



Town of Mukwonago Waukesha County

W320 S8315 Beulah Road • Mukwonago, WI 53149
Phone: (262) 363-4555 • Fax: (262) 363-8377

April 6, 2011

Senator Mary Lazich
P O Box 7882
Room 8 South
Madison WI 53707-7882

Re: Rainbow Springs Golf Course

Dear Senator Lazich:

The Town Board and Plan Commission met on Wednesday, April 6, 2011 and discussed the Rainbow Springs Golf Course.

The Plan Commission voted unanimously to recommend not re-opening Rainbow Spring Golf Course based on the following reasons from the commissioners:

- Much effort went into preserving this land.
- The golf course operation is not consistent with our Smart Growth plan.
- At this late stage after state gets the financing and acquires the land, now to go back and even consider a change is not appropriate.
- It is not consistent with the Waukesha County Green Space Plan.
- It conflicts with the Mukwonago River Watershed Protection Plan prepared by SEWRPC with which the Planning Commission is implementing. A couple of the major items to address include removing the culverts restricting the river and that a natural buffer needs to be implemented to reduce unfiltered runoff into the river. The river is an outstanding water resource as defined by the DNR, and such protections are warranted.
- The area is in wetlands and floodplains, and a golf course would not be allowed under current land use and zoning ordinances.
- A taxpayer subsidized golf course is not desired. (Because it is on public property, the golf course would be exempt from property taxes.)
- There are other golf courses in the area.

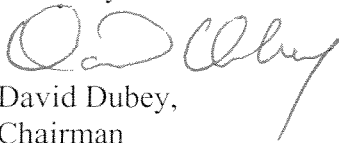
The Town Board voted unanimously to recommend not re-opening Rainbow Springs Golf Course based on the following reasons in addition to the Plan Commissions reasons:

- Funds came from Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund and it does not allow funds to be used for golf course operation. Making Rainbow Springs a one time exception is a bad precedent.
- There are already plans in place from the State of Wisconsin, County of Waukesha and Town of Mukwonago regarding this property, and it is too late in the process to change.

I have attached, as an addendum, copies of correspondence I have received from Friends of Mukwonago River, Mukwonago High School Golf Course Coaches and Athletic Director; Golf Course Owners of Wisconsin; Kettle Moraine Golf Course, Broadlands Golf Club and James McNelly, Aquatic Biologist.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



David Dubey,
Chairman
Town of Mukwonago

Cc: Scott Walker, Governor
Neal Kedzie, State Senator
Chris Kapenga, Representative
Cathy Stepp, DNR Secretary
Scott Gunderson, DNR executive assistant
Dan Vrakas, Waukesha County Executive
Dale Shaver, Waukesha County Director of Parks and Land Use
Gilbert Yerke, Waukesha County Supervisor
Pam Meyer, Waukesha County Supervisor
Mukwonago Town Board
Mukwonago Plan Commission

April 5, 2011

**Mukwonago Joint Planning Commission
And Town Board**

Discussion and Recommendation to the State regarding Rainbow Springs Golf Course

Letter to the Commission and Board.

Since there will be no Public Forum to discuss this project I was asked to bring the Commission and Board up to date on activities related to the States ownership and possible plans for the Rainbow Springs Golf Course.

From the time the State of Wisconsin purchased the Rainbow Springs property, several groups have been in contact with the DNR, State Senators and State Representatives in keeping the course open. This has been on going for over two years. As recently as Monday, April 4th, the DNR held a meeting discussing contingency plans for the development of keeping the course open as a part of the State Park.

