

Oct. 28, 2022

Greetings, Wisconsin educators and students!

I hope this letter finds you safe, healthy, and that the school year is off to a great start. I am writing to you today because each year I send a letter inviting Wisconsin educators, students, and staff asking for help decorating the tree that is displayed in the Wisconsin State Capitol building during the holidays—and this year is no different! Kathy and I are hoping we can count on your help again this year to bring your brilliant ideas, creativity, and inspiration to the Capitol this season.

Each year, the Capitol's Holiday Tree is filled with handmade ornaments from kids, students, and families from every corner of our state, transforming into the centerpiece of holiday celebrations at our state's Capitol building. I am extending a special invitation to your school, students, and families to help contribute handmade ornaments highlighting how Wisconsin's vast and valuable waterways have influenced you, your families and community, and our entire state.

In Wisconsin, we pride ourselves on our state's natural resources, including our fresh waters—and conservation and preservation are part of our DNA as Wisconsinites. Boasting more than 15,000 freshwater lakes, 84,000 miles of rivers and streams, more than 800 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, and millions of acres of wetlands, Wisconsin's waters have played a critical role in our state's history and our traditions for centuries. From the first Indigenous people who hunted and gathered in our freshwater sources before Wisconsin became a state, to our farmers who have been the backbone of our economy for generations, to our proud maritime and shipbuilding history, to our outdoor recreators and anglers hoping to hook one of our mammoth Lake Sturgeon and Muskies, water has always been essential for our way of life here in Wisconsin. So, when it comes to our waterways, we've got a lot to celebrate—and that means we have a lot to protect, too!

That is why I am excited for you to be among the first to know that I am announcing “Wisconsin Waters” as the theme for our 2022 Capitol Holiday Tree that will displayed in the Wisconsin State Capitol Rotunda.

Kathy and I and our kids have lived all across Wisconsin from Plymouth to Oshkosh to Tomah and communities in between, so we know how important our waters are to Wisconsinites in every corner of our state. Kathy and I went to kindergarten together in Sheboygan County near Freshwater Surfing Capital of the World on Lake Michigan. Now, in Madison, we live at the Executive Residence on Lake Mendota where divers recently discovered a 3,000-year-old canoe used by Indigenous peoples now thousands of years ago. What a great reminder of the deep, rich history our Wisconsin waterways hold!

We know Wisconsin waters are an important part of our state's proud history and traditions—but water is an important part of our future, too, and that is why we want to hear from you about what Wisconsin waters mean to *you*. Whether you live in a coastal community on our Great Lakes shoreline, in the Coulee Region along the mighty Mississippi River, or near a beach where you spend time with friends and family in the summer, as Wisconsinites, water plays a big role in each of our lives. The ornaments you create could depict the freshwater wildlife that calls our waterways home, Wisconsin's rich maritime history, mysterious shipwrecks, and our shipbuilding industry that still thrives today, your favorite recreational activities like fishing, boating, and paddling, or—if you are like Kathy and me, hydro-biking!—whatever celebrating Wisconsin's waterways means to you, your family, and your community.

We ask that students make ornaments from non-breakable material. They must be strong enough to hold up during shipping and to be handled while the tree is being decorated. For these reasons, we recommend students do not use fragile items or paper cutouts that may tear easily. We suggest ornaments that are 4-6 inches in size and are made from a color that contrasts with the color of the tree so they can easily be seen and enjoyed by all visitors. Please attach a ten-inch loop of ribbon or string from which each ornament will hang.

We hope your school will share your classroom's experience making the ornaments with pictures and stories through Facebook and Twitter using #WICapitolTree and #WisconsinWaters.

Please send your ornaments to the address below by **November 22, 2022**. Also, please be sure to include the teacher's name and grade, school name, and address so that we may acknowledge your contribution.

Emily Gorman
Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of Facilities and Transportation Services
17 West Main Street, Suite 119
Madison, WI 53703

If you have any questions about an ornament, please contact the Facilities Management Information Center at (608) 266-1485. Please note that ornaments will not be returned.

Students are also invited to attend the Capitol Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, at noon at the Wisconsin State Capitol to see their ornaments in action. The Capitol Holiday Tree will be on display through the end of the year, and students and their families are encouraged to visit the Capitol to share in the holiday spirit. Capitol hours and information are available at <https://tours.wisconsin.gov/>.

We will gratefully accept any ornaments your school provides for the Capitol Holiday Tree, and if there are extras, they will be shared with nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospitals, and veterans homes to share the holiday cheer with others. Thank you for helping to make the State Capitol beautiful and festive this holiday season.

Sincerely,

Tony Evers
Governor