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## **Parks Revitalization Act 2.0 Passes the Senate**

### *Cowles Bill to Help Clear Backlog of Water Infrastructure Projects in State Parks Heads to Assembly*

MADISON— Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after the state Senate passed Senate Bill 125, the Parks Revitalization Act which Senator Cowles authored with Representatives Rob Summerfield (R-Bloomer) and Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay), by a vote of 33-0:

“To help preserve our state’s outdoor recreation industry, we not only need to attract new visitors, but we need to keep visitors coming back. Most visitors will never notice that the drinking fountains, shower facilities, or vault toilets are up-to-date. But if that water infrastructure is run down or out-of-service, it will impact the visitor’s experience in our State Parks and may impact their plans to come back or visit other State Parks in the future.

“When visitors leave our State Parks, they should have memories of the trails, scenery, and good times with friends and family, but their memories shouldn’t be of rundown bathrooms or rusty bubblers. Further, an isolated illness or an outbreak of water-related disease at our State Parks would not only be devastating to those impacted and their loved ones, but could cause ripple effects and harm our entire outdoors-based tourism industry in Wisconsin.

“The water facility and infrastructure upgrades that would be completed under the Parks Revitalization Act 2.0 will help to improve visitor experience, promote parks-based tourism, and protect the health and safety of millions of State Park visitors for decades to come. Not only will this bill help to ensure the delivery of clean water to visitors in State Parks, but by replacing some dilapidated outhouse facilities, we can help to prevent septic waste from contaminating unconfined aquifers underneath these Parks as the facilities were built before modern building standards ensured casings were protective of the risk of leachate.”

2019 Senate Bill 125 allows the DNR to spend up to \$5.2 million in authorized, but unobligated Stewardship funds from prior fiscal years on critical health and safety and high priority water infrastructure projects in highly-visited Wisconsin State Parks and Forests. This legislation builds on progress from last session’s 2017 Wisconsin Act 71 which provided \$4.5 million from a similar funding stream, but recognizes that more work needs to be done to clear the backlog in State Parks’ water infrastructure. Senate Bill 125 now requires approval by the full Assembly after already being unanimously recommended for passage by the Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

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