Reasons for keeping the golf course open:

1. The DNR and SEWRPC sites the Mukwonago River as one of the most "pristine" waters and home to numerous endangered species in the State of Wisconsin. The Golf Course has been part of that watershed since 1962, so keeping the course in play, has not and does not hurt the Mukwonago River.
2. The State's ownership now guarantees no Housing or Condo development on the river.
3. The State's ownership guarantees that the fertilizers and maintenance of the course will continue to be ecologically friendly to the watershed. The same way they oversee the State owned Peninsula State Golf Course in Door County, which runs along the waters of Green Bay.
4. The DNR has contingency plans to increase shoreline vegetation, burn and shoreline protection areas along the Mukwonago River in connection with the lay of the current Golf Course.
5. The loss of this course has had a major impact on the Mukwonago High School Men's and Women's Golf Teams in financial as well as in participation numbers. This also affects the schools summer golf programs that provided play for hundreds of local kids. The surrounding courses were not interested in providing the needs of the program until a negative article was recently printed in the Milwaukee Journal. The only course to help was John Freeman at Edgewood GC in Big Bend, at double the cost and the Spring Men's program was reduced from 40 players to 15. This will have similar results on the Women's Team this August.
6. The loss of the course has resulted in the loss of 45 local jobs as well as start up jobs for our local high school students.

7. There is a loss of revenue to local businesses that supply and support the operation of the course, as well as the loss of revenue (gas stations, restaurants, ect.) brought into the area by the 20,000 -25,000 rounds of golf played annually at Rainbow Springs.
8. The State of Wisconsin is seriously looking at developing the property as a multi-use destination where visitors could, hike, fish, camp, hunt and **golf**. Bringing more visitors and revenue to the Mukwonago area.

We understand Senator Lazich has spoken with Chairman Dubey as to her views and intentions of keeping the course in operation as well as the petition of several hundred local citizens requesting the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this information, prior to making your recommendation to the State, on what to do with the Rainbow Springs Golf Course.

Sincerely:

Bob Anderson – Mukwonago Men’s Varsity Golf Coach
Nick Movrich - Assistant Varsity Golf Coach
Jay Christianson – Mukwonago Women’s Varsity Golf Coach
Robert Sildorf – Golf Course Superintendent
Robert Groh – GSI
Andy Trudell – Athletic Director Mukwonago High School
Jeff Voelkel – President Mukwonago Booster Club



Kettle Moraine

GOLF CLUB

Dear Senator Lazich,

April 1, 2011

Senator Mary Lazich
Room 8 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

This letter is in regards to the proposed bill to keep Rainbow Springs Golf Course open.

The March 30, 2011 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article, written by Lee Bergquist, indicated that one of the main concerns was the loss of use of the golf courses by the Mukwonago School District. The statement in the article that other golf courses in the area would not tolerate so much playing pressure from students is untrue. In fact, here at Kettle Moraine Golf Club we have offered the use of our course to the Mukwonago Golf Team but were turned down. I know of at least two other golf courses within 10 miles of the high school that would also be interested in hosting the team. The golf team is currently playing at Edgewood Golf Course in Big Bend so they have obviously found a new home course. I'm sure that there could be some additional fees involved in hosting the golf team but we would be happy to help them organize a fundraising event to cover the additional cost if they decided to call Kettle Moraine Golf Club home. We also run a junior golf program here that has plenty of room for new students. The program includes golf instruction by a PGA Golf Professional as well as access to the golf course at little or no cost to the students.

Before deciding to keep the golf courses at Rainbow Springs open I would also recommend that the condition of the golf courses, facilities, and equipment be taken into consideration. It is our understanding that the irrigation system was not winterized properly and needs a new pump, golf carts are not owned, and most of the other equipment and facilities are in poor repair. It could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars just to get the course up and running properly.

Lastly, an open bidding process would seem to make sense if a management team is being considered to run the course for the state in the future. To our knowledge the former owner leased the property from the state for \$1 per year for the past two years. This arrangement doesn't seem to be in the best interest of the taxpayers and shouldn't be allowed to continue.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue from a local golf course owner's perspective.

Sincerely,


Arthur G. Lyle, Owner

cc: Scott Walker, Governor
cc: Neal Kedzie, State Senator
cc: Stephen Nass, State Assemblyman
cc: Andy Trudell, Mukwonago Athletic Director
cc: Bob Anderson, Mukwonago Golf Coach
cc: David Dubey, Mukwonago Town Chairperson
cc: Lee Bergquist, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

April 1, 2011

Senator Mary Lazich
Room 8 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707



Dear Senator Lazich,

I am writing in response to the proposed amendment regarding Rainbow Springs golf course.

