



JOEL KITCHENS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Rep. Kitchens working on stewardship renewal plan

MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) has introduced legislation that would extend the vital Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program through 2030 while also cutting down on borrowing and debt.

Back in early 2019, Gov. Tony Evers released a budget that renewed the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for only two years at the most recent annual bonding level of \$33.25 million. The program, which aims to preserve Wisconsin’s natural lands and waterways, had been funded in 10-year cycles since it was implemented in 1989.

When he introduced his budget, Gov. Evers said he called for the short-term reauthorization so he could create a bipartisan blue ribbon task force to study and make recommendations on the future of the program.

“Here we are almost a year later and no task force has been formed,” Rep. Kitchens said. “We believe it’s irresponsible to have to wait any longer, so we’re taking matters into our own hands. After all, we as legislators are responsible for setting both the policy and spending levels for any future renewal.”

The bill being proposed by Rep. Kitchens and Rep. Amy Loudenbeck (R-Clinton) would extend the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program to 2030 while also reducing annual bonding by approximately 30 percent and overall expenditures by 7 percent.

Under the legislation, nearly one-third of the proposed \$31 million in total authorized yearly spending would come from segregated forestry funds, which significantly decreases bonding for the program and, as a result, future debt.

“No region of the state has benefited more from the stewardship program in preserving natural areas and expanding outdoor recreation than my district,” Rep. Kitchens said. “It is imperative that we give our residents greater assurances that we will remain committed to protecting our invaluable land and water resources. However, it’s also important that we do so in a fiscally-responsible manner. I am confident our proposal does just that.”

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