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ALDERMAN, 10TH DISTRICT

# **DNR scale-back at State Fair sad, but no surprise**

**Statement of 10<sup>th</sup> District Alderman Michael J. Murphy  
June 22, 2017**

The Governor Walker-supported decision by the state Department of Natural Resources to eliminate popular programming at its visitor center during the Wisconsin State Fair is bad news for children and families. The long-held tradition of taking children and students to enjoy the DNR center's fishing clinics, children's play area, archery or other programs is no more.

For many kids growing up in Milwaukee, the DNR visitor center during the State Fair is the first exposure they have to learning more about Wisconsin's natural resources and the great outdoors. The number of state hunting permits taken out by residents is down, and it makes one wonder how we can nurture and educate future hunters (and nurture future permit/license revenues) by eliminating this important programming.

In my view this move at the State Fair is not a surprise, as the Walker administration has increasingly turned the DNR away from its traditional stewardship and education focus, to the detriment of average families in Milwaukee and those with modest means.

Another example: The DNR increase in permit fees for access and camping at state parks.

Raising the permit fees makes it more difficult for individuals and families of modest means to enjoy a hike or a few nights of camping in one of our amazing state parks. Our state parks should be enjoyed by all and anything that keeps our children from learning opportunities or from immersing themselves in these beautiful spaces has a negative impact on all of us.

One more example: The Governor's attempt to eliminate *Wisconsin Natural Resources*, the DNR magazine.

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The magazine survives, but the attempt to shut it down shows the administration's short-sightedness, in my opinion, as the publication is full of great information and educational articles about our natural resources and our incredible wealth of plants and animals. One could argue it is also a good marketing vehicle that spurs interest in hunting and fishing, as well as generating tourism to state parks and other state lands.

For the sake of thousands of children looking to learn about the natural world, I hope the DNR programs are restored at the visitor center during the State Fair. But if the cut-cut-cut trend from the Governor and his administration is any indication, that seems unlikely.

(NOTE: A portion of the State Fair Park grounds is located in the 10<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District).

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