The March 30, 2011 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article, written by Lee Bergquist, indicated that one of the main concerns was the loss of use of the golf courses by the Mukwonago School District. The statement in the article that other golf courses in the area would not tolerate so much playing pressure from students is untrue. I have offered the use of our course to the Mukwonago Golf Team in the past at very reasonable rates but was always turned down. I thought it would be a good fit since we are located only 8 miles from the high school and have many students and some former staff members as employees. I even offered to help the team raise money to cover the costs with a golf fundraiser. The golf team is currently playing at Edgewood Golf Course in Big Bend so they have obviously found a new home course.

I run a large junior golf program here at Broadlands that has plenty of room for new students. The program includes golf instruction by a PGA Golf Professional and high school golf coaches as well as access to the golf course at little or no cost to the students. We even supply golf clubs and have flexible scheduling.

Before deciding to keep the golf courses at Rainbow Springs open I would also recommend that the condition of the golf courses, facilities, and equipment be taken into consideration. It is our understanding that the irrigation system was not winterized properly and needs a new pump, golf carts are not owned, and most of the other equipment and facilities are in poor repair. It could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars just to get the course up and running properly.

Lastly, an open bidding process would seem to make sense if a management team is being considered to run the course for the state in the future. To our knowledge the former owner leased the property from the state for \$1 per year for the past two years. This arrangement doesn't seem to be in the best interest of the taxpayers and shouldn't be allowed to continue.


Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue from a local golf course owner's perspective.

Sincerely,


Andy Spaulding, Managing Member – Broadlands Golf Club, LLC

cc: Scott Walker, Governor
cc: Neal Kedzie, State Senator
cc: Chris Kapenga, State Assemblyman
cc: Andy Trudell, Mukwonago Athletic Director
cc: Bob Anderson, Mukwonago Golf Coach
cc: David Dubey, Mukwonago Town Chairperson
cc: Lee Bergquist, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

GCOW

Golf Course Owners of  Wisconsin

Dear Senator Mary Lazich,

I would like to respond to your comments in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on March 30, 2011 regarding your interest in having Rainbow Springs re-open as a golf course. We strongly discourage any legislation directed at re-opening the property as a golf course.

Some facts about the state of golf that the GCOW would like to share with you:

- There are more than 500 golf courses in the state of Wisconsin
- There are more than 30 golf courses in Waukesha County alone
- The market is saturated, which forces owners to often discount their product, which causes courses' revenue to drop and perhaps ultimately close.
- We do NOT need more courses in the state and the closing of courses will level out the supply and demand scenario.

Some facts pertaining to Rainbow Springs that the GCOW would like to share with you:

- Rainbow Springs closed because even with severely discounted rates the past few years, they still did not get enough people playing to generate needed revenue. This proves the point of market saturation of golf courses!
- The owners at Rainbow Springs did not purchase new equipment or maintain the equipment and facilities well during the past 3 seasons since they knew that the course would close after 2010.
- To reopen the course, it will most likely cost hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars to fix the irrigation system, repair the buildings and facilities, and purchase and repair the equipment and golf carts.
- In addition, the golf course itself has not been maintained properly and is in need of many maintenance projects. Startup costs alone will be prohibitive for any group running the course.
- The leagues and outings that played at Rainbow Springs in the past have already been scheduled at other area facilities.

No golfers or juniors will go unserved!

As for the comments by Andy Trudell, Assistant Principal of Mukwonago High School, that "other courses in the area would not tolerate so much playing pressure from students" is simply inaccurate.

There are several courses in the area that have already offered to host area high school golf teams. The misconception that golfers of all ages, most importantly junior golfers, will have no place to play now that Rainbow Springs has closed is simply inaccurate.

Several area golf courses are anxious to serve junior golfers, high school teams, junior golf associations, etc. Numerous courses in Waukesha County have already made contact with the schools, administration, etc to offer their courses to any junior or high school programs. Remember there are more than 30 golf courses in Waukesha County alone. No person will be without a course to play!

