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For Release: August 9, 2001

Nelson Urges Forestry Department Veto

Former Wisconsin Governor and U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson is urging Governor Scott McCallum to veto a state budget provision that would split off management of state forest programs from the Department of Natural Resources.

In a letter to McCallum, Nelson, who founded Earth Day, wrote, "The proposed Department of Forestry would break up the integrated resource management that has made our state a leader in natural resource protection."

Nelson pointed out that it was his Republican successor, Governor Warren Knowles, who created the modern DNR, combining previously separate agencies.

"I believe that system has served our state well over the past four decades," Nelson wrote. "Returning to a fragmented approach... would represent a retreat from what we know to be good science."

Nelson called the split a "giant step backward for natural resource protection in Wisconsin."

Nelson, who serves as Emeritus Chair of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and as Counselor to the Wilderness Society, seldom speaks out publicly on specific Wisconsin environmental issues. He said he felt compelled to do so in this case because the DNR split represents a fundamental assault on the institutions that manage and protect natural resources in his home state.

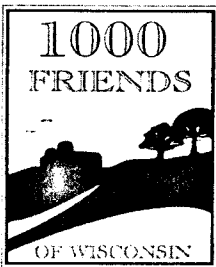
A copy of Nelson's letter is attached.

1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Inc. & 1000 Friends Land Use Institute

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August 8, 2001

The Honorable Scott McCallum
The Capitol
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53703-7863

Dear Governor McCallum:

The state budget bill currently before you contains some positive items for our environment. I was especially happy to see an increase in the state Stewardship Fund, which builds on a program that I began and Governor Knowles expanded some four decades ago.

However, I am writing today to urge your veto of one item that I believe would have a devastating impact on natural resource protection in Wisconsin. The proposed Department of Forestry would break up the integrated resource management that has made our state a leader in natural resource protection. It was Governor Warren Knowles who accepted a recommendation from his commission on government reorganization to combine natural resource protection and conservation agencies into one strong department. I believe that system has served our state well over the past four decades. Returning to a fragmented approach is inefficient, but more importantly, it would represent a retreat from what we know to be good science.

Our forests are certainly part of our economic base and they should continue to be, but they are also home to plants and animals, they provide recreation for hunters, anglers, hikers and wildlife enthusiasts, and they are integral to clean water and clean air.

The Department of Forestry would be a giant step backward for natural resource protection in Wisconsin. Please consider the use of your veto authority to protect Wisconsin's environment by eliminating this ill-conceived proposal.

Sincerely,

Gaylord Nelson
Emeritus Board Chair
1000 Friends of Wisconsin

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