

WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Brunsweler River Legislation Honoring Martin Hanson Approved By Bipartisan Vote in Assembly and Senate

Madison—On Tuesday the State Legislature designated the Brunsweler River as a State Wild River in honor of conservationist Martin Hanson. The ten mile designated segment of the Brunsweler River located in Ashland County within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest becomes the fourth wild river to be given protected status. Representative Gary Sherman (D-Port Wing) and Senator Bob Jauch (D-Poplar) authored the legislation.

“The purpose of this legislation is to preserve the Brunsweler River in its free-flowing condition and to protect it from building and expansion so that it can be sustained for many years into the future” stated Sherman.

This legislation reaffirms Wisconsin’s legacy of environmental responsibility and in doing so it honors one of Wisconsin’s most important environmental leaders, Martin Hanson. Before he passed away in October of 2007, one of Hanson’s last requests was to designate the Brunsweler a State Wild River and this Tuesday both the Assembly and the Senate recognized that request.

The two lawmakers also noted the importance of passage of the legislation during Superior Days, an annual lobbying event by citizens across northern Wisconsin. “Martin was the ultimate behind the scenes advocate constantly advocating for environmental policies and the timing of passage by both houses to coincide with the citizen grassroots lobbying activity is a tribute to the region,” said Jauch.

“This legislation is a tribute to Martin's legacy as well as an affirmation of our obligations to protect the unique waters of Wisconsin,” Jauch stated. “Martin was a trusted friend and advisor to Gaylord Nelson, Congressman Dave Obey, to Representative Gary Sherman, to me and a long list of state leaders. His achievements include protection of the Apostle Islands National lakeshore, the reintroduction of elk into the North Woods, and the creation of wild and scenic waterways. In a big way we honor him by the designation of the Brunsweler River as a wild river but in an important way we honor his legacy by specifying the designation be known as the ‘Martin Hanson Wild River.’”

“This bill serves as a confirmation of our stewardship responsibilities to the unique waters of the State of Wisconsin and as a small tribute to a man that served as a strong environmental leader during the last century. Hanson played an integral part in the environmental movement with other leaders like Gaylord Nelson and Aldo Leopold.” Sherman noted that, “if Gaylord Nelson was the father of the Apostle Islands Lakeshore, then Martin Hanson was the midwife.”

The Wild Rivers Program in Wisconsin served as a model for the National Wild Rivers program authored by Gaylord Nelson. The designation was established in 1965 to preserve Wisconsin rivers in a clean and natural state and to protect them from development so they can be preserved and enjoyed for generations

to come. “To say the least it is disappointing that we have not added additional rivers to this category of protected resources until now. It is about time,” stated Jauch.

The bill enjoys broad community support, both statewide and locally. The Town of Marengo on the Brunswailer and the Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited both passed resolutions in favor of the bill. Representative Sherman and Senator Jauch look forward to the Governor signing this important piece of legislation to make the Brunswailer the first protected river in forty-four years since the Pike, Popple and Pine Rivers were preserved in 1965. “It’s certainly a step in the right direction” Sherman added.

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