

Making Decisions

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to:

- identify controversial issues involving Wisconsin’s aquatic ecosystems
- describe how natural resources decisions are made in Wisconsin
- detail how they can be involved in natural resources decision making

METHOD: Students will brainstorm ideas together about natural resources controversies or [Hot Topics](#). Students will work in pairs to craft a resolution on how they would like to see a natural resources policy changed. Students will present their resolutions to each other, and, if the class finds a resolution compelling, introduce that resolution at the annual spring hearing.

MATERIALS: internet access during class, and/or internet accessibility after class for students to do research.

● See [Appendix J](#) for [Sample Resolutions](#) for each pair of students.

SETTING: Indoors

DURATION: Two 45-minute sessions if research and writing done outside of class

VOCABULARY: Natural Resources Board, Conservation Congress

STANDARDS:

Science: C 8.1, 8.2; F 8.10; G 8.5, 12.1, 12.5; H 8.1, 8.2, 12.1, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 12.7.

Environmental Education: A 8.1, 8.4, 8.5, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5; C 8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 12.2, 12.3; D 8.1, 8.4, 8.7, 8.8, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.7, 12.9.

Social Studies: C 8.3, 8.7, 8.8, 12.8, 12.9, 12.10.

Language Arts: F 8.1, 12.1.

BACKGROUND: State statutes define the Wisconsin Conservation Congress as the Natural Resources Board’s (NRB) official citizen advisory body on all natural resource issues of local and statewide significance. Wisconsin citizens elect delegates to serve on the Conservation Congress and help the NRB and DNR effectively manage the state’s natural resources for current and future generations. The Congress meets with local citizens to hear their

opinions about Wisconsin natural resource management, consults with local and statewide organizations, and works with organizations, educators and citizens to increase outdoor opportunities for all. The Congress further participates in the science and politics of decision making by considering all reasonable resolutions submitted to it and recommending to the NRB support or opposition to rule changes on natural resources management.

Citizens resolutions can be found under the Spring Hearings page of the Conservation Congress Web page: dnr.wi.gov, search for **“Spring Hearings.”** Some of the issues and suggestions are often controversial and involve a mix of science and compromise to solve.

OPENING: Have students suggest aquatic resource management issues that are currently in the local news. Begin keeping a class list of potential topics for resolutions.

MAIN ACTIVITY: Direct students to [How to Write a Resolution](#) and [Hot Topics](#) in their booklet. ● Hand out the [Sample Resolutions](#) from Appendix J. Divide the students into pairs and have each pair select a topic on which to write a resolution. Let students know the resolution will be a combination of the information they find on the issue and their own views on how current policy should change. This should not be merely a report, but an attempt to persuade the Conservation Congress that the author’s position is the correct one. In devising their resolutions, students should keep both science and politics in mind.

Students should be given time in class to decide on their issue and begin outlining possible places to get information on their topics. Most of the research will be done outside of class.

CLOSING: Students will give short presentations about their resolutions that include the reason for the needed policy change. If a pair has written a compelling resolution, encourage them to introduce it to the Conservation Congress at the annual spring hearing in April. If the resolution is supported in the county where the students introduced the resolution, students can track it as it moves through the approval process.



ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS: What is the function of the Natural Resources Board? How is this different than the function of the Conservation Congress? How do people become members of each?

ANSWERS: The Natural Resources Board makes policy decisions for the DNR. It is composed of members appointed by the governor. In the Conservation Congress, citizens propose and provide input on rule and law changes they

would like to see happen. Their recommendations are brought to the Natural Resources Board and the DNR. Anyone over 18 can be a member of the Conservation Congress.

EXTENSIONS:

Service Learning: Encourage students to attend the county's Conservation Congress hearing in April and introduce resolutions.

• If you have downloaded this booklet, please see the appendix that follows for additional materials.

