



NANCY VANDERMEER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 70TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Contact: Rep. Nancy VanderMeer

(608) 266-8366

Evers Vetoes Elroy-Sparta and 400 State Trail Funding From Budget

Madison – Today, Governor Tony Evers vetoed a number of provisions from Assembly Bill 56, the biennial budget bill. Included in his list of vetoes was a provision that would have provided \$100,000 in segregated funds from the Department of Natural Resources to make repairs to the Elroy-Sparta and 400 State Trail.

Funding is needed to repair the trails because of area flooding last summer. Representatives Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc), Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah), and Loren Oldenburg (R-Viroqua), all helped to secure the funding in the legislature's budget with the help of former Governor Tommy Thompson.

In his veto message, Governor Evers stated:

"I am vetoing this section because I object to directing the department to repair specific trails. The flooding of 2018 caused damage throughout the state trails system, not just these two trails. This veto would allow the department to prioritize repairs based on the best interests of the state and all trail users."

"I'm disappointed and frustrated that the Governor chose this course of action without any prior communication from him or his team regarding why this funding was inserted and why it would make a huge difference for the Sparta area, Monroe County, and our region. The Elroy-Sparta Bike Trail is historic and is the nation's first ever Rails-to-Trails project. It draws international interest to Wisconsin. \$100,000 is really not a huge amount of money in the greater scheme of an \$83 billion budget and the way we set it up didn't ask for new money, just devoting existing funds to the project. I don't think it should surprise anyone at this point that this Governor trusts bureaucrats in Madison to make decisions that may adversely impact those of us that don't live in the southern part of the state, but seeing it happen this close to home is discouraging," VanderMeer said.

She continued, "An ironic thing for me is that his Secretary of Tourism just appeared before the Assembly Committee on Tourism, of which I'm a member, to update the committee on tourism initiatives throughout the state and the progress that is being made. Secretary-designee Meaney was also advocating for new tourism marketing funding and I'm wondering why there should be a focus on devoting new money to new projects rather than taking care of the proven tourism drivers we already have, such as these trails."

"The trails are a huge driver of tourism to our region. People from all across the state and the country come every summer to enjoy the trails and our beautiful part of the state, and the trails remaining closed not only will have an immediate impact, but will have longer term consequences by pushing individuals and families to other areas of our state and neighboring states for recreational opportunities. I was very pleased that we were able to secure state resources to help, but now I'm encouraging area residents and stakeholders to contact the Governor and his appointees at the Department of Tourism and the Department of Natural Resources. It's unfortunately all we can do right now."

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The 70th Assembly District includes portions of Monroe, Jackson, Portage and Wood counties.