



Amy Loudenbeck

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 31ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**Press Release
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Loudenbeck Unveils Stewardship Reauthorization Plan

Madison – Today, Rep. Amy Loudenbeck (R-Clinton) introduced and circulated for co-sponsorship a bill to reauthorize the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (KNSP) for 8 years.

The 2019-2021 budget did not include a plan to reauthorize the program long term. 2019 Wisconsin Act 9 included a two year authorization, at current bonding levels of \$33.25 million annually. Governor Evers stated when he introduced his budget it was his intention to bring together a taskforce of stakeholders and interested parties to work on a plan for reauthorizing the program. Nearly a year later, that still hasn't happened.

"As legislators, it is our responsibility to set both the policy and the appropriate spending level for any future KNSP reauthorization," said Loudenbeck. "We recognize the path forward to the next KNSP reauthorization must include actionable steps to address legitimate concerns about the cost of existing and future principal payments and debt service obligations."

The KNSP reauthorization plan reduces the current level of annual bonding by approximately 30% and reduces overall spending by approximately 7%. The biggest difference going forward, is that \$10 million of the proposed \$31 million in total authorized spending is cash, which helps trim back the amount of bonding and future debt dramatically, without compromising the goals of the Stewardship program. The reauthorization plan would be for 8 years, with the next reauthorization to be in 2030. The new proposed funding levels include GPR bonding of \$21 million annually and SEG Forestry of \$10 million annually.

"I hope that Governor Evers, my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, along with the many stakeholder groups who have a vested interest in the future of the KNSP will take a serious look at this proposal. I believe it bridges a gap between being fiscally responsible and protecting Wisconsin's conservation values. I invite them to bring their feedback to my office so we can work on having a good plan in place before the next budget cycle," said Loudenbeck.



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Background on the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was created in 1989 Wisconsin Act 31 to preserve valuable natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and fisheries, and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. The conservation and recreation goals of the Stewardship Program are achieved through the acquisition of land and easements, development of recreational facilities, and restoration of wildlife habitat.

Under the program, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) acquires land and provides grants to local units of government and nonprofit organizations for land acquisition and property development activities through the issuance of 20-year tax exempt bonds. Annual debt service payments for principal and interest on stewardship bonds are primarily funded from general purpose revenues (GPR), with a portion paid from the segregated (SEG) conservation fund.

Since its creation in 1989, the program has been reauthorized twice—in 1999 Wisconsin Act 9 and in 2007 Wisconsin Act 20.

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