

Sen. Cowles: New law will further revitalize our state parks

Posted on Wednesday, Feb 5, 2020

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MADISON- Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after Senate Bill 125 was signed into law as 2019 Wisconsin Act 93. Known as the Parks Revitalization Act 2.0, this new law, authored by Senator Cowles and Representatives Rob Summerfield (R-Bloomer) and Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay),

provides up to \$5.2 million to help clear the mountain of backlogged of water infrastructure projects in State Parks:

“To help preserve our state’s outdoor recreation industry, we not only need to attract new visitors, but we need to keep visitors coming back. Most visitors will never notice that the drinking fountains, shower facilities, or vault toilets are up-to-date. However, if that water infrastructure is run down, out-of-service, or contaminated, it could impact their experience in our State Parks and may impact their plans to come back or visit other State Parks in the future.

“When someone visits our State Parks, they should leave with memories of good times with friends and family and mental snapshots of the trails and scenery, not thoughts of rundown bathrooms or rusty bubblers. Further, an isolated illness or an outbreak of water-related disease at our State Parks would not only be devastating to those impacted, but could cause ripple effects that harm our entire outdoors-based tourism industry in Wisconsin.

“The water facility and infrastructure upgrades that will be completed under the Parks Revitalization Act 2.0 will help to protect the health of millions of State Park visitors, preserve water quality in these pristine

landscapes, and improve the experiences of those enjoying our public lands for decades to come. I appreciate the partnership of Representatives Summerfield and Kitchens in this effort, and am proud that my Legislative colleagues and the Governor recognized the strides that this new law will have in maintaining and growing our outdoors-based tourism industry and protecting human and environmental health.”

2019 Wisconsin Act 93 allows the Department of Natural Resources to spend up to \$5.2 million in authorized, but unobligated Stewardship funds from a prior fiscal year on critical health and safety and high priority water infrastructure projects in highly-visited Wisconsin State Parks and Forests. This legislation builds on progress from last session’s 2017 Wisconsin Act 71, also authored by Senator Cowles with Representative Ron Tusler (R-Harrison) to provide \$4.5 million from a similar funding stream, by recognizing that more work needs to be done to clear the backlog in State Parks’ water infrastructure.