

Sen. Cowles: Funding critical infrastructure upgrades in the Wisconsin state parks system

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2021 Senate Bill 664, which he authored with Representatives Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) and Ron Tusler (R-Harrison), was signed into law today as 2021 Wisconsin Act 173:

“Anyone who visits the Wisconsin State Park System knows that these are special and scenic places. But despite the enjoyment from some of our state’s best opportunities for outdoor recreation, dilapidated infrastructure can create a lasting impression of our State Parks System that can be hard to break. Unfortunately, with hundreds, if not thousands of backlogged projects, there’s far too many opportunities for these impressions to be made.

“Act 173 can help to prevent those impressions by replacing millions of dollars’ worth of decades-old infrastructure that is at the highest risk of failure. By making these investments, we can improve visitor experiences, promote parks-based tourism which has positive economic impacts throughout our communities, and protect the health and safety of millions of State Park System visitors for decades to come.”

[2021 Wisconsin Act 173](#) uses \$5.6 million in authorized but unobligated Stewardship funding from a prior fiscal year – funds that could not otherwise be used for any acquisitions or projects without new authorization – to provide the funding necessary to complete all the remaining high and medium priority backlogged water infrastructure projects in the Wisconsin State Parks System, likely benefiting 36 properties across 30 counties, including Governor Thompson, Hartman Creek,

Newport and Potawatomi State Parks and Governor Earl Peshtigo River State Forest in Northeast Wisconsin. 2021 Act 173 builds on the successes of [2017 Act 71](#) and [2019 Act 93](#), all three of which combined have or will help to replace more than \$15 million in backlogged water and wastewater infrastructure in our State Parks System.