**Sierra Club example budget hearing testimony**

**Use the statements below to inspire your personal testimony. Feel free to use direct quotes from the testimony below.**

**DNR Staffing and CAFO Permits**

I am here today to ask you to provide funding for 5 additional DNR positions to address water permits for CAFOs.

Part of your job as a legislator is to keep Wisconsin’s residents safe and make sure the clean waters Wisconsin is known for will be part of our future. In addition to the importance of safe drinking water, Wisconsin is known for our natural and recreational opportunities that are critical to our economy.

As you know, manure runoff from large factory farms has become a huge issue in our state, with over 50% of wells in some areas contaminated with water unsafe to drink. No one should turn on their water and have brown excrement flowing from their tap. The increasing rainfall events we are experiencing will only exacerbate runoff and water contamination.

The costs of contaminated water to our residents are simply too high. Not only is the water unsafe for family use, but they pay significant costs to monitor wells that once had safe drinking water. Bottled water for drinking and cooking cost families hundreds of dollars a year or more, but pale in comparison with the health care costs many pay from toxics exposure.

Currently, CAFOs pay $345/yr. for their permit which does not even cover its costs. An initial permit fee of $3200 (~ 50 cents/cow for an average CAFO) along with an annual fee of $660 (~ 10 cents/cow) hardly seems unreasonable, and would help protect our waters and our residents.

I urge you to fund the 5 additional staff the DNR needs to ensure CAFOs have proper permits and that they are appropriately monitored.

**Transportation**

I urge you to re-prioritize transportation spending so that it aligns with the needs of Wisconsinites.

Right now, our transportation system is broken. Our aging population is outliving their ability to drive, young people are leaving our state in search for communities with multi-modal transportation options, and people with disabilities who are unable to drive and those who cannot afford a car are cut off from opportunities. Our local roads are crumbing and our transit systems are struggling. Meanwhile, we have disproportionately invested money into highway expansion projects that make congestion worse, increasing pollution and, in many cases, segregating communities.

While a heated debate has been taking place around a gas tax increase, I encourage you to consider Wisconsin’s transportation spending priorities. In this state budget, I request that you do not enumerate any new highway expansion projects, increase public transportation funding by $36 million and increase local road funding by $40 million. I also urge you to maintain the $6 million increase to specialized transportation and paratransit, respectively, that was proposed in Governor Evers’s draft budget. You can build a transportation system that gets us where we need to go.

**Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund**

I am here to ask you to continue funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund that helps ensure future generations will have access to the places we love and value. This visionary plan that has enjoyed bipartisan support, benefits people in every district of our state and has helped protect many special places. Protecting our forests, prairies, hills and valleys, rivers and wetlands, and lakes also provide many additional environmental benefits.

Preservation of these lands and waters are critical to Wisconsin’s economy, generating $18 in consumer spending for outdoor recreation each year; an amount that is likely to grow. In addition, the Stewardship Fund provides support for Friends Groups and conservation organizations to improve facilities, construct recreation projects, and support restoration and other efforts that help attract people here.

The Stewardship Fund also leverages matching private funds, more than doubling the benefits of the state dollars spent on this program. It has helped fund added lands for the Ice Age Trail, protection of key natural areas and wetlands, purchase of additional county and other park and recreation lands, increased access to waterways for fishing and canoeing, and supported many other outdoor recreational opportunities.

As a popular program that receives support from 90% of Wisconsinites, I urge you to support reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for another 10 years, and ensure Wisconsin will continue to be a place people want to escape to.

**State Parks Funding**

Our state parks are one of our key resources that make Wisconsin special. It is critical that we have proper funding and staffing to ensure that our parks are well maintained and provide the image we want for our users and visitors. Having our parks well maintained and staffed with people who can provide assistance and support, is important in offering people a good experience that will inspire them to return.

