protection or aquatic invasive control grants appropriation funding could be authorized for CLMN expenses (Alternative 3).

ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt the Governor's recommendation to allow DNR to utilize up to 10% of the total funding provided under the lake protection and planning and the aquatic invasive species grant programs for citizen lake monitoring network expenses. Further, expand the definition of eligible

expenses to include contracts for providing technical assistance to entities that have applied for or received aquatic invasive species grants.

2. Adopt the Governor's recommendation, but limit DNR to providing up to a total of \$317,500 annually from the lake protection and the aquatic invasive species grant programs for citizen lake monitoring expenses.

3. Adopt the Governor's recommendation, but limit the amount of CLMN awards to up to 5% of the total amount provided under the lake protection and aquatic invasive species grant programs.

4. Maintain current law.

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