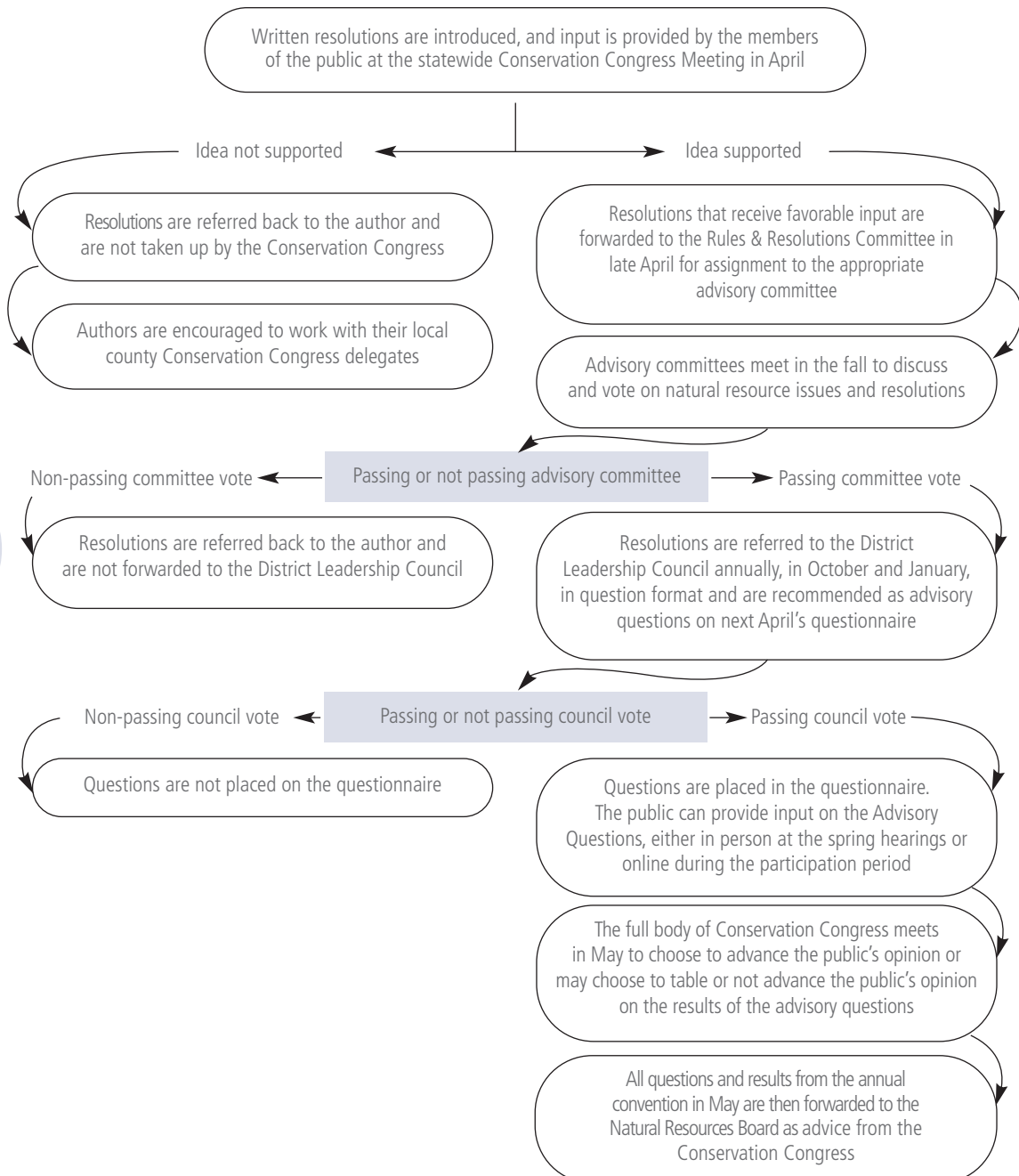
Making Decisions

Who is responsible for making sure that our fisheries stay healthy? We all are—through our daily actions and the power of our vote. We choose the legislators who create laws that affect natural resources. But who actually determines, for example, whether a bottled water business can be built at the headwaters of a trout stream? That would be the Natural Resources Board (NRB) based on input from DNR staff and citizens. The NRB makes policy decisions for the Department of Natural Resources. The governor appoints the board's seven members, whom the state Senate must approve. After hearing from scientists and citizens, the NRB members make environmental and natural resource decisions, within the confines of law.

