



STATE SENATOR
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DISTRICT 30

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Audit Ordered on State Fish & Wildlife Account ***Despite \$25M Bail Out, DNR Account Meant to Benefit State Hunters & Anglers is in the Red***

MADISON, WI — The Joint Legislative Committee on Audit approved an audit of the state Fish and Wildlife Account, a fund meant to finance projects that benefit hunting and fishing in Wisconsin. Co-Chairs of the Committee, Sen. Eric Wimberger (R-Green Bay) and Rep. Robert Wittke (R-Wind Point) initiated the review after the Department of Natural Resources indicated the fund, despite a recent \$25 million bail out, would once again be in deficit.

“Across the board, hunters and anglers are concerned. These funds come from license fees & taxes on sporting goods and are supposed to be used on projects that benefit fishing and hunting across the state,” said Wimberger. “We need a closer look at DNR’s handling of these funds.”

[The audit](#), will analyze to what extent DNR expenses within the account were used for permitted purposes and the extent to which funds were used for activities that primarily benefited hunters and anglers, benefitted multiple users, or did not directly support hunting or fishing at all.

The last time an audit of the Fish and Wildlife Account was conducted was 2006, where auditors found \$1.6 million in expenditures that had no direct benefit to hunters or anglers. A 1998 audit found that \$11.6 million, or 23% of the fund, was spent on DNR’s overhead costs, leading the Legislature and Governor to cap the amount DNR can spend on administration.

The State’s most recent budget, the 2023-2025 Biennial Budget Act, assisted DNR in balancing the fund with a one-time transfer of \$25 million from the Forestry Account to the Fish and Wildlife Account.

The Fish and Wildlife Account is funded primarily from hunting and fishing user fees. [State law](#) requires DNR use these funds only “when it is exercising its responsibilities that are specific to the management of the fish and wildlife resources of this state” and “shall not be diverted for any other purpose.”

The committee also approved [an audit of the Department of Public Instruction](#)’s oversight of school district finances after it was recently found that years of financial mismanagement in Milwaukee, Wauwatosa and Monona went unchecked by the Department. See the full release [here](#).

Find more information on the hearings and view the full audit scopes [here](#).

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Senator Eric Wimberger represents the 30th Senate District, which includes parts of Brown, Oconto, and Marinette Counties.

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