



Kristin Dassler-Alfheim

STATE SENATOR • SENATE DISTRICT 18

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senator Dassler-Alfheim, Legislative Democrats circulate bill to save Knowles-Nelson Program will expire June 30th, 2026 if legislative action is not taken

MADISON, WI – Today, State Senator Dassler-Alfheim co-authored legislation that renews the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program for six years at \$72 million per year.

“This program is the reason that we have such beautiful trails at Heckrodt in Menasha, stunning waterfront views at Steiger Park in Oshkosh, and bike racks and picnic areas to enjoy at Herziger Conservancy Park in Neenah. Renewing this program is critical to ensuring that communities are able to appreciate Wisconsin’s green spaces for generations to come,” said Senator Dassler-Alfheim.

This bill is in contrast to Republican-backed Knowles-Nelson renewal legislation (AB-315/SB-316), which provides \$28.25 million annually for four years. The Governor’s budget proposal, which included both funding and reauthorization, was stripped from the budget by Republicans. Barring legislative action, the program will expire on June 30th, 2026.

“I hear from constituents nearly daily on the importance of this program and the value it adds to our communities, our hunting and fishing heritage, and our tourism economy,” said Sen. Dassler-Alfheim.

The bill also creates a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Board that would meet at least quarterly, advise the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on all projects and have approval authority only for large land acquisition projects of \$2.5 million or more. The Republican proposal requires sign-off from the entire legislature for acquisitions of \$1 million or more, which would result in significant delays and hamper the program’s ability to acquire land for conservation purposes.

“What we put forth today is a reasonable and intentional proposal based on what our state can afford and what supporters have told us they want. We must pass a bill to ensure continued access to public lands, and we hope that Republicans will join us to have a thorough and rational discussion to get something passed,” said Sen. Dassler-Alfheim.

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Named after Republican Governor Warren Knowles and Democratic Governor Gaylord Nelson, the program has invested over \$11 million in Senate District 18 since it was passed in 1989 by Republican Governor Tommy Thompson and a Democratic legislature.

“Knowles-Nelson is an incredible example of a bipartisan success story, and I look forward to keeping it that way,” concluded the Senator.

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