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Joint Finance Committee Rejects Stewardship Land Purchase ***Marklein seeks improved approach to negotiating stewardship purchases.***

MADISON – On Monday, March 27, 2017, the legislature’s Joint Finance Committee (JFC) rejected a \$346,045 Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant to fund half the cost of 102.5 acres of land in Dane County known as the Nelson tract. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had previously paid the current owner \$207,000 for a conservation easement on the property.

“I am not opposed to purchasing land for the stewardship program,” Marklein said. “But too often, the DNR appears to be acting as the realtor, rather than the buyer, by making offers that are at the high-end of the appraisals for each property we consider. We need to negotiate for better prices on behalf of taxpayers.”

The Nelson tract purchase would have spent nearly \$3,400 in stewardship dollars per acre on a property that includes several buildings that would have been demolished upon purchase. The full purchase price, with anticipated contributions from the Town of Dunn and Dane County would have spent \$692,090 or \$6,752 per acre.

“The appraised price the DNR decided to work with was nearly \$100,000 more than the lowest appraisal!” Marklein said. “No ordinary citizen would make this offer. This is an ongoing trend that we need to address in the Stewardship Program. Public land is important, but it should not be purchased frivolously.”

The parcel is located west of State Highway 51 in the Town of Dunn, Dane County. The property is adjacent to the Hook Lake Wildlife and State Natural Areas which are managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). According to the proposal, the property would enhance public access to the wildlife areas and improve recreational access. The property is being sold as a part of an estate. The sellers approached conservation buyers first.

“As a member of the Joint Finance Committee, I will continue to work with the DNR to improve the stewardship land purchase process,” Marklein said. “I am committed to being a good steward of taxpayer dollars for all residents of Wisconsin, including the sportsmen and women in our state who trust us with this important program.”

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