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RE: Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Contact: Mike Carlson, Executive Director

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608-251-9131 x13

Gathering Waters and Wisconsin's land trust community applaud Governor Evers' proposal to renew the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for 10 years and to fund the program at \$70 million per year. Wisconsin's land and water resources are the foundation of our state's quality of life and our economy. That has never been more apparent than during the past twelve months. Strategic and targeted investments in conservation today will help to meet the state's unprecedented and growing demand for outdoor recreation, and it will pay dividends for generations to come.

We encourage the legislature to carefully consider the governor's proposal and to commit to renewing a robust and well-funded Stewardship Program for the next decade.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is Wisconsin's most effective tool for conservation. First authorized in 1989, the program provides matching grants to non-profit conservation organizations and local governments to protect land, build trails, improve local parks, and more. Every dollar that the state invests in a local conservation project is matched at least 1 to 1. The DNR also makes investments in conservation with Knowles-Nelson dollars, and the state's investment has been doubled by federal funding sources, many of which would have been unavailable without funding from Knowles-Nelson. The Stewardship Program is Wisconsin's key to leveraging significant local, federal, and charitable funding to conserve our state's land and water.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program continues to provide impressive returns:

- Lands protected by Knowles-Nelson provide a more than \$2 billion value to Wisconsin every year through the work that nature does for us every day, including: air and water filtration; flood control; carbon sequestration; access to recreation; wildlife habitat; and more.
- More than 9 in 10 Wisconsin households are within a mile of a Knowles-Nelson investment. Stewardship protects Wisconsin's iconic landscapes and nature right outside our doors.
- The Stewardship Program invests in large tracts of working forests that support the \$24 billion forest products industry.
- Outdoor Recreation contributes nearly \$8 billion annually to Wisconsin's economy. Knowles-Nelson grants fund the trails, campgrounds, and boating facilities that help people get outside and enjoy Wisconsin's beauty.
- Knowles-Nelson only costs each Wisconsin resident \$19.75 per year, less than the cost of a state park sticker or fishing license.
- Bipartisan support for conservation funding is at an all-time high. Polling shows that fully 93 percent of the state's electorate say the legislature should continue to dedicate public funding for land, water, and wildlife conservation in Wisconsin.

Gathering Waters and Wisconsin's land trust community support the governor's proposal to renew the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for 10 years at \$70 million per year. Doing so will grow Wisconsin's economy, protect the health of Wisconsin residents, and enable committed Wisconsinites to keep caring for our state's land and water. We look forward to the legislature's inclusion of a strong, well-funded Stewardship Program in the 2021 state budget.

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*Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts helps land trusts, landowners, and communities protect the places that make Wisconsin special. Land trusts are nonprofit organizations that protect land, water, wildlife, and the Wisconsin way of life. Wisconsin has over 40 local land trusts, and Gathering Waters provides them with training and technical assistance, advocates for laws and funding that support land and water protection, and promotes the benefits of conservation.*