

The Nature Conservancy • Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts • Ice Age Trail Alliance
Wisconsin's Green Fire • River Alliance of Wisconsin • Wisconsin Wetlands Association • Wisconsin
Wildlife Federation • Ducks Unlimited • National Wild Turkey Federation • Pheasants Forever • Ruffed
Grouse Society • Trout Unlimited Wisconsin • Wisconsin Waterfowl Association • Backcountry Hunters &
Anglers • Outdoor Industry Association • Wisconsin Bike Fed • 1000 Friends of Wisconsin • League of
Wisconsin Municipalities • Wisconsin Towns Association • Wisconsin Counties Association • Wisconsin
Parks & Recreation Association • American Bird Conservancy • Audubon Great Lakes • Bird City
Wisconsin • Western Great Lakes Bird & Bat Observatory • Wisconsin Audubon Council
Wisconsin Society for Ornithology

American Farmland Trust • Baird Creek Preservation Foundation • Baraboo Range Preservation Association
Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation • Chippewa County Land Conservancy • Couderay Waters Regional
Land Trust • Door County Land Trust • Driftless Area Land Conservancy • Geneva Lake Conservancy
Glacial Lakes Conservancy • Green Lake Conservancy • Green-Rock Audubon Society • Groundswell
Conservancy • Kettle Moraine Land Trust • Kinnickinnic River Land Trust • Landmark Conservancy
Madison Audubon Society • Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy • Mississippi Valley Conservancy • North
Central Conservancy Trust • Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust • Northwoods Land Trust • Ozaukee
Washington Land Trust • River Revitalization Foundation • Seno K/RLT • Standing Cedars Community
Land Conservancy • Star Prairie Land Preservation Trust • Tall Pines Conservancy
The Conservation Fund • The Prairie Enthusiasts • Waukesha County Land Conservancy

To: Governor Tony Evers

Date: August 24, 2020

**Re: Support for long-term reauthorization of Wisconsin's
Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program**

Dear Governor Evers:

We write to express our support for the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program (KNSP). As a coalition of 58 groups, representing environmental conservation, business interests, local governments, hunting, fishing, forestry, agriculture, and recreation, we recognize the tremendous positive impact that the Stewardship Program has on our health, our economy, and our priceless Wisconsin landscapes.

We support a 10-year reauthorization of the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program, and we respectfully urge you to restore the program's funding in order to reverse the trend of cuts that have significantly reduced the buying power of the KNSP over the past decade.

The KNSP was created in 1989 to preserve valuable natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and fisheries, expand opportunities for outdoor recreation, and support our timber and tourism industries.

By any measure, the Stewardship Program has been a resounding success. Because of the KNSP, the Wisconsin DNR, local governments, and nonprofit conservation organizations have received state funds—which are matched with federal, local, and private dollars—to purchase public land

or easements for conservation and to support the upkeep and maintenance of our waterways, parks, forests, and trail systems.

Protected land in Wisconsin works for everyone's benefit. Forests sequester carbon and clean our air. Wetlands filter our water and buffer against floods. These benefits can be quantified. A conservative estimate of the value of "natural infrastructure" on lands protected by KNSP is more than \$2 billion per year.

And yet, the total investment in KNSP represents a small fraction of the state's investments in traditional infrastructure projects. For example, we spend an average of \$1.6 billion *per year* on the state trunk highway system. Over *three decades*, the state of Wisconsin has invested approximately \$1.3 billion in the KNSP. We also continue to lag behind our neighbors Michigan and Minnesota in the amount of land that we protect and the financial resources we allocate to developing outdoor amenities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear that access to parks and open space — especially places close to home — is vital for the physical and mental health of Wisconsin residents. Over the history of the KNSP, more than 1,000 grants have been made to local governments to support green space purchases in our cities and towns as well as funding the trails and park amenities that help Wisconsinites get out and enjoy nature. But there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that *all* Wisconsin residents have convenient access to parks and open space. For example, more than 50,000 Milwaukee residents do not live within a 10-minute walk of a park, and in many smaller metro areas, like Eau Claire and Wisconsin Rapids, more than a third of residents do not live within walking distance of a park.

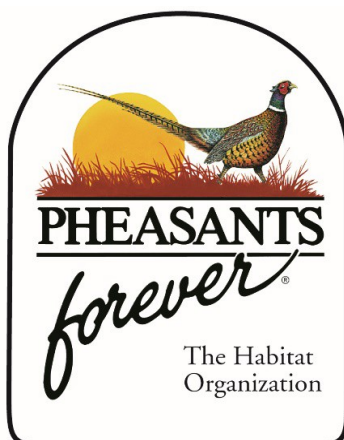
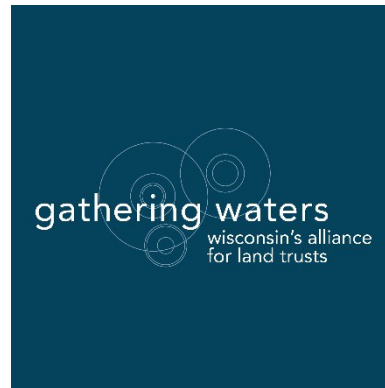
Time spent in nature increases one's sense of well-being, improves one's attention span, and decreases feelings of anxiety and depression. Regular exercise is one of the best treatments for chronic health conditions like obesity and high blood pressure, and access to open space close to home is a key factor in encouraging healthy exercise habits.

If the KNSP is not renewed as part of the 2021 state budget, we will lose Wisconsin's best source of funding for land and water protection as well as funding for the development and maintenance of community parks and open spaces.

Planning and executing Stewardship projects can take years. Therefore, landowners, donors, nonprofits, and government agencies need certainty about the long-term future of the program in order for projects to be as strategic and successful as possible. That's why we're asking for a 10-year authorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program as had been the tradition since the program's inception in 1989.

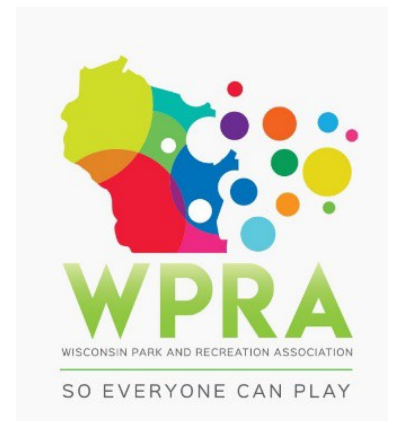
Polling demonstrates near universal public support for the KNSP, even in times of economic turmoil. Past surveys have shown that 93 percent of Wisconsin voters want to see the KNSP reauthorized. This includes 89% of Republicans, 90% of Independents, and 100% of Democrats.

Please support land and water conservation in Wisconsin by including a 10-year reauthorization of the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program in your budget and restoring funding that has been cut. We look forward to advocating for Stewardship with our legislators and speaking publicly about the many benefits that the program will provide for decades to come.





**WISCONSIN
BIKE FED**







Green-Rock Audubon Society



Protecting Wildlife for Tomorrow



**GROUNDSWELL
CONSERVANCY**



**Kinnickinnic
River Land Trust**
Conservation
Community
Education



**NORTHEAST WISCONSIN
LAND TRUST**
Preserving Our Natural Heritage

