

# DNR, Wisconsin Conservation Congress: Spring hearing affords thousands the opportunity to weigh-in on resource management proposals

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Hearing results now available on DNR website

MADISON -More than 10,700 people participated in the 2019 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Fish and Wildlife Rules Hearings. The public hearings were held in all 72 counties on April 8 for people who wanted to attend and comment on proposals. In addition, an online option was available to individuals who couldn't attend in person. While 3,402 attended a hearing in person, another 7,310 participated using the online opportunity.

"We had a lot of competing interests this year across the state; with a popular NCAA basketball game on TV and 70 degree temperatures that drew a lot of folks outside to enjoy the weather, I firmly believe that the online input option we provided this year allowed thousands of people to participate whose voices would have otherwise gone unheard," said Wisconsin Conservation Congress Chair Larry Bonde. "Given that this was the first year we offered this opportunity, I'm pleased to see the number of people who took advantage of it and the positive feedback we received."

The Spring Hearings provide citizens with an opportunity to comment and indicate support or opposition to a wide range of proposed fish and wildlife management rule changes, Conservation Congress advisory questions, and to submit resolutions for rule changes they would like to see in the future.

Statewide hearing results and the questions are available by searching the Department of Natural Resources website, [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), for keywords “spring hearings.”

“With the online option being open for 72 hours to allow for more people to participate, the new forms and the compiling of the in-person data being compiled by a third-party contractor, it took a little longer to get the results out than it has in the past, but we needed that time to validate and review the input. Both the department and the Congress want to be sure we were gathering the best data to help us make these important management decisions,” said Bonde.

Meeting results, along with written comments on the evening’s questions and DNR recommendations are used to advise the state Natural Resources Board. This year’s results will be reviewed at the board’s May 22 meeting in Madison. Votes are non-binding and are presented to the Natural Resources Board as a gauge of the public’s support or non-support for proposed changes.

The hearings are held annually on the second Monday in April in conjunction with the Wisconsin Conservation Congress county meetings. DNR related proposals are presented to attendees by DNR staff. Following DNR business, the meeting is reconvened as a Conservation Congress meeting and Congress advisory questions are presented.

The Spring Hearings also provide an opportunity for citizens of each county to elect Wisconsin Conservation Congress delegates to represent them on natural resource issues. The Conservation Congress is the only statutorily recognized citizen advisory body to the Natural Resources Board. During the Congress’ portion of the hearing, citizens may introduce resolutions for consideration and vote by those attending the hearings.