

Adam N. Payne to Serve as DNR Secretary

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced his appointment of Adam N. Payne to serve as secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) effective Jan. 3, 2022. The appointment fills the vacancy created by former Secretary Preston D. Cole's retirement.



“Adam has deep Wisconsin roots and understands that our vast and valuable resources—from our waterways to our farmlands—are core to who we are as a people and a state,” said Gov. Evers. “He is an outdoorsman, a conservationist, and has been a strong, successful leader for Sheboygan County. I know he will bring that same dedication and spirit of service to this role as secretary.”

Payne currently serves as the county administrator for Sheboygan County, a position he has held for more than two decades. As county administrator, Payne has served as the chief administrative officer, coordinating and directing countywide administrative and management functions, initiating program and policy changes, working with state government for the betterment of the county, and leading Sheboygan County's annual budget development process. Prior to serving as county administrator, Payne was the executive director of the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association and served for five years at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection from 1990 to 1995, including as the director of the Farmland Preservation Program.

“It is an honor to accept Gov. Evers' appointment to serve as Secretary of the DNR,” said Payne. “I have always had a passion for protecting and enhancing our natural resources and am an avid outdoorsman. I look forward to working with a strong and diverse team of DNR staff, the Board and its many partners and stakeholders to problem-solve, protect, and enhance our natural resources for people today and for generations to come.”

Payne is from Plymouth, where he raised his family and as a boy, worked on his grandmother's farm. Originally from Stevens Point, Payne grew up learning how to fish, trap,

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and hunt from his father along the Wisconsin River, and as an active outdoorsman to this day, Payne understands the importance of protecting Wisconsin's natural resources for generations to come. During his time as county administrator, Payne led the County through two major conservation projects, including cleaning up the Sheboygan River and Harbor and purchasing and preserving the Amsterdam Dunes, which encompasses 328 acres of undeveloped shoreline along Lake Michigan.

Payne has bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Communications and Urban and Regional Planning, respectively.