



TOM TIFFANY

STATE SENATOR • 12TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 626

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

December 6th, 2017

I want to thank Chairman Kleefisch and members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 626 which would allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a muzzle loading season within the Apostle Islands beginning in November.

The Apostle Islands are a group of 22 beautiful islands in Northern Wisconsin. Whitetail deer did not historically live on the islands, but their growing numbers have caused ecological problems, especially for native plants.

Currently, there is a muzzleloader hunt during the month of October that has been operating under emergency rules and a coordinated effort from the National Park Service and the Wisconsin DNR. The DNR has been issued nuisance animal tags that has allowed the hunt to continue. This bill will rectify an oversight that happened with the passage of 2011 Wisconsin Act 50.

The muzzleloader season and archery season have not been adequate to manage the deer population on the islands. Our legislation would allow the DNR to reestablish the fall muzzleloader season for hunting deer. This opportunity will help the National Park Service and the Wisconsin DNR to manage the deer population on the Apostle Islands.

Again, thank you members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage for hearing this bill and we would appreciate your support.

Tom Tiffany
Wisconsin State Senate
12th Senate District



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
BETH MEYERS

Rep. Meyers Testimony for AB 626 in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

10:00 AM

417 North

Wisconsin State Capitol

Madison, WI

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for agreeing to hear Assembly Bill (AB) 626, and for giving me the opportunity to testify in favor of this important bill.

AB 626 protects the popular and longstanding Apostle Islands muzzleloader deer hunt. This hunt was established in 1985, and has since provided a distinctive experience for participants as the only hunting season of its type in the state.

AB 626 is being introduced in order to rectify some unintended consequences of Wisconsin Act 50, which became law in 2011. Act 50 banned gun deer season prior to the Saturday before Thanksgiving, except for the youth hunt, disabled hunter deer hunt, and Learn to Hunt programs.

Unfortunately, that law effectively and unintentionally prohibited the Apostle Islands muzzleloader deer hunt, which takes place in October. The reason this deer hunt historically has occurred in October is because boat travel in the Apostles can be treacherous, any month of the year, but especially in November. This bill is narrowly focused to provide a solution to this unique problem in a unique part of the state.

The noncontroversial muzzleloader hunt provides an unparalleled hunting experience and has strong public support. This bill also has bipartisan support within the Legislature and I am happy to work with my colleagues including Senator Tiffany to provide a solution to protect this longstanding Wisconsin tradition.

Again, thank you for your consideration of this proposal and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.



74TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Statement Before Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
In Regard to Assembly Bill 626
Robert J. Krumenaker, National Park Service
December 6, 2017



Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of this Committee, for providing the opportunity for me to speak in regard to Assembly Bill 626.

My name is Robert J. Krumenaker. I am an employee of the National Park Service (NPS), US Department of the Interior. I serve as the Superintendent of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, a unit of the National Park System in northern Wisconsin.

AB626 would authorize the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish an open season within the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore for hunting deer with muzzle-loading firearms prior to the regular firearms season.

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore consists of 21 islands in Lake Superior and a 12 mile mainland strip on Wisconsin's north coast. It is the only US national park unit fully within the boundaries of our state. Visitation since 2007 averages ~ 187,000 people/year. The economic impact of the National Lakeshore was estimated in 2014 to be \$54 million in local spending, supporting approximately 700 jobs.

While public hunting is not typical within units of the National Park System, it was explicitly permitted by the 1970 federal legislation which established the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. Congress directed that hunting was to be managed collaboratively by the state and federal authorities, "in accordance with the appropriate laws of Wisconsin and the United States to the extent applicable."¹

The National Park Service and the state DNR have a long and successful record of collaboration on the management of hunting deer and other wildlife species in the Lakeshore, working through the state's laws and regulatory process whenever possible, rather than imposing federal rules.

In 1985, an October muzzleloader hunt in the Lakeshore was established jointly by the DNR and the NPS to allow for a quality hunt at a time of year when there was still safe boating access to the islands within the National Lakeshore. Later in the fall, Lake Superior gets extremely dangerous for hunters to try to access the islands by boat. Safe access for hunting is a priority for both the NPS and the DNR.

The muzzleloader hunt provides a unique hunting experience to those who participate. It has strong public support, even though only a small number of people take advantage of the opportunity each year.

¹ Public Law 91-424 §)

Statement Before Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
In Regard to Assembly Bill 626
Robert J. Krumenaker, National Park Service
December 6, 2017



Wisconsin Act 50 from 2011 banned any gun deer season prior to the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This, in effect, and unintentionally, prohibited the long-standing October muzzleloader hunt in the Apostle Islands.

