

# Sen. Marklein: State parks given tools to continue growing in state budget

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MADISON – State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) moved Budget Motion #313 as a part of the Joint Finance Committee’s (JFC’s) Executive Session today to continue providing tools and flexibility to the state park system including funding for maintenance and improvements, raising the overall cap on electrical campsites and allowing the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to increase fees commensurate with demand.

Wisconsin is the only state with a nearly self-sufficient state park system, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

“Two years ago, I initiated a plan to give our state park system the flexibility to employ private-sector ideas to move toward self-sufficiency,” Marklein said. “We gave the DNR flexibility to increase and decrease rates based on demand and we made reasonable increases to fees. We have studied the results of these changes and they have been very successful. Our motion will authorize the DNR to invest millions of dollars over the biennium in improvements to our popular state parks.”

Budget Motion #313 gives the DNR Secretary the following options to increase revenue and care for the state parks:

- Allow DNR the option to invest \$1 million each year of the biennium from the State Parks Account for maintenance and improvement projects such as

repairing facilities, replacing signage, replacing drinking fountains and upgrading non-electric sites to electricity.

- Lift the state-wide cap for electrical sites from 30% to 35% of campsites statewide.
- Increase the park sticker fee by \$5 for residents and non-residents.
- Create a \$5 surcharge option for high-demand electrical sites at popular parks.
- Increase the range up to \$10 for nightly camping fees at the Secretary's discretion.

“Based on input from constituents, personal experience and data from the last two years, I am confident that these tools will enable the park system to be self-sufficient while meeting the needs and expectations of visitors,” Marklein said. “We are trailblazing the path to self-sufficiency using private-sector principles to manage high-demand products. Our state parks are one of our greatest commodities and we must continue to seek ways to improve them and manage them for future generations.”