

Nature Conservancy: Disappointed by Joint Finance Committee's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program decision

Posted on Thursday, Jun 10, 2021

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Madison, WI - *The following is a statement from Elizabeth Koehler, State Director, The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin*

The Nature Conservancy thanks the Joint Finance Committee for their decision to reauthorize the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, but we're disappointed that it was only for an additional four years. While four years is an improvement over the last budget, since 1989, the Stewardship Program has been reauthorized every decade for 10 additional years with broad bipartisan support, providing the fiscal certainty necessary for multi-year conservation land transactions.

The Stewardship Program is a nationally-renowned public-private partnership that fuels an \$7.8 billion outdoor recreation economy and supports a \$24 billion forestry industry, clearly and consistently providing a very strong return on investment to Wisconsin taxpayers.

There is overwhelming support among Wisconsin voters for conserving our lands, waters and wildlife habitat for future generations. Recent polling by The Nature Conservancy indicates a sweeping, bipartisan majority of Wisconsinites support reauthorizing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for 10 years.

Over the next 4 years, The Nature Conservancy is committed to working with the Governor and the Legislature for longer-term reauthorization of the Stewardship Program.