

57 # 3 2009

RESOLUTION

Presented at the 2009 Conservation Congress Spring Hearing
April 13, 2009

570309

Title: Conservation Funding for Public Lands Management

The Problem: Wisconsin has been fortunate to have invested in the purchase of public lands for several decades, using a popular funding tool, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund for land acquisition. The Stewardship Fund has, since 1990, been used to acquire over 300,000 acres outright and secure conservation easements on almost 150,000 acres, for a total cost of nearly \$450 million. These publicly-owned properties are available to Wisconsin citizens and non-citizens alike to enjoy, to use, and to protect for future generations. These lands provide habitat for game species and non-game species alike, serve as reserves for some of the state's most threatened species of plants and animals, and offer tremendous recreational potential for all citizens.

Whereas the Stewardship Fund continues to provide significant dollars for land acquisition (\$87 million in 2009-2010 and each year thereafter), there is no single source of funding to support the management of these same lands. Many properties require some degree of active stewardship to protect ecological integrity, to manage for target species, and/or to remove and discourage invasive non-native species. The gap between *acreage owned* by the state and the *funding and personnel needed* to properly steward and manage these lands is growing at an alarming rate. We are experiencing a "management crisis" on our public lands of enormous and growing proportions, with no solution in sight.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting for 2009 recommends that the State of Wisconsin through the Legislature, the Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Board seek a long-term funding source to support the growing management needs on public lands, and especially those purchased with Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund monies.

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