In fact, the Mukwonago High School Boys' Varsity, Junior Varsity and Girls' golf teams are already committed to playing at Edgewood Golf Course this year.

Some questions the GCOW have for you:

- With more than 30 courses in Waukesha County, and more than 500 courses in the state, this is not a market that goes un-served, so why spend time, effort and taxpayer dollars on opening up one specific golf course?

- How can the state consider reopening a course when the state is operating with a huge deficit? We do not need to use tax dollars to subsidize another entity that competes with private business.
- Why would Waukesha County, and the State, want to do this and what are the budget implications?
- If you start here, what other businesses that have closed, or future golf courses will the state try to come in and purchase/lease? Where do you draw the line in private enterprise and the government again getting involved in the private sector?
- What would groups like Ducks Unlimited, etc that have received NAWCA grants as part of the Mukwonago-Fox River Watershed Initiative do if this acreage would be re-opened as a golf course?

Some facts and unfair advantages of government-run golf courses

In reference to your proposed legislation to allow a private party to "lease" the operations from the state, this brings up even more unfair practices for current privately-owned courses. Consider these benefits that a leasee could have over a private owner.

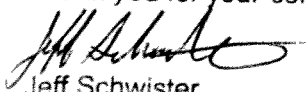
- Publicly held golf courses do not pay school or property taxes. Privately held golf courses do.
- In areas where a public water supply is available, oftentimes the private sector golf courses will pay for their water while the public golf courses will not – which is at taxpayers expense.
- Publicly held golf courses have access to better and cheaper employee benefit packages at taxpayers expense.
- Publicly held golf courses have access to State or Federal grants, and low or zero interest loans to fund improvements at taxpayer's expense.
- Publicly held golf courses will often offer substantially discounted rates for residents who might otherwise use some of the privately held golf courses in the area. Remember, these residents live in the same community as the tax paying private golf courses, yet given the highly discounted rates they enjoy at the publicly held facility, they will not frequent the privately held facility as much or at all.
- Evidence exists suggesting that some publicly held golf courses are losing money and those losses are being covered by taxpayers. Included on that list of taxpayers are the privately held golf courses. So the privately held golf courses of the area are actually **SUBSIDIZING** their competition!

Not only do we NOT need to re-open or build new golf courses, we certainly do NOT need to have any government entity own a course and put more burden onto the taxpayers of Waukesha County.

I think it is time for people to realize that the golf industry is saturated and that the golf course boom of the 1990s has yielded a situation where there are too many courses for the demand of the consumers. Recent studies by the National Golf Foundation have shown that roughly 8% of people are avid golfers and there is a wide variety of all types of golf courses to serve this small percentage of people.

Maintaining the natural beauty of the area however, via the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund and continuing with the plan to use the land for outdoor-based recreation, hunting, hiking and fishing, is a wise choice that will benefit far more people.

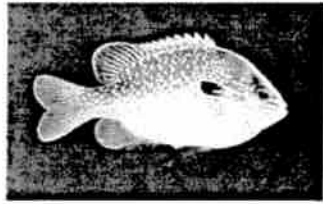
Thank you for your consideration.



Jeff Schwister
 Executive Director
 Golf Course Owners of Wisconsin (GCOW)
 11350 W. Theo Trecker Way
 West Allis, WI 53214
 Office - (414) 443-3568
 FAX - (414) 443-0817
jeffs@gcow.org

CC: Governor Scott Walker, Senator Neal Kedzie, County Executive Dan Vrakas, State Assemblyman Chris Kapenga, State Assemblyman Scott Gunderson, Rep. Dan Knodl, Andy Trudell, David Dubey, Nick Movrich

Friends of the Mukwonago River



Longear Sunfish
(*Lepomis megalotis*)

P.O. Box 21
Eagle, WI 53119

April 6, 2011

Honorable Members of the Town of Mukwonago Planning Commission and Town Board
W320 S8315 Beulah Road
Mukwonago, WI 53149

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for placing the issue of the future of the Rainbow Springs property (now known as the Mukwonago River Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest) on your Planning Commission agenda for this evening. We understand there will be no public comment opportunity on that agenda, but we wanted to be sure you had all of the information on this issue before you consider it and potentially make a decision.

