



Governor Doyle Unveils Stewardship Fund Reauthorization Plan

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For more information, contact:
Kinnickinnic River Land Trust

421 N. Main St.

River Falls, WI 54022

715-425-5738

Vicki Elkin, *Stewardship Campaign Director*, Gathering Waters Conservancy
p: 608.441.8819; c: 608.334.1473; stewardship@gatheringwaters.org

Governor Jim Doyle's call to reauthorize the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program as part of his 2007-09 Budget is drawing applause from the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust.

“Thanks to the Stewardship Fund, our land trust has been able to protect natural treasures in our community, like the Kelly Creek Preserve,” said Brent Sittlow, board president of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust. The Stewardship Fund’s matching grant program has made it possible for the land trust to purchase these lands and make them available for current and future generations to enjoy.

“Through the generosity of local citizens, we’ve matched these state grants dollar-for-dollar with private contributions” explained Sittlow.

Established in 1989 in honor of former Governors Warren Knowles and Gaylord Nelson, the Stewardship program has helped protect more than 475,000 acres of high-quality recreation and environmentally-sensitive land in Wisconsin from development – places like the 39 acres the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust recently sold to the State of Wisconsin which was added to the Kinnickinnic State Park. These lands are available to the public for hunting, hiking, fishing, camping, wildlife viewing and other outdoor activities.

The Stewardship program sunsets in 2010, but Doyle's new budget includes \$105 million a year through 2020 for Stewardship, a program that has enjoyed historically bi-partisan support in the state Legislature.

Vicki Elkin, Stewardship Campaign Director for Gathering Waters Conservancy, the statewide umbrella organization for land trusts, noted that Republican Governors Tommy Thompson and Scott McCallum adjusted the Stewardship Fund several times from its original funding level of \$25 million annually to reflect soaring land values across the state.

"With the cost of forest lands quadrupling over the past ten years, Governor Doyle has recognized that it is time, once again, to increase the Stewardship Fund so that our conservation efforts can keep pace with inflation," Elkin said.

"The matching grant program is an incredibly popular component of the Stewardship Program," explained Elkin. To date, land trusts and municipalities have raised over \$135 million to match state grants.

"This commitment of local and private funds demonstrates the broad public support for land conservation and the urgent need for additional lands for outdoor public recreation," said Elkin. "In many parts of the state, we have a very small window of opportunity to protect the best of what remains of outdoor Wisconsin. Citizens across the state understand that and are united in their support of the Stewardship program."

Under the Governor's budget, land trusts would be eligible for \$14.5 million a year in grants.

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to double the state's money by matching public dollars with privately raised funds," said Sittlow.

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Kinnickinnic River Land Trust

Created in 1993, the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT) has protected over 1,750 acres in the watershed and 6.5 miles of stream bank. The KRLT is a member-driven and financially supported organization. It does not operate at taxpayer expense. It was nominated for the River Falls Area Chamber of Commerce 2005 Small Business of the Year and received the 2003 Decade River Champion Local Guardian Award by the River Alliance of Wisconsin. For more information, see www.kinniriver.org, email krlt@presenter.com or call 715-425-5738. Membership donations are tax deductible.

Gathering Waters Conservancy

Gathering Waters Conservancy was founded in 1994 with the goal of establishing a statewide network of local land trusts – citizen-run organizations, dedicated to protecting trails, parks, nature preserves, access to rivers and streams, working lands and wild places. To date, Wisconsin's 55 land trusts have a combined membership of 45,000 individuals and families and have protected over 200,000 acres for the benefit of current and future generations.