In recognition that the prohibition was unintentional, DNR and NPS staff have worked collaboratively in recent years to engineer a short-term, legal, but temporary “work-around” to the Act 50 statutory prohibition. Envisioned as a stop-gap measure until a permanent solution could be achieved, this has required considerable extra effort on an annual basis by both DNR and NPS staff. It has also, unfortunately, been confusing to the public. But it has allowed the hunt to continue in the absence of a long-term statutory resolution.

Assembly Bill 626 and its companion, Senate Bill 508, if enacted into law, provide that long-term statutory resolution.

Neither the muzzleloader season nor this proposed legislative “fix” are controversial.

US Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, in Secretarial Order 3356 issued September 15, 2017, directs the National Park Service and other Interior bureaus to support and expand hunting and fishing, to improve wildlife management through collaboration with state partners, and to increase outdoor recreation opportunities for all Americans. AB 626 and SB 508, appear consistent with the Secretary’s priorities.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Testimony supporting AB 626 in the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

December 6, 2017, 10 AM, 417 North, Wisconsin State Capitol

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on this bill.

I am speaking as a private citizen representing only myself. I am a former DNR Wildlife Biologist, who, as part of my responsibilities worked cooperatively for many years with the Apostle Island National Lakeshore (AINL) on many natural resources issues including deer management and hunting.

The AINL, which was created in 1970, must, by both Federal (USC 16, Sec. 460w-4) and State enabling legislation (SS1.026 (2)) allow hunting, fishing and trapping. The vast majority of National Park Service (NPS) properties do not allow hunting, fishing and trapping. Hence this provision is quite unique for NPS properties.

At the time the AINL was created and through the 1980's the deer population and hunting effort and harvest on the Apostle Islands was low.

In the early 1980's the interest in muzzleloaders and hunting with muzzleloaders was rapidly increasing. Many muzzleloader enthusiasts were requesting a special muzzleloader deer hunting season.

Jointly the DNR and NPS saw an opportunity to offer a unique hunting recreational opportunity by creating a muzzleloader only deer hunting season for the month of October on the Apostle Islands. This would be:

- a primitive weapon only season: for muzzleloaders
- in habitat conditions and with deer populations similar to those that existed at the time of European settlement
- during October when lake travel conditions are usually much safer than in November
- in a Federally Designated Wilderness

In 1985 the DNR, with concurrence of the NPS, created the muzzleloader deer season on the Apostle Islands. This was prior to the creation of the current statewide muzzleloader season which began in 1991. The Apostle Islands October muzzleloader deer season was used by a small number of hunters who were dedicated to this unique hunting opportunity until 2011.

In 2011 Act 50 prohibited all gun deer seasons, except for youth, disabled hunts and Learn to Hunt programs, prior to the traditional Thanksgiving week gun season. It eliminated the October muzzleloader season on the Apostle Islands.

This was apparently an unintended consequence.

I request that you support AB 626 which would allow the DNR to reinstate, with the support the NPS, the October muzzleloader deer season on the Apostle Islands which provides a very unique gun deer hunting opportunity.

Thank you and respectfully,

Fred Strand
Iron River

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you regarding the October muzzleloader hunt in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and Assembly Bill 626.

It has been my privilege to participate in this hunt almost every October since 1996. These trips have included six of the 22 islands. Every hunt has been a unique experience.

There are very few areas in our state that can offer a wilderness hunting experience that can match the Apostle Islands. Oak Island alone is 5000 acres of woods without fences, no trespassing signs or angry neighbors. This area matches the majesty of Lake Superior with the solitude of the island's interior. It is truly unique.

It is my hope that you will pass Assembly Bill 626 and establish the October muzzleloader hunt in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore for many years to come.

Thank you.



Scott A. McKay, DVM

Date: December 6, 2017

Re: Establishing an open season for hunting deer with muzzle-loading firearms within the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

My name is Bruce Prentice, a lifelong resident of Ashland and Bayfield Counties of Northern Wisconsin, a retired science educator, a member of several sporting clubs/organizations, a member of the Conservation Congress for Ashland County, an Advisor to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and a person that has recreated in the Apostle Islands often.

I support establishing/re-establishing a muzzleloading deer hunting season in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. This provides a unique, distinctive hunting opportunity and a management tool for the Park Service. In speaking to sportspersons/hunters that have been involved with this season in the past, whether they harvest an animal or not, report this as an experience that they won't forget.

Sincerely,

Bruce Prentice

Ashland, Wisconsin