



June 15, 2022

To: Members of the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board

Re: Approval of the 2022-32 Greater Prairie-Chicken Management Plan (Agenda item 4.E.)

On behalf of Wisconsin's Green Fire, thank you for the opportunity to offer our written support for the proposed Wisconsin Greater Prairie Chicken (GRPC) Management Plan. Our organization had the privilege of serving on the Advisory Team for this plan. We believe the management actions proposed in this plan are strongly supported by the current science for GRPC conservation and represent Wisconsin's best chance of maintaining this iconic wildlife species for future generations.

Interest in the GRPC in Wisconsin began in the 1920's with the involvement of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, a precursor to the WCD, the WDNR, and the NRB. This early investigation and subsequent research led to the beginnings of a grassland management program, a private/public effort that began with an initial land purchase in 1954. Your approval of the updated management plan is essential to a successful launch of a second century of prairie chicken conservation.

As indicated in the GRPC plan, broad land-use changes in Wisconsin have reduced suitable GRPC habitat to a small area of central Wisconsin near the Buena Vista, Paul Olson, and Leola Wildlife Areas. This plan focuses Department efforts on this core area and provides needed security for the remaining prairie chicken population.

Conservation is not free. We recognize that this plan requires a significant and continued investment in habitat protection and management. However, as any farmer knows you need to invest in your land to produce the needed crop yields. Similarly, the land investments called for in this plan are needed to produce the annual reproduction needed for the security of this unique and charismatic wildlife species. These investments will not only benefit prairie chickens but will help a host of declining grassland-dependent species, such as bobolinks and upland sandpipers. Further, the plan reduces erosion, improves water quality and soil health in central Wisconsin.

We thank you again for the opportunity to express Wisconsin's Green Fire's support for this plan and request your approval to help conserve Wisconsin's Greater Prairie-Chicken population.

Sincerely,

Jim Kier

Jim Kier
Advisory Team Member
Retired P. Chicken Biologist

Tom Hauge

Tom Hauge
Wildlife Work Group Co-chair
Retired Wildlife Program Director