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Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 464

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members for holding this public hearing today on Assembly Bill (AB) 464. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you in support of this important legislation.

Wisconsin is home to some of the best game preserves in the country. The game birds produced in Wisconsin are sold around the United States. One of the challenges faced by game preserves is protecting their game birds from predators such as hawks and owls. While nets are used on the enclosures in which the game birds are raised, this alone is not enough to protect them. Predator birds can dive down and depress the netting far enough to harm the game birds, who often take flight out of fear when a predator dives on the enclosure.

Before diving on the enclosure, predator birds usually land on a post or elevated perch to observe their prey. Game preserves have been able to use this to their advantage by deploying pole traps to protect their game birds. A pole trap is a *non-lethal* trap placed on the top of a pole or other elevated perch that catches the leg or legs of a predator bird. These traps have a lead which allows the captured birds to safely come to rest on the ground. The captured birds are then able to be safely relocated away from the game preserve. These non-lethal traps are one of the most effective tools game preserves can use to protect their birds. Unfortunately, current restrictions to pole trap heights under Wisconsin law make these traps ineffective in our state.

Currently, federal regulations allow holders of a bird depredation permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to use pole traps at the maximum height of 10 feet. However, Wisconsin law is much more restrictive, only allowing pole traps at a maximum height of 3 feet. This height restriction makes pole traps essentially ineffective as predators will land on a higher point such as a fence post around the enclosure, which is much higher than 3 feet.

This legislation solves this problem by allowing holders of a valid US Fish and Wildlife Service bird depredation permit to set or operate a pole trap at a maximum height of 10 feet. This would bring Wisconsin in line with what is currently allowed under federal regulations and allow Wisconsin game preserves to better protect their birds.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 464 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.