

## Green Bay News Chronicle - Story - 7/31/01

### Gard: Forestry department will improve management

The new agency would spin off from the DNR next year

**By Warren Bluhm  
News-Chronicle**

Two Republican lawmakers said Monday the proposed state Department of Forestry will give environmentalists another voice in the governor's cabinet and ensure that money intended for use in state forests will be spent there.

"Some would have you believe that by giving forestry a more visible role in state government, that's somehow bad for the environment - that's just loony," said state Rep. John Gard, R-Peshtigo, who talked about the newly passed 2001-03 budget during a visit to the News-Chronicle offices with state Rep. Judy Krawczyk, R-Green Bay.

Gard, who played a major role in developing the budget as co-chairman of the Joint Finance Committee, said the new department - which would split from the Department of Natural Resources in 2002 - would help clear up controversy over whether fees earmarked for forest management programs are allocated properly.

"Forest managers in the state will now have a lot more authority to have decisions made timely, clearly and I think a lot more accountable," Gard said, adding that foresters within the DNR have told him privately they are "wildly enthusiastic" about the spin-off.

The proposal, which needs Gov. Scott McCallum's signature along with the rest of the budget, is a compromise that Gard said he worked out with state Sen. Russ Decker, D-Wausau, after the Assembly's version of the budget separated the Department of Natural Resources into two agencies, one with environmental enforcement functions and the other responsible for fish, wildlife and forestry management.

"Forestry was one area where I think (senators) believe they could justify (a separate department) more easily, because of the impact it has on our economy and because of the number of woodlands that are not being managed properly up north right now," Gard said.

The Division of Forestry has 620 employees who will be moved into the new department, and Gard said that will test his theory that forestry, fish and wildlife fees have been siphoned to pay for other DNR activities.

"You don't need to create any more bureaucracy if what they've said is true," he said. "If we move those 620 people over, you shouldn't need any more administrative help in either agency, because according to the DNR they haven't been siphoning the money off."

Krawczyk said Arizona has four agencies to handle what the Wisconsin DNR does, covering land management, water management, fishing and hunting, and environmental enforcement.

"And these smaller agencies are more cost-effective, and they are more responsive to the public," she said.

Gard stressed three Republican highlights about the budget plan that was passed by both houses Thursday after a conference committee completed its work on the compromise budget: Proposed increases in business taxes were removed, the budget contains the lowest increase in state spending in 30 years, and Northeast Wisconsin fared well in terms of receiving funding for important projects and programs.

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