

Wisconsin Trout Unlimited  
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May 1, 2001

State Sen. Brian Burke  
P. O. Box 7882  
Madison WI 53707

State Rep. Robert Gard  
P. O. Box 8952  
Madison WI 53708

Dear Sen. Burke and Rep. Gard:

As co-chairs of the Joint Finance Committee, both of you are aware of the dangers of lumping overarching policy initiatives--which deserve full scrutiny during the legislative hearing process--into the Legislature's budget deliberations. A perfect example is Rep. Gard's effort to split the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) into two separate departments, one for environmental enforcement and another for conservation.

Trout Unlimited has 3,500 Wisconsin members in 22 chapters around the state, working as part of a national organization to "preserve, protect and restore trout streams and lakes". Our members work on conservation projects and actively support environmental protection efforts. Although we don't agree with the DNR in all matters, we do work regularly with the department. We see what is and what isn't working.

This proposal doesn't work for our state. TU's State Council last Saturday voted its opposition to efforts to split the DNR, and directed me to advise you of some of the many good reasons for that opposition: No economic gains will be realized, and in fact costs of two departments will be increased. Decreased efficiency will result with two separated departments separately considering issues which they already address as one integrated unit. Think how difficult it is to bring DATCAP and DNR together right now on issues.

If there are concerns about the effectiveness of the recent DNR reorganization, this is not the mechanism to address them. We have concerns about it, but believe splitting the DNR would be doing brain surgery with a chain saw where some fine-tuning would be more appropriate. We also believe many interests in the state would benefit from relaxing the DNR's environmental protection efforts during the period of uncertainty about a split of authority. If this effort continues, rest assured of TU's public opposition. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John W. Welter