Policy Process

The **Wisconsin Conservation Congress**, an independent citizen advisory body defined in state statutes, advises the NRB on natural resource issues. Wisconsin citizens elect delegates to serve on the Conservation Congress. You must be 18 years old to be a delegate or to vote for a delegate to the Congress, but people of any age may propose and provide input on rule changes. Hearings where these proposals are brought forth, occur the second Monday in April in each Wisconsin county every year. If you feel strongly about a natural resource issue, use Wisconsin's citizen input opportunities to help the NRB make a decision to present to legislators!

The Conservation Congress Resolution Process



PLEASE SEE APPENDIX J
Making Decisions:
Sample Resolutions



How to Write a Resolution

Each year the Conservation Congress accepts Resolutions from the public in each county regarding natural resource issues of statewide concern. The public introduces these resolutions during the Conservation Congress county meeting held annually in conjunction with the DNR Spring Fish and Wildlife Rules Hearings in April.

1. Resolution Content

In order for a resolution to be accepted for further consideration by the Conservation Congress and the public at the annual Conservation Congress county meeting, all resolutions introduced must meet the following requirements:

1. The concern must be of statewide impact.
2. The concern must be practical, achievable and reasonable.
3. The resolution must have a clear title.
4. The resolution must clearly define the concern.
5. Current state statutes and laws must be considered, with reasonable cause for change being presented.
6. The resolution must clearly suggest a solution to the concern and a description of further action desired.

2. Resolution Format

- Resolutions must total 250 words or less and be typed on one side of an 8 ½ x 11 sheet of white paper. No attachments or additional sheets will be accepted for the same resolution.
- The author's name, mailing address, county, telephone number and signature are required at the bottom of the resolution. An email address is optional and helpful to stay informed.

3. Resolution Presentation

- Only the individual author or designated representative may present the resolution within the county. The author or designated representative must be present at the time the resolution is introduced.
- No one may introduce more than two resolutions during the Congress portion of the Spring Hearings.
- Resolutions not meeting the above criteria and/or verbal resolutions will not be accepted.
- Provide the Congress County Chair with TWO COPIES of the resolution for submission at the beginning of the evening, one to be part of the official record and the other to be posted for public viewing.

- Individuals attending the meeting may provide input on the resolution being introduced within the county.

4. Sample Resolution

Title: Designating the morel as the state fungus (requires legislation)

The Problem: At present, Wisconsin does not have a designated state fungus.

The morel is important to many citizens; from the thousands of Wisconsin mushroom hunters that take to the woods to look for these edible wild mushrooms to the thousands of others that consume them and consider them a seasonal delicacy.

Morels typically grow in sandy soils near ash, aspen, elm and oak trees (usually dead or dying trees) and they require very specific temperatures, site and weather conditions to grow, so the quantity and time period that they are available is limited. Given the challenges associated with finding and harvesting these mushrooms, as well as the fluctuation in the number produced annually, the ability to locate and sell morels to other citizens provides an economic boost to successful hunters.

Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to designate the morel as the state fungus?

Name of Author: Chris Q. Public

Name of Organization (optional): Private Citizen

Address: W12345 State Road 6 City, State, Zip Code:
Hometown, Wisconsin 54321 Name of the County
Introducing In: _____ County

Telephone Number (including area code): 123-456-0789

Email (optional) CQP@gmail.com

*Resolutions introduced at each Spring Hearing are public documents under Wisconsin's Open Records law [ss. 19.31-19.39, Wis. Stats.] and will be posted online for the public to review. Any personally identifiable information will be available to the public but will only be used by the Department for administrative purposes.

4. DNR Rules Process

A lengthy internal process begins at this point that includes an impact analysis of the potential change, legal review, public hearings, a public comment period, review and approval by the Natural Resources Board, and finally, action by the Legislature, where any change is approved or rejected.