As you likely remember, the Rainbow Springs property, half of which lies in the Town of Mukwonago and half in the Town of East Troy in Walworth County, was acquired by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in 2008 for the purposes of ecological restoration and to provide nature-based recreational and educational opportunities for the general public. This action, which the Friends supported wholeheartedly and indeed had advocated for years, necessarily meant that historic uses of the property, including the two golf courses, would cease. As part of the deal between the DNR and the former owners, the Fekers, an arrangement was made to allow the Fekers to run the golf course for two years before its operation would cease and the Department would begin active restoration of the golf course area of the property, which lies immediately adjacent to the Mukwonago River as it passes through the property.

It bears mention here that the golf course's construction decades ago and its ongoing operation since have been a detriment to water quality, aquatic habitat, wetland function, proper water flow through the area, and fish and recreational passage. The golf course lies in a low area that is within the floodplain and thus it floods regularly. Bridges and culverts that would not be legal to build today prevent paddlers from passing easily through the area. The DNR and partners like Ducks Unlimited have worked in the last 3 years to fundraise for the expenses that restoration will entail. Clearly, the restoration of the golf course area of this property has been a top priority since the deal to acquire the land for public purposes was first conceived.

As you may or may not know, recently, a group of people with long-term ties to the Rainbow Springs golf course have expressed to the DNR and state decision-makers a desire to see the golf courses allowed to continue in existence. The attached news articles provide more detail on this.

DNR leaders from Madison and our area held a public forum in March at the Parkview Middle School where people with an interest in the future of the Mukwonago River unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest were asked to express their feelings about what the future for that property should look like. Incidentally, the DNR's invitations to that meeting (also attached) and the DNR's prepared information for that meeting made no mention whatsoever of the possibility of continuing the property's golf courses as one possible future scenario. Regardless, many in attendance (41%, according to DNR—see the attached summary of the comments from the public at that meeting) were in favor of the golf course idea. According to that same DNR information, however, over 56% of comments (from 187 people—a significant majority) advocated a natural future for the property.

The Friends of the Mukwonago River believe that the Mukwonago River Unit's future should be as has always been the plan: restoration of the Mukwonago River, surrounding wetlands, and the river's floodplain for the benefit of water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and nature-based recreation opportunities for the general public. Now that the 2-year arrangement between the DNR and the Fekers has come to an end, the golf course must go and the ultimate purpose for which the property was purchased must advance.

Conservation groups including the Waukesha County Conservation Alliance, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, and Ducks Unlimited share our position in opposition to the further use of this property for golf and support its restoration and opening for passive recreational enjoyment, hunting, and fishing.

Many other questions arise around the notion that the golf course should be allowed to continue which you may also want to consider. The change would require a modification to state law to provide a one-time exception to a long-time ban on the use of state Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Funds for golf courses. That very funding that allowed the purchase of the property in the first place could be threatened. We also understand that the significant funding that the DNR and partners like Ducks Unlimited have provisionally raised through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to help pay for ecological restoration in the golf course / Mukwonago River area of the property is threatened should any moves be made to allow the continued use of the golf course. The Town may also wish to consider whether property taxes could be levied against the property to properly cover needed services if the golf courses were allowed to continue in use as a private business operated on state-owned land.

We hope this provides you with additional information which will be helpful to you as you assess the issue and decide whether to take any action at this time as the Town. Thank you for your consideration of the issue and of our position on it.

