



PARTNERS IN FORESTRY LANDOWNERS COOPERATIVE

February 8, 2017

To: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance
From: Partners in Forestry Cooperative

Subject: Support for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

Partners in Forestry is a 16 year organization advocating for sustainable forest management. Our actions have brought several thousand acres into management in recent years, benefiting the forest industry and the health of these forests. We care deeply about the economic, social, environmental and intrinsic values of Wisconsin's forest land and we act continuously on behalf of land owners and local economies.

We wish for you to consider the importance of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship fund in mitigating forest fragmentation and parcelization. Since the 'sell off' of the former industrial forest lands started in earnest about 20 years ago many thousands of acres of productive forest land has been converted to other uses or divided too small to be viable for modern day harvesting operations in the trend of forest fragmentation.

Our Stewardship program has successfully protected over 250,000 acres of working forest lands in the Forest Legacy Program and secured federal matching Forest Legacy funding to accomplish much of this. Adding acreage to the County Forest Crop program has been an additional benefit of Stewardship in recent years, and these purchases help keep stumpage revenues at the local level. Protecting the integrity of the State Forests by acquiring available in holdings is equally beneficial to the people of Wisconsin. Yet another benefit of the program to local communities is the matching grant aspect to non-profits which can utilize this assistance in acquiring community forests. At the local level, these community forests are very beneficial in providing forest education and public recreation.

Conserving these lands in large blocks is imperative to the economic health of the forest and tourism industries, as well as for protecting wildlife habitat and securing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Here in northern Wisconsin, our economy is centered around forestry and tourism. Maintaining these forests is vital to maintaining our economy.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program focuses on our economic and social well being, in turn benefitting us all.

Sincerely,
Joe Hovel as director on behalf of the Partners in Forestry Cooperative Board
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