



Saving Wisconsin's Stewardship Program

Wisconsin's prized land protection program is under attack. Despite a long history of bipartisan support for the Stewardship Program, Governor Walker's proposed budget would freeze it until 2028. This unprecedented action

would jeopardize the lands that make Wisconsin so special – for the citizens of Wisconsin and for Wisconsin's economy.

Investing in land is one of the wisest long-term investments a state can make. Increasing pressures from development will continue to put our best lands at risk while raising the value (and cost!) of the land. If land purchases are frozen now, we may end up paying more for that same land later – or worse, losing it altogether.



Ask your legislator: Will you support restoring funding for land purchases under the Stewardship Program?



What's at Stake

Governor Walker's budget would put the brakes on important future land acquisitions, including:

State-owned land: These lands include state parks, the Ice Age Trail, state natural areas, and conservation easements that protect and preserve vulnerable areas. Such lands have always been purchased strategically to maximize the impact in the most important places. Losing the ability to acquire new lands will put Wisconsin even further behind neighboring states of Michigan and Minnesota, which each have more than twice

as much state owned land as Wisconsin. We would also lose eligibility for federal funding for land purchases and easements.

Non-profit managed land: The Stewardship Program has been very successful in leveraging private money for land protection. Land trusts and other non-profit organizations raise money from private investors to match state money for land purchases. The result is a win-win for everyone – the state, local communities, the economy, and the environment.

“Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of ensuring the safety and continuance of the nation.”
– Theodore Roosevelt

County forests: The Stewardship Program helps purchase land for county forests, which are an important economic component of many rural counties. In particular, sustainable timber harvests from county forests help to offset property taxes.

Stewardship Program – Our Legacy to Future Generations

- Established in 1989, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is a public-private partnership that protects some of the most beautiful and diverse land and waters in Wisconsin, providing the public with recreational areas to hunt, hike, fish, bike, and canoe.
- Named after two Wisconsin Governors who led the way in conservation – Republican Warren Knowles and Democrat Gaylord Nelson – the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program has always enjoyed overwhelming support from voters and legislators of all political stripes.
- 90% of Wisconsin voters agree that even in tight fiscal times, the Stewardship Program should be a priority.



Fast Facts

- \$11.9 billion: Amount of consumer spending on outdoor recreation in Wisconsin
- 142,000: The number of jobs created by Wisconsin outdoor recreation
- \$12 billion: The worth of Wisconsin's tourism industry

Our Public Lands Matter

- Hiking, hunting, fishing, skiing, biking, or even just sitting quietly... Wisconsin's natural areas are important for nurturing our own physical and mental health.
- Our drinking water depends on protecting land around rivers, lakes, and streams to prevent contamination and pollution.
- We rely on public lands to help preserve the soil and vegetation that naturally purify our air and water.