Sincerely,

Ezra Meyer
President, Friends of the Mukwonago River

Summary of Public Comments - Mukwonago River Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest

Public comment period: March 1 – March 14, 2011

Public meeting: March 10, 2011

Comments received:

On-line comments	115
Email comments	77
Written comments	187
TOTAL	332

Petitions received:

Rainbow Springs Golf Course - support to retain course	653 signatures
Waukesha Co. Snowmobile Assoc. - support for trail system	14 clubs, >12 signatures

Comment Summary

Primary Comment	# of Comments	Percentage
Retain Golf Course	136	41.0%
Nature Based Recreation (hiking, hunting, camping, etc.)	135	40.7%
Conservation Restoration (limited recreation)	52	15.7%
Motorized Recreation	9	2.7%

Recurring public comment themes:

- Because of the size of the Unit, the golf course and other recreational activities can co-exist with space and time separation.
- Economic impacts will be larger with an open golf course.
- The stewardship legislation is clear that a golf course is not an allowable purchase.
- The DNR Board action was clear on the long term intent and direction of the Unit.

Dear Town Board and Plan Commission Members:

As a citizen of the area for the past 36 years and an aquatic biologist and recently retired natural resources professional, I have closely followed the Mukwonago River preservation discussions. A recent article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Senator Mary Lazich's proposes to introduce legislation to continue golf course operations on the Department of Natural Resources Mukwonago River Unit of Kettle Moraine State Forest. This proposal is in conflict with Town and County plans and wise stewardship of the Mukwonago River. I am opposed to any specific legislation proposing continued golf course operations and encourage the Town Board and Plan Commission members to consider the following information on this valuable waterway:

- The Mukwonago River has the largest number of endangered and threatened plant and animal species of any waterway in Wisconsin. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has classified this river as a natural area of statewide significance due to the presence of these plants and animals. While these endangered and threatened species have persisted during the period of golf course operations the removal of the course and its pesticides and fertilizer would certainly enhance the biological status and water quality of the river and downstream Lower Phantom Lake.
- The Mukwonago River area has been identified by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission as a significant groundwater aquifer recharge basin for the Fox River Valley. Southeastern Wisconsin has numerous instances of shallow water table depletions and deep aquifer issues with radium. Waukesha, New Berlin, Mukwonago all have had elevated radium in their deep wells. All three of these municipalities have sought additional shallow ground water sources. Continuation of the golf course operations does not enhance either the recharge of ground water or improve the shallow aquifer water quality.
- The Town of Mukwonago was recently ranked number one by Milwaukee Magazine as a desirable place to live. Chairman Dubey attributed that ranking to the rural nature of the Town and the natural resources availability. The Town's recently completed master plan and Smart Growth Plans, developed with extensive public input, have identified the Mukwonago River as a resource area meriting additional land use protection. Recent Town Board decisions have reflected protection of the Mukwonago River. Continuation of a golf course is contrary to that direction.
- Waukesha County's Park and Open Space Plan evaluated the need for intensive and passive recreation areas. A golf course fits in the classification of intensive. Waukesha County identified a goal of establishing a Greenway Corridor along the Mukwonago River to enhance water quality and to promote passive outdoor recreational activities similar to those allowed on a Department of Natural Resources State Forest area. Waukesha County's plan did assess the availability and need for additional private and public golf courses. The County plan did not call for the continuation of a golf course on the Mukwonago River. There are two other nearby courses that could serve the community golfing needs. Comments in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel attributed to school representative Andy Trudell indicated the discontinuation of golfing at the Mukwonago River would result in additional cost to the school of \$3500. The same article also indicated that a substantial number of students participate in golf at the Mukwonago River. Based on the numbers in the article the cost would be approximately \$5 per student. These additional costs do not seem to be excessive in a sport like golf.
- The purchase of the former Rainbow Springs property was funded using Stewardship Program funding. This funding source does not allow for purchasing or developing lands for activities such as golf. These funds are to support passive outdoor recreation such as camping, fishing, hiking, hunting, and nature based traditional recreation. Changing state law to exempt a specific land purchase and allow golfing is contrary to the purpose of state law, especially when the proposal is contrary to the intent of the recently adopted Town and County plans. Both plans specified passive outdoor recreation for this area.

Thank you for considering this input.

Sincerely,

James L. McNelly

W312 S6510 Willow Spring Drive, Mukwonago, WI 53149