

Evers Proposes Investments in Conservation, State Parks, and Outdoor Recreation

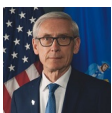
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Governor’s state and capital budgets propose increased funding and staff for state park system, support for park building projects and facility upgrades, more transparency in stewardship program.

WAUSAU — Gov. Tony Evers today, ahead of Earth Day on Saturday, will visit Rib Mountain State Park in Wausau and highlight several initiatives in his 2023-25 biennial budget proposal, as well as his 2023-25 Capital Budget recommendations, to support conservation efforts across the state, bolster Wisconsin’s state parks and public lands, and promote the state’s \$8.7 billion outdoor recreation industry.



“Our park system and public lands are the gems of our state, and no matter where you go in Wisconsin, you’re never very far from a state park or trail,” said Gov. Evers. “That’s because conservation and outdoor recreation are core to who we are as a people and a state, and my budget makes targeted investments to ensure our natural resources are available to be enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for generations yet to come.”

Gov. Evers’ 2023-25 biennial budget proposal makes several key investments to increase funding and staff for the state park system and support for park building projects and facility upgrades. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), more than 584,000 visitors camped in Wisconsin State Parks and more than 19.6 million people visited the State Park System in 2022. The governor is directing more than \$30.5 million for the State Parks System, including more than \$21 million for capital development projects, more than \$2 million to hire additional limited-term employees (LTE) and contract services to support the state park system, and \$2.9 million to electrify campsites in state parks and forests. The

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governor's 2023-25 Capital Budget Recommendations included more than \$48.2 million for 23 major projects at state parks and properties across the state.



Additionally, annual data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis showed Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry contributed a record-setting [\\$8.7 billion](#) to the state's gross domestic product in 2021, and Wisconsin's outdoor economy grew by 14.1 percent—more than three times faster than the state's overall economy, which grew by 4.6 percent. Gov. Evers created the [Office of Outdoor Recreation](#)

at the Wisconsin Department of Tourism in 2019 to serve as a central hub for Wisconsin's outdoor recreation industry, working with stakeholders and providing resources to bolster Wisconsin as a top outdoor recreation destination. The governor's 2023-25 biennial budget proposal would make this Office permanent by providing \$1.1 million and three full-time positions to continue expanding the state's growing outdoor recreation market.

Another critical program in the conservation and preservation of public lands is the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, which was created in 1989. For decades, this program has supported the acquisition of hundreds of thousands of acres of land, including natural areas, fisheries and streambank protection, forests, and wildlife management. Under the 2021-23 biennial budget signed by Gov. Evers, the stewardship program was reauthorized for another four years with an annual allocation of more than \$33 million. The governor's 2023-25 biennial budget builds on the success of the stewardship program by increasing transparency in the stewardship program process to ensure these critical projects are not unnecessarily delayed. Specifically, the budget includes a provision requiring that if a member of the Legislature objects to a proposed Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program project approval, that member's name and nature of the objection be shared publicly, among other changes.

More information regarding the governor's 2023-25 biennial budget investments to support conservation efforts across the state, bolster Wisconsin's state parks and public lands, and promote the state's outdoor recreation industry is available below.

Supporting and Enjoying Wisconsin State Parks

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