

OPINIONS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

State park giveaway?

I enjoyed John Gurda's July 2 column regarding the downward spiral of an agency that once championed protection of the state's environment and preservation of our public lands ("The DNR's small-minded move," Crossroads).

As an historian, Gurda is unmatched in his consensus of what has happened within the Department of Natural Resources since the advent of conservative politics has invaded the agency's decision-making. One disagreement I have with Gurda is his statement that the public recreational property purchased by the state through the Knowles-Nelson program "will never see a 'no trespassing sign'" and "that land is our land and can be forever."

Unfortunately this is no longer the case as evidenced by Wisconsin Act 20 passed in 2013 by a conservative majority in the Legislature, which mandated the sale of at least 10,000 acres of DNR public property by June 2017.

Now, state policy is about to change again with the recent Natural Resources Board's decision to allow the DNR to amend the master plan for Kohler-Andrae State Park in Sheboygan County. The sole purpose of this move is to allow the DNR to give away several acres "within" the boundaries of this popular state park to the Kohler Company.

The company claims it needs the state park lands to accommodate its plan to build a new high-end golf course north of the park on its 247 acres of rare Lake Michigan forested and open sand dunes. The state seems determined to grease the wheels in giving Kohler a 99-year lease on publicly owned state park land and allow it to bulldoze the existing forest flat in order to build a maintenance garage and large parking lot.

You can be sure once Kohler's new elite golf course is built "no trespassing" signs will indeed be posted to keep park visitors out of their own public property. This precedence-setting public land giveaway to big business can only be seen as the start of a "state parks for sale" policy.

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