

## The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund: Frequently Asked Questions



### **☞ Where does the money come from to pay for the Stewardship Fund?**

Stewardship is funded through state-issued bonds. The state sells bonds to investors then pays back the debt over the next 20 years. This spreads the cost over time so it is shared with future users of public lands. Debt payments come out of tax revenues, so all taxpayers in the state are contributing to the Stewardship Fund, as well as benefiting from its impacts.

### **☞ How can we afford the Stewardship Fund?**

At ½ of one percent of the overall state budget, the Stewardship Fund is a great value for Wisconsin. For the same amount of money it will cost to rehabilitate Interstate 94 between Mitchell Airport south of Milwaukee and the Illinois state line, we are able to permanently protect 30,000 acres of conservation and recreation lands. The investment represented by Stewardship strengthens our \$11 billion tourism economy and our forest products industry.

### **☞ What does the Stewardship Fund pay for?**

The Stewardship Fund is used to buy state and local parkland, wildlife habitat and hunting areas, trails for biking, snowmobiling, hiking, skiing, horseback riding, habitat for endangered species, and working forests. It also provides funding for acquiring easements to eliminate non-point source run-off into our waters, stream bank easements for stabilization and trout habitat enhancements, as well as urban green spaces and parks.

### **☞ Who uses the Stewardship Fund?**

The Stewardship Fund is used by the Department of Natural Resources to acquire land and develop outdoor recreation facilities for the state. The Fund offers grants to local units of government for parkland acquisition, recreational facilities, urban rivers and urban forests and acquiring development rights on farmland buffering public land. Grants are also available to non-profit land conservation organizations to purchase land and conservation easements that protect wildlife habitat, water quality, working forests, and some of Wisconsin's most outstanding natural lands and waters. Together, land trusts and local governments have raised \$130 million to match grants through the Stewardship program.

### **☞ Who benefits from the Stewardship Fund?**

Everyone who enjoys spending time outdoors in Wisconsin benefits from the Stewardship Fund. Stewardship provides special places to hike, watch birds and other wildlife, fish and paddle. In addition, over 92% of all lands protected with Stewardship Funds are open for hunting. The 85% of Wisconsinites who enjoy walking in nature have local opportunities to do so, thanks to the Stewardship Fund's impact in communities across the state.

All Wisconsin citizens enjoy the ecological benefits of protected land and water, including clean drinking water, scenic vistas along our roads and a high quality of life that attracts and retains businesses.

### **☞ Why does the Stewardship Fund need to be renewed?**

The Stewardship Fund is not a permanent state program. It was initially created in 1989 as a 10-year program. In 1999 the Stewardship Fund was renewed by the State Legislature for an additional 10-year period. The current program is due to expire in 2010, unless it is reauthorized by the Legislature.

While the Stewardship Fund has been extremely successful to date – nearly 480,000 acres of land protected – the amount of land available for habitat and recreation is not keeping pace with the demand for those resources. As our state’s population grows and our tourism industry expands, we need more places for people to go and recreate on the land.

**∞ Why do we need more money for the Stewardship Fund?**

Since 1989, the Stewardship program has been adjusted several times from its original funding level of \$25 million annually to reflect soaring land values across the state. Both Governors Tommy Thompson and Scott McCallum recognized the importance of maintaining the historic purchasing power of the Stewardship program. With the cost of recreational lands growing exponentially (forest land values alone have quadrupled over the past 10 years), it is time, once again, to increase the Stewardship Fund so that our conservation efforts can keep pace with inflation.

## The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund: By the Numbers



- ⌘ **\$60 million** available annually through 2010
  - **\$8 million** available for non-profit conservation organizations
  - **\$8 million** available for local units of government
- ⌘ Represents **one-half of 1%** of total state budget
- ⌘ Stewardship Fund has helped complete land protection projects in **71 of Wisconsin's 72 counties** (all but Menominee)
- ⌘ **480,000 acres** of conservation and recreation land protected since 1989
- ⌘ **92% of all lands** protected by the Stewardship Fund are open for public hunting; **97%** are open for public fishing and other types of recreation. Those lands not open to hunting include heavily-used parks and trails like Lakeshore State Park and the Hank Aaron Trail in Milwaukee, the Ice Age Trail, and the Green Circle Trail around Stevens Point.
- ⌘ **45 individual non-profit organizations and over 400 local units of government** have received matching grants from the Stewardship Fund demonstrating the widespread public support for land conservation and the urgent need for recreational land in the state.
- ⌘ Land trusts have raised **\$60 million** in private and federal money to match Stewardship Fund grants and protect some of our most critical wildlife habitats and natural resources.
- ⌘ Local units of government have raised **\$75 million** to match Stewardship grants and provide recreational opportunities in some of our most populated parts of the state.
- ⌘ **89% of acres** protected are **Wisconsin Dept of Natural Resources projects**
- ⌘ **8% of acres** protected are **non-profit conservation organization projects**
- ⌘ **3% of acres** protected are **local government projects**
- ⌘ Wisconsin spends more than **5 times per capita** on highways what it spends per capita on parks and recreation