



Winnebago County

The Wave of the Future

DATE: October, 25, 2021
TO: Members of the Legislative Committee
FROM: County Executive Jon Doemel & Director Adam Breest
RE: State funding for Winnebago System navigational buoys

Background:

In order to provide safe navigation throughout the Winnebago System, Winnebago County provides many services to the system's users. This includes draw and lift bridge tenders, public boat launches, navigational buoys and other amenities. The Winnebago System accounts for about 17% of the inland fresh water in Wisconsin and is famous for anglers and water sport enthusiasts alike. Because of the rivers and shallow lakes, navigational buoys are essential to the safety of all users of the system. Currently, Winnebago County uses boat launch fees to fund the tens of thousands of dollars for buoy placement and maintenance. This leaves fewer resources to maintain and improve our assets.

Policy Discussion:

We are asking this committee to support state financial support to the multiple counties who provide navigational buoys. Under current practice, maintenance of these essential buoys falls to county boat launch users or property tax payers. Boats launched from private or municipal launches do not contribute to the buoy project. Additionally, the tourism generated by the system is not captured in an effective way to provide local dollars to fund the navigational buoys.

Current Policy Solution:

Earlier this month, State Senator Roger Roth and State Representative Rachael Cabral-Guevara were joined by area legislators to introduce legislation ([SB 544/AB 543](#)) to make the navigational buoys in the Winnebago System an eligible project for the recreational boat fund (RBF). This solution captures program revenue the Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) captures from boat registrations. The legislation does not guarantee Winnebago County will receive funding. Any funding application will have to be approved by the Wisconsin waterways commission. The funding could be competitive not only with our neighboring counties, but with other projects allowed under the RBF.

Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) will register in favor of the legislation.

Previous Committee Action:

The Parks and Recreation Committee voted 5-0 to support Senator Roger Roth's bill in regards to providing funding for the navigational buoys located within the Winnebago Lake System.

The Legislative Committee voted 8-1 (7 excused) to Support Senator Roger Roth's bill in regards to providing funding for the navigational buoys located within the Winnebago Lake System.

JON DOEMEL
COUNTY EXECUTIVE



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The County Board Requested Action:

We ask that the County Board support an advisory resolution that is broad in nature and not legislation specific so that we can negotiate the best policy outcome for Winnebago County and our neighboring counties. We request a motion to request legislation to fund navigational buoys in the Winnebago System.