

50 Groups Promote Land Conservation Program

Ducks Unlimited • Trout Unlimited Wisconsin • Backcountry Hunters & Anglers National Wild Turkey Federation • Pheasants Forever • Ruffed Grouse Society Wisconsin Waterfowl Association • Wisconsin Trappers Association • Wisconsin Wildlife Federation • Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs • Wisconsin Bike Fed League of Wisconsin Municipalities • Wisconsin Counties Association • Wisconsin Towns Association • Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association • Wisconsin Realtors Association • Wisconsin Utilities Association • Outdoor Industry Association The Nature Conservancy • Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts Ice Age Trail Alliance • American Bird Conservancy • Audubon Great Lakes Wisconsin Society for Ornithology • Baird Creek Preservation Foundation • Baraboo Range Preservation Association • Caledonia Conservancy • Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation • Chippewa County Land Conservancy • Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust • Door County Land Trust • Driftless Area Land Conservancy • Geneva Lake Conservancy • Glacial Lakes Conservancy • Green Lake Conservancy • Groundswell Conservancy • Kettle Moraine Land Trust • Kinnickinnic River Land Trust • Landmark Conservancy • Madison Audubon Society • Milwaukee Area Land Conservancy Mississippi Valley Conservancy • North Central Conservancy Trust • Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust • Northwoods Land Trust • Ozaukee Washington Land Trust River Revitalization Foundation • Riverland Conservancy • Tall Pines Conservancy The Conservation Fund • The Prairie Enthusiasts • The Ridges Sanctuary Waukesha County Land Conservancy

To: All Legislators Date: April 17, 2019 Re: Support for long-term reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program As a coalition representing hunting, fishing, forestry, conservation, local governments, recreation, and business interests, we write to express our support for the Warren Knowles Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was created in 1989 to preserve valuable Page 2 of 7 Re: Support for Long-term Reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program April 17, 2019 natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and fisheries, expand opportunities for outdoor recreation, and support our timber and tourism industries. And it has been a resounding success. Because of this program, local governments and nonprofit groups have received state matching funds to purchase land or easements for conservation, and we have the funding needed for the upkeep and maintenance of our waterways, parks, forests, and trail systems. But if the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is not renewed as part of the state budget being debated right now, then we'll lose the effectiveness of Wisconsin's best source of funding for land and water conservation. Planning and executing Stewardship projects can take many years, meaning landowners, funders, nonprofits and local governments need certainty about the long-term future of the program for projects to be viable. That's why the Legislature continued the program for ten additional years each time during the two prior reauthorizations. Unfortunately, the Governor's proposed budget only calls for a two-year extension of the Stewardship Program. That short time frame is entirely inadequate, and severely limits the ability of nonprofit groups and local governments to provide these outdoor spaces for the public to enjoy. We support a long-term reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, and urge the Legislature to adopt a ten-year reauthorization of the program, while

maintaining current funding levels. A June 2018 statewide survey from The Nature Conservancy found that an overwhelming majority (93%) of Wisconsin voters want to see the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program reauthorized. This includes 89% of Republicans, 90% of Independents, and 100% of Democrats. We urge the Legislature to continue to support this tremendously popular program by passing a long-term reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.