

Press Statement

Contact: Sen. Bob Jauch

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Designation of the Brunsweler River as a State Wild River

Today a bill I authored with Representative Gary Sherman designating portions of the Brunsweler River as a State Wild River passed out of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee and a public hearing on the bill was held in the Senate Environment Committee. 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.

For those who never met or didn't know of Martin, he was the modern day Aldo Leopold. He loved the land and lived every day of his life to preserve it. Martin's spirited advocacy for our wildlife and natural resources is noted in an endless list of public policy initiatives that protect our natural resources and enrich the quality of life for generations long into the future.

Sadly, in October Martin died on his property on the Brunsweler.

He 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 to be the "Martin Hanson Wild River."

The bill adds a portion of the Brunsweler River, which is a natural jewel in Ashland County, as a State wild river and it requires that the portion of the designated river be known as the "Martin Hanson Wild River." The Brunsweler was listed by the DNR as an outstanding resource water in 2006 and it will become the fourth river in Wisconsin and the first designated as such in 44 years.

The segment of the Brunsweler River designated includes more than a ten mile stretch of the river that is within the Chequamagon-Nicolet National Forest. The section touches very few private parcels and is truly a remote and beautiful resource.

Forty four years ago the State Legislature established the Wisconsin Wild Rivers Act and designated three unique bodies of water: the Pine, the Pike and the Popple as Wisconsin Wild Rivers. The intention was to afford the people of this state an opportunity to enjoy natural streams and preserve some rivers in a free flowing condition and to protect them from development.

To say the least it is disappointing that we have not added additional rivers to this category of protected resources. It is about time.

Six years ago the Washburn County Board began to pursue the idea of adding the Totogatic River which flows through Bayfield, Sawyer and Washburn County to the list of state wild rivers. In 2005 Governor Doyle included both the Totogatic and the Upper St Croix in as part of his "Conserve Wisconsin" environmental legislative initiative.

As you are aware, separate legislation offered by Representative Milroy and I will soon be introduced in both houses to designate the Totogatic River as a wild river.

In the process of working with representatives from concerned citizens, advocacy groups and the DNR, Martin contacted me to suggest adding the Brunswailer to the list of unique resources that should be designated and protected as a wild river.

Like so many of his powerful ideas to protect the land and the wildlife he loved, Martin passionately sought public support and successfully obtained support from local and county officials. Last summer in failing health Martin enthusiastically continued to encourage adoption of this designation. Tia Nelson and I traveled to Bayfield to meet with Martin and agreed to the final details of the sections of the river to be included in the bill.

In Wisconsin water defines our borders but more importantly describes our character. As a people we must remember that we are one with the water that nourishes our bodies and nurtures our souls. We must care for the water and be cautious about land use policies that can spoil these resources.

In the Big Top Chatauqua performance "Under the 30th Star" the concluding song begins with these words: "What shall we give our children to live on? What shall we give our children to dream by? Dig a deep garden, clear waters blue, for their children's children and their children too."

Like the Pine, the Pike and the Popple Rivers, the Brunswailer is remote, rugged and undeveloped. Its unique character deserves strong protections. It is not a body of water that should be exploited for personal profit but should be properly sheltered by public policy that affords its public protection and use for generations.

The Brunswailer is a gift. We have an obligation to protect it. The wild river legislation assures that we will be responsible stewards to this precious body of water. Martin never sought credit but through this legislation we will both fulfill a promise to protect this cherished tributary while paying tribute to an environmental legacy that enriches our lives.

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Press Release
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Brunsweler River Legislation Honoring Martin Hanson Receives Unanimous Bipartisan Approval In Assembly Natural Resources Committee

Madison—Representative Gary Sherman (D-Port Wing) and Senator Bob Jauch (D-Poplar) are pleased to announce that the Assembly Natural Resources Committee voted unanimously (15-0) today to name portions of the Brunsweler River a State Wild River. Portions of the Brunsweler River, located in Ashland County, will be known as the “Martin Hanson Wild River,” as a tribute to his environmental advocacy and his love of the Brunsweler. The Senate Environment Committee also held a public hearing on the legislation today.

“With today’s vote on Assembly Bill 7, we are one step closer to confirming our stewardship responsibilities in a way that pays tribute to one of Wisconsin’s most passionate environmental leaders,” said Sherman.

The segment of the Brunsweler River designated includes more than a ten mile stretch of the river that is within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The section touches very few private parcels and is truly a remote and beautiful resource.

The Wild Rivers Program in Wisconsin was the first of its kind in the nation and it served as the prototype for the National Wild Rivers program authored by Gaylord Nelson. The designation was established in 1965 to preserve Wisconsin rivers in a free flowing condition and to protect them from development. The Brunsweler is the first river to receive this designation since the Pike, Popple and Pine Rivers were added shortly after the passage of the initial legislation forty-four years ago. It is disappointing that we have waited this long to add additional rivers to this category of protected resources.

“For those who never met or didn’t know of Martin, he was a modern day Aldo Leopold. He loved the land and lived every day of his life to preserve it. Designating the Brunsweler a State Wild River was one of Martin’s last requests. Today the Assembly Natural Resources Committee honored that request.” stated Jauch.

Gaylord Nelson’s daughter Tia Nelson, an environmental leader in her own right, testified in favor of the bill. “All of my father’s accomplishments would not have been possible without the support of Martin Hanson,” noted Nelson.

The bill enjoys broad community support, both statewide and locally. The Town of Marengo on the Brunsweler and the Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited both passed resolutions in favor of the bill. Sherman and Jauch are optimistic the bill will be passed by the full Assembly soon.

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