

## **DNR Secretary Bills Have Highly Successful Hearings**

By George Meyer, Executive Director

Assembly Bill 138, restoring the appointment authority for the DNR Secretary back to the Natural Resources Board, had a public hearing in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee on July 28<sup>th</sup>. One hundred and seventy three individuals representing seventy sports and environmental groups and unions testified in favor of the bill. Sixteen individuals, led by DNR Secretary Matt Frank, and virtually all representing business interests testified against the bill. The five-hour hearing heard legions of testimony about the concern about the lack of natural resource background of agency leaders, short terms of office for such leaders and the high degree of Governor's political interference currently taking place in resource management decision-making. Leading the testimony in favor of the proposal was Assembly bill lead author Rep. Spencer Black; Nina Leopold Bradley, daughter of Aldo Leopold, one of the creators of the Board appointed system; Herb Behnke, long time member of the Natural Resources Board and Jack Nissen, Wildlife Federation President.

Assembly Bill 138 and its counterpart Senate Bill 113 are cosponsored by a majority of the State Assembly and a majority of the State Senate. AB 138 will be voted on by the Assembly committee in early September

The Senate Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Senator Jim Holperin, held a public hearing on SB 113 on August 13<sup>th</sup>. Ninety-four individuals representing forty-eight sports and environmental groups and unions testified in favor of the bill. Six individuals, once again led by DNR Secretary Frank, and virtually all once again representing business interests, testified against the bill. The Senate hearing testimony mirrored the Assembly hearing testimony. The supporters were led by Senate lead author, Senator Bob Wirth; Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton and Jack Nissen, Wildlife Federation President.

The total numbers for the two hearings were two-hundred and sixty-seven in favor and twenty-two against with almost ninety groups in favor. The Senate Natural Resources Committee will also vote on the bill in early September.