



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

Secretary Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

10/17/2023

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We write to you today as dedicated public servants and elected State Representatives and Senators of the great state of Wisconsin, who are passionate advocates for the preservation of our state's natural heritage. We respectfully ask you not to list the Lake Sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or at the very least, exclude Wisconsin or the Fox Valley region from that list. While we hold the highest regard for the mission of wildlife conservation, we believe that such a listing in our state could have unintended and detrimental consequences for both the Lake Sturgeon and our Wisconsin communities. If there are population concerns in other states, then listing them as protected in those lakes, rivers, or states may be appropriate.

Lake Sturgeon hold a special place in the hearts of Wisconsinites, particularly in the regions surrounding Lake Winnebago, Lake Butte des Morts, Lake Winneconne, and Lake Poygan. The annual sturgeon spearing season, an event deeply rooted in our cultural identity, is set to commence on February 10, 2024. This tradition brings together generations of residents, forging bonds and fostering a profound connection with our natural surroundings.

It is crucial to emphasize the extraordinary work carried out by Wisconsin Biologists and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in preserving the Lake Sturgeon population. Through rigorous scientific research and collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, these dedicated professionals have achieved remarkable success in maintaining the health and sustainability of Lake Sturgeon for generations.

The sturgeon spearing season is meticulously managed, with safeguards in place to ensure the long-term viability of the Lake Sturgeon population. Seasonal harvest caps and mandatory registration at DNR-operated stations, where detailed data on length, weight, sex, and tagging are collected, exemplify our commitment to responsible stewardship. Detailed spawning records and data are kept and analyzed to make calculated conservation decisions come harvest time.

We implore the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to recognize the exceptional conservation efforts and dedication exhibited by our state agencies and the communities they serve. The current framework strikes a balance between preserving Lake Sturgeon and allowing our cherished tradition to endure.

Listing the Lake Sturgeon as an endangered species in Wisconsin, particularly in the Fox Valley, could potentially result in the suspension or significant curtailment of the sturgeon spearing season. Such an outcome would not only impact the cultural fabric of our state but also harm the livelihoods of numerous spear fishermen and women, and local businesses that depend on this tradition for their economic well-being.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service engage in a collaborative dialogue with the Wisconsin DNR, local communities, and all relevant stakeholders to explore the positive work we have done to keep sturgeon numbers stronger than ever. We would never jeopardize the Lake Sturgeon's future as it is important to preserve one of Wisconsin's most sacred traditions.

In conclusion, we implore you to take into account the remarkable conservation efforts undertaken in Wisconsin and the unique cultural significance of sturgeon spearing when deliberating the status of the Lake Sturgeon. We ask that Wisconsin's Lake Sturgeon are exempt from the endangered species list. Together, we can ensure the continued existence of this magnificent species for generations to come. We are confident we can work together with other states and share our successes in hopes to better the population pockets around the country.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We remain enthusiastic that we can find a path forward that harmonizes the objectives of wildlife preservation and the preservation of our cherished traditions.

Sincerely,



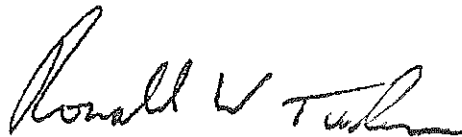
Rep. Ty Bodden
59th Assembly District



Sen. Dan Feyen
18th Senate District



Sen. Duey Stroebel
20th Senate District



Rep. Ron Tusler
3rd Assembly District



Rep. Jerry O'Connor
52nd Assembly District



Rep. Nate Gustafson
55th Assembly District



Sen. Rachael Cabral-Guevara
19th Senate District



Rep. Michael Schraa
53rd Assembly District



Sen. Joan Ballweg
14th Senate District



Sen. Robert Cowles
2nd Senate District



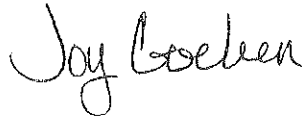
Rep. Paul Tittel
25th Assembly District



Rep. Dave Murphy
56th Assembly District



Rep. Alex Dallman
41st Assembly District




Rep. Joy Goeben
5th Assembly District



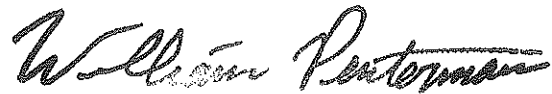
Sen. Cory Tomczyk
29th Senate District



Rep. Jeffrey Mursau
36th Assembly District



Rep. Rick Gundrum
58th Assembly District



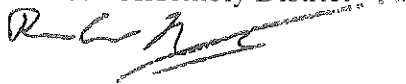
Rep. William Penterman
37th Assembly District



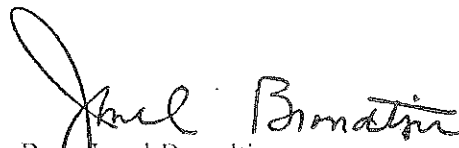
Rep. Rob Summerfield
67th Assembly District



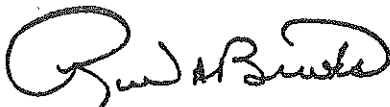
Rep. Clint Moses
29th Assembly District



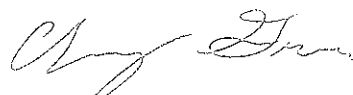
Rep. Dave Maxey
15th Assembly District



Rep. Janel Brandtjen
22nd Assembly District



Rep. Rob Brooks
60th Assembly District



Rep. Chanz Green
74th Assembly District



Rep. Angie Sapik
73rd Assembly District



Rep. Nik Rettinger
83rd Assembly District

CC: Martha Williams, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240