

Evers Campaign: Amid mismanagement and failure at Walker's DNR, Evers pledges to restore independent secretary

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MADISON – After nearly seven years of mismanagement and back-room dealing at Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Democratic gubernatorial candidate and State Superintendent Tony Evers pledged to restore independence to the DNR by returning the power to appoint the DNR Secretary to the Natural Resources Board. Evers' announcement comes in the wake of DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp's departure from the agency to accept a position with President Trump's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

“Under Scott Walker, the DNR has systematically failed in its fundamental mission to safeguard our air and drinking water from pollution and protect the rivers, streams, forests and lakes that make Wisconsin special” Evers said. “Walker has put the needs of special interests and campaign contributors first, endangering the health of thousands of Wisconsinites and ignoring the family farmers, hunters, hikers and fishermen who depend on the DNR to protect their interests. Only an independent DNR Secretary can restore the DNR's mission of serving the needs of all Wisconsin citizens, not just the big corporations.”

Former Assembly Democratic Leader Spencer Black, who authored a bill to restore

an independent DNR Secretary, praised Evers' decision. "Tony Evers' pledge to restore the independence of the Department of Natural Resources by returning the power to select the protector of our air, land and water to an independent citizens board will keep the DNR separate from constant political influence and once again make our state a national leader in protecting the environment," Black said. "Decisions about our outdoors should be based on science, not politics. As we are learning the hard way, once our water or land is polluted, repairing the damage is difficult and expensive at best and often just impossible."

This week Evers is on a two-day tour of Northern Wisconsin, home to some of our most valuable and bountiful natural resources. Wisconsin's outdoor recreation economy generates nearly \$18 billion and supports nearly 168,000 workers.

"From Amery to Rice Lake to Superior, nearly everywhere I have traveled this week, I have heard from Wisconsinites who love to spend time and money on Wisconsin's outdoors. Instead of spending \$3 billion in taxpayer dollars on Scott Walker's corporate welfare to Foxconn, they want to see park fees go down, more outdoor recreation trails and clean air and drinking water," Evers concluded.

Since the 1920's, Wisconsin's natural resources were managed by seven citizen members of the Natural Resources Board (NRB), and its predecessor, the Conservation Commission, which appointed the DNR Secretary. However, since Republicans changed the law in 1995, the DNR Secretary has been a political appointee selected by the Governor.