

Besadny blasts forest sale

By Don L. Johnson

Outdoor writer

Wausau — Federal plans to "privatize" public lands were criticized sharply by the top administrator of the State Department of Natural Resources on Friday.

"By God, I think it's crazy for the federal government to say, 'We're going to sell this, we're going to peddle that,'" said DNR Secretary Carroll D. Besadny at the annual meeting of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.

"The DNR and I will stand firmly and strongly on the side of keeping public land public," he told the 200 loudly applauding delegates.

He added that he would not oppose sale of small parcels that did not fit a management scheme, but would lead a fight against any proposals to sell key

parcels in federal forests or any federal lands.

In May, The Milwaukee Sentinel published a five-part series on the Reagan administration's plan to sell as much as 80% of national forestland to pay off part of the interest on the national debt.

Budget cuts already have caused closing of the Genoa and Lake Mills federal fish hatcheries, Besadny pointed out.

The DNR recently took over the Lake Mills facility, where it will use Great Lakes trout and salmon stamp revenue to rear salmon for Lake Michigan, he said.

Continuing a sharp attack on the US Department of Interior, Besadny also said he would invite Gov. Earl and Conservation Congress Chairman Francis (Bill) Murphy to accompany him to Washington, D.C., for a showdown on Wisconsin's waterfowl hunting regulations.

Complaining that Interior Secretary James G. Watt never answers his letters, Besadny said, "I'm fed up with them dinking around with the goose quotas."

Wisconsin waterfowl hunters were outraged last fall, when federal authorities cut the state's Canada goose quota to 18,000 while Illinois, with fewer hunters, was allotted 27,000.

Besadny also told the delegates that his department would continue vigorous efforts to protect surface ground water from pollution of any kind. Although he was concerned last year about the threat of acid rain, "now I'm afraid," he said.

Composed of delegates from each county of the state, the Conservation Congress is a citizen advisory body that meets annually to vote on fish and game rule proposals and other matters to come before the Natural Resources Board.