

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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COMMITTEES:
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

BUDGET

SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Honorable Cathy Stepp
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

Dear Secretary Stepp,

I am writing in regard to the master planning process that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently conducting for the Badger Army Ammunition Plant (BAAP) property in Sauk County.

Having represented Sauk County in Congress since 1999, I have long had an interest in the issues surrounding this land, and was pleased to secure federal funds to support a facilitated community consensus process. That process brought together all stakeholders, from federal agencies to local government, tribal representatives and community organizations, who worked for many months to reach a consensus. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources played an active and important role in that process.

On March 28, 2001, the Badger Reuse Committee issued its consensus report which set out clear values and criteria. Among the values were:

- That the property be managed collaboratively and holistically as a single unit by those entities who take ownership.
- That the U.S. Army and/or the federal government complete the highest quality cleanup of the Badger property's contaminated land and water, and
- That Educational, Research and Recreational opportunities afforded by the Badger property's unique natural, agricultural, historical, and cultural resources be developed and made available to the public.

The plan provided that the "recreational activities should focus on Badger's natural and cultural features and values. . . . Activities should be low impact in nature and should be compatible with other uses and overall management goals."

The progress that has been made in cleaning up the BAAP property is extraordinary. Significant contamination from the explosives residue affected the buildings, land, and water and required great care and cooperation to safely remove and bring the land and water up to state and federal standards. The DNR has played a vital role in that process.

Thereafter, the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center and the State of Wisconsin requested parcels of BAAP land from the General Services Administration (GSA). As a part of the process, GSA, the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, and the Wisconsin DNR entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between anticipated future owners of the property. The MOU provided

that "Parties agree that the Badger Reuse Plan's values, criteria, and concepts will be considered the guiding principles for the future development, operation, and management of the premises."

Now, after 12 years, the vision of the Badger Reuse Committee is within reach.

As we approach the realization of the vision established over a decade ago, many are dismayed that the master planning process now includes use options that are not consistent with the Badger Reuse Plan.

The Wisconsin DNR deserves great credit for supporting the development of the Badger Reuse Committee's Reuse Plan and for working to establish recreational space on this extraordinary land. Its proximity to the Wisconsin River and Devil's Lake State Park provide special opportunities for enhanced recreational activities.

However, one of the three proposed use alternatives offered by the DNR and currently being considered would, in part, establish a shooting range and All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) trails on the property. Pursuing such high-impact uses would not be consistent with either the values or criteria outlined in the Badger Reuse Plan or the MOU.

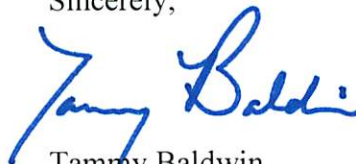
In a letter to the DNR, dated August 5, 2013, Acting Director Richard Muck of the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center outlined his concerns regarding motorized recreational trails and a shooting range on land parcels contiguous with their operations. He noted the incompatible aspects of these use alternatives and raised significant concern regarding an increase in noise levels and vehicular activity on land adjacent to grazing areas that may have a negative impact on their research.

In addition to those concerns, it is worth noting that millions of taxpayer dollars have been invested in environmental remediation of the property to remove explosives residue that threatens water quality and public safety. After more than a decade of clean-up work, it is inconceivable that any party to the Badger Reuse Plan or the MOU would propose reintroducing explosive or "ammunition" materials in any form to this extraordinary property.

As you evaluate alternatives, I hope that you will be guided by the values and criteria set forth in the Badger Reuse Plan and reject the idea of introducing a shooting range or ATV trails on this particular property because they are incompatible with the BAAP land.

Thank you for your careful consideration of the issues presented. Over the years, citizens and government officials have spent many thousands of hours working toward the realization of a vision. The BAAP lands present a rare opportunity for Wisconsin to enhance its natural resources and provide a special place for education, conservation, and recreation for many generations to come.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

From the files of
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