



Mary Lazich

President
Wisconsin State Senate

**Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
Assembly Bill 715
January 20, 2016**

Thank you Chair Ott for scheduling Assembly Bill 715 (AB 715) a public hearing, and thank you committee members for attention to AB 715. AB 715 allows the Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission (SEWFRC) to include additional communities to better leverage federal funds.

During 2011, the SEWFRC worked with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to rewrite and update their Implementation Plan. Through this process, the decision was made to expand the area of responsibility through Kenosha County down to the Illinois border. SEWFRC received Memorandums of Understanding from the counties and municipalities of the expanded area, indicating their desire to become members of the SEWFRC. This expansion will enable the SEWFRC to be more competitive for larger federal grants while applying for them in conjunction with their partner the Fox Waterway Agency of Illinois.

A state statute change is necessary for SEWFRC to expand their territory and/or add new members. AB 715 extends the planning area of SEWFRC to the Wisconsin-Illinois border and adds additional commissioners to represent the seven new member communities of the commission. Additionally, the bill authorizes the commission to expand the planning area and to designate counties and municipalities within the planning area as members of SEWFRC by a majority vote of voting commissioners.

AB 715 changes the quorum requirement to a majority of voting commissioners rather than a specific number.

Finally, AB 715 changes SEWFRC's fiscal year to a year beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30 the following year, aligning it with the State.

The organizational and operational changes will allow the commission to work with a broader membership to reach mutual goals.

I ask the committee approve AB 715. Thank you for your attention.



Visit us at WWW.SEWFRC.ORG

The Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission (SEWFRC) established in 1997 by Wisc. Act 27

- In response to citizen & community concerns over water resource problems in Fox River System
- Jurisdiction covers 36.5 mi stretch from North limit of City of Waukesha down to Waterford Dam.
- Tributary drainage area (watershed) includes 364 square miles (in Waukesha & Racine Counties)

What is the purpose of the SEWFRC?

From Statutory Mandates:

- Selective Dredging of the Fox River waterway & clearance of debris jams
- Surveys & research projects to gather data on surface & ground waters
- Be a liaison with Federal, State and other agencies & organizations to protect, rehabilitate and manage water resources in the Fox River System
- Public Information & education programs for the Fox River System
- Automate the Waterford Dam

From Implementation Plans:

- Improve Water Quality and the scenic, economic and environmental value of the Fox River Water System.
- Protect & Enhance Recreational use of the Navigable waters
- Coordinate & Integrate Programs & Projects to make improvements to the navigable waters
- Create advisory committees as necessary
- Promulgate rules to implement duties & powers of the SEWFRC
 - Written Cost Share Agreements
 - Project Acceptance Criteria

An Implementation Plan as required by the State Statutes was developed in 1998

- The Plan acted as our guide for 12 years.



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In 2010 the SEWFRC decided that a revised (updated) Implementation Plan was appropriate

- SEWRPC offered to fund the writing & publication of the new Implementation Plan
- The existing Plan was reviewed in detail and revised accordingly

A Major point of discussion (consideration) was the boundaries of jurisdiction

- It makes sense to include all of the Fox River System in the jurisdiction of the SEWFRC
- Most likely there is as much work needed to be done above and below our present area
- Improvements to the entire Fox River waterway should benefit all the users from North to South

A decision was made to expand south to the Illinois border.

- Input from the Fox Waterway Agency of Illinois (FWA) indicated that together we might apply for Federal Funding for major projects.
- The FWA spends a lot of time and money collecting our Wisconsin silt & waste
- Likely more problems associated with silt deposition, storm water and flooding increase as you go downstream

The proposed changes to Subchapter VI, Chapter 33 of the State Statutes

- Expand the area of jurisdiction down to the Illinois border
- Allow for additional expansion, without legislative action, as deemed appropriate and necessary by the SEWFRC
 - **The proposed legislation would allow the SEWFRC the same powers to amend their boundaries as already allowed by public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts as defined in Ch 33 of the WI statutes.** Lake districts can amend their boundaries by common consent (petition of landowner and action of the commissioners)--Sec 33.33(2)(a).
 - **Granting power to municipalities to petition for attachment to the SEWFRC and for the board to accept such attachment is both cost and time effective,** by devolving such power to the SEWFRC rather than requiring legislative action and a specific bill.