



## Opinion Piece / Editorial

9 October 2018

On Election Day, November 6, 2018, voters in Wisconsin have an opportunity to support the health and future of our natural resources. The quality of natural resources impacts every single person in the state – via recreation, tourism industry, paper and logging industries, our heat and electricity, agriculture, hunting and fishing, the water we drink, swim and fish in, the food we eat and the air we breathe. Our economic vitality, personal health, well-being and quality of life depend on the health of our natural resources.

Managing Wisconsin's natural resources should not be a partisan issue. Historically they have been protected and carefully managed by individuals on both sides of the aisle. And historically, that protection has had extensive input from you, the public.

As the new, nonpartisan organization whose mission is to promote science-based natural resource management, *Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation (WGF)* recognizes the rich tradition Wisconsin has as the leader in natural resource management. Think of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Sigurd Olson, Gaylord Nelson and Warren Knowles. Our resource stewardship has been rooted in the power and reliability of science.

WGF believes public policy decisions must be informed by current science. Science is not just a collection of facts. It is a method - a framework for gathering knowledge. That framework supports continued testing and review, so we can be confident in using the most accurate and up to date information available. It's the best method for making decisions.

One timely example: consider flooding in Wisconsin in the recent past, with \$108 million in damage over the last month alone. Scientific information showed the importance of wetlands to slow the flow and serve as basins for excess water. As wetlands are reduced, damages rise.

It's critical to support scientific research in tackling important conservation issues such as CWD (chronic wasting disease) in our deer herd, protecting our drinking water and the air we breathe, and reducing impacts of extreme weather events.

Further, the best available science should be shared with the citizens of Wisconsin. We believe public officials should support open processes that provide Wisconsin's citizens good information and opportunity for input into decisions that affect our quality of life.



Voters can make the best choice for conservation by keeping the following question in mind before entering the voting booth: What is the candidates' actual record (or, in the case of challengers, their intent) on conservation issues? All will say they 'value the environment;' however, we voters must look at their records, and ask specific questions from them.

Decisions we make today affect our immediate health and well-being. They also determine the kind of Wisconsin our grandchildren will inherit. Before an election is the perfect time to ask candidates, "Where do you stand on using science in conservation issues?"

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