

May 29, 2015
For Immediate Release

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The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin

The Nature Conservancy Applauds Budget Committee Action on Stewardship Program

Group urges full Legislature to approve Budget Committee's action on Stewardship Program

MADISON, WI | May 29, 2015

The following is a statement from Mary Jean Huston, Director of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin.

The Nature Conservancy applauded action taken today by the Joint Committee on Finance to fund the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Wisconsin's only dedicated source of state funding for the conservation of land, water and wildlife habitat.

We appreciate the leadership shown by Committee co-chairs Senator Darling and Representative Nygren, as well as the support of Committee members, in keeping this premier land and water conservation program working to protect the forests, lakes and rivers on which our health, our economy and our quality of life here in Wisconsin depend.

A poll recently commissioned by The Nature Conservancy shows overwhelming bipartisan support throughout Wisconsin for public funding for conservation even in tough financial times. Nearly nine-in-ten Wisconsinites say that, even with a tight state budget, investments in conservation should continue.

The 2015-2017 funding level for the Wisconsin Stewardship fund has been set at \$33.5 million dollars per year. This represents a \$17 million dollar reduction from the current program and an almost \$50 million reduction from the program's highest funding level, and The Nature Conservancy remains concerned about the future of this nationally recognized conservation program.

Wisconsin has a long tradition of conserving its lands and waters, making it an attractive place to live and do business. It's important that we continue to invest in our lands and waters now while they are intact and healthy and the opportunity exists to do so. The investment we make today helps ensure that we all continue to reap the many benefits provided by healthy lands and waters today and for generations to come.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect the land and water on which all life depends. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have helped protect 130 million acres worldwide. In Wisconsin, the Conservancy has protected more than 231,000 acres of land and water since 1960. Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at nature.org/wisconsin.