Wisconsin’s residents fund our state parks so everyone can have access to nature and the outdoors. Having that access is critical to the well-being of children and adults, and has been shown is an important component of good physical and mental health.

Had we not had the foresight to preserve the lands we have for our state parks, we would not have many of the places that we treasure today. Our state parks offer access to all to appreciate the places that make Wisconsin special, and provide opportunities for recreation and enjoying nature and the outdoors that many people would not otherwise have.

Our parks lands are funded primarily by taxpayer dollars. The restoration of the $5 million that is being asked for in the state budget is a small price to pay to allow our taxpayers to enjoy the lands they have paid for, and can be paid for in good part by user fees. In addition, our state parks attract people for tourism and outdoor recreation that brings billions of additional dollars into our state annually.

As someone who has enjoyed a number of our state parks and wants to see them maintained and staffed, I urge you to restore the $5 million in funding for state parks for the next biennium.

**Clean Energy**

Wisconsin is lagging seriously behind other states on clean energy with only about 10% renewable energy, and it is costing us dearly. Each year, we send ~ $14 billion out of state to pay for fossil fuels. In addition, fossil fuel related industries and utilities create very few jobs in Wisconsin. Instead we have the potential for over 160,000 jobs in renewable energy according to a recent report from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy – more than doubling our current number of clean energy jobs.

Why continue this drain on our finances when instead our dollars could be used to stimulate Wisconsin’s economy? In addition, fossil fuels harm our economy through the pollution they cause and the damage they cause to people’s health and the environment. Tens of thousands of hours are lost from work each year due to toxic pollutants in the air, asthma rates are high in polluted areas, and the costs of health care tax people’s personal budgets.

Wisconsin can again be a leader on clean energy through adopting policies, practices and programs that reduce our costs for energy and create energy independence from locally sourced renewable energy. The proposal to create an Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy would help speed up that transition. There is tremendous potential with electrification of transportation and heating to transform Wisconsin’s economy and lead on innovation and renewable energy.

I ask that you include funding for an Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy in your budget. Let’s strengthen Wisconsin’s economy and lead again on clean energy.

**Lead in drinking water**

What if your own child or grandchild was exposed to something that would cause brain damage, reduce their IQ and quality of life, cause behavior problems, violence and learning disabilities, and possibly take away their future as a contributing member of society? What would you do?

Our children suffer enough challenges already without having to endure the damages of lead in water pipes that can leave them permanently disabled, and unable to lead a decent life, and potentially as a burden to society.

We do not allow our children to intentionally be placed in harm’s way, yet they endure those same threats and injury from excessive lead in water pipes, something we know how to deal with. We throw people in jail who inflict direct harm on children, yet look the other way when they are damaged by our passively ignoring lead. Some of our communities have worse lead problems that in Flint, Michigan where the harm caused is well known.

With all the calls for more funding for special education and health care, why wouldn’t we eliminate some of the need for those monies caused by the lead in drinking water that exacerbates those very problems.

It’s time to fully fund safe drinking water in this state and provide the $70 million (or more!) bonding authority to allow communities to make their drinking water safe. It’s the very least we can do for our children’s future.

**By the Numbers: What is Sierra Club asking for in Wisconsin’s state budget?**

**Water (DNR Staffing and CAFO Permits):**

* Funding for 5 additional staff the DNR needs to ensure CAFOs have proper permits and that they are appropriately monitored
* Support Governor Evers’s proposals to increase the Safe Drinking Water Loan Program by $40 million to assist in replacement of lead service lines and to include $25 million for contaminated sediment removal in the Great Lakes

**Transportation:**

* No new highway expansion enumerations
* $36 million increase to public transportation
* $40 million increase to local roads
* $6 million increase for specialized transportation

**Land Preservation:**

* Reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for another 10 years

**State Parks Funding:**

* Restore the $5 million general revenue for State Parks

**Clean Energy:**

* Designate $4 million for an Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy
* Continue to pursue clean energy development in Wisconsin