



Citizen Resolution #xxxxxx

Funding the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (requires legislation)

The future of Wisconsin's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program has been imperiled by legislative inaction. (1) Funding for the program is set to expire entirely in June 2026. Reauthorization proposals considered by legislative committees would provide little to no funding for acquiring conservation lands that are open to nature-based outdoor activities like hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, and wildlife watching. (2) This comes at a time when demand for outdoor recreation access near population centers is increasing. (3) Further, Wisconsin has tens of thousands of acres of landlocked public land to which outdoor recreationists have no access—land that could be unlocked through strategic Knowles-Nelson conservation purchases. (4) Since its creation in 1989, Knowles-Nelson has protected over 650,000 acres of land for public use and has consistently enjoyed bipartisan support and strong public approval. (5) Recent polling shows 93% of Wisconsin voters support the program. (6) Yet despite broad, bipartisan support, this popular program now faces an uncertain future.

Wisconsin should provide robust, permanent funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. Caring for Wisconsin's land and water deserves the certainty of permanent funding. The program should permanently fund conservation land acquisition, outdoor recreation infrastructure development and maintenance, and greater access to opportunities for nature-based outdoor activities.

Do you support permanently funding Wisconsin's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program to continue the state's longstanding policy of conserving publicly accessible land and facilitating access for hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing and other outdoor recreation?

Additional information provided by author:

1. <https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2025/07/07/state-budget-omits-stewardship-funds-includes-1-million-for-timber-industry-groups>
2. <https://wisconsinexaminer.com/2026/01/23/assembly-passes-pared-down-knowles-nelson-stewardship-bill-that-limits-land-acquisition/>
3. <http://outdoorrecreation.wi.gov/Pages/Resources/Report.aspx>
4. <http://www.onxmaps.com/pdf/the-upper-midwests-inaccessible-public-lands.pdf>
5. <http://bit.ly/LegislativeFiscalBureau-KN-Jan2025>
6. <http://bit.ly/Knowles-Nelson-Polling-Data>

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