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Investment builds on governor's efforts to protect and conserve Wisconsin's natural resources and outdoor areas.

MADISON – Gov. Tony Evers today announced more than $4.5 million in funding to advance projects across Wisconsin of significant importance to several communities, conservation and natural resource protection, and the state's multi-billion-dollar outdoor recreation economy.



"From exploring our extraordinary parks and trails with loved ones to teaching the next generation to hunt and fish, conservation and outdoor recreation are part of who we are as a people," said Gov. Evers. "This became even clearer during the height of the pandemic when our state parks had some of their highest rates of attendance on record. I'm proud to be investing these funds to ensure these precious natural areas are protected so Wisconsinites can enjoy them for years to come."

The initial projects that led to today's investments were submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) by the Department of Natural Resources to be partially funded through the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program but have yet to receive funding. Requests for funds over $250,000 are subject to JFC approval under a 14-day passive review period due to committee member objections.

"We thank Gov. Evers for his leadership and action to advance these meaningful investments," said Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Secretary Preston D. Cole. "In addition to increasing the outdoor recreation opportunities available to Wisconsin residents and visitors,

these projects will bolster our state's outdoor recreation economy, all while delivering significant natural resource conservation benefits."

The governor's investment, funded by the state's allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is supporting the following projects:

- **Ozaukee Washington Land Trust:** These funds will support the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust in conservation, education, and stewardship efforts that protect the area's natural resources and promote lakeshore recreation and safe harbor access, and conservation of unique, critical shoreline habitat. Initially the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust had a stewardship request for 50 percent of the acquisition cost for the 131-acre Cedar Gorge-Clay Bluffs Preserve. That initial request was objected to by a JFC member.

- **Milwaukee Public Schools Outdoor Spaces:** These funds will support new playground equipment, playfield renovations, and other needed upgrades and development of outdoor recreation and green spaces. Initially MPS had a stewardship request objected to by JFC for 25 percent of the estimated project cost for Milwaukee Modrzejewski Park, which was objected to by a JFC member.
- **Caroline Lake Preserve, Ashland County:** These funds will provide 50 percent of The Nature Conservancy's acquisition cost for 34.5 acres, including shoreline, to allow for public access to the northwest corner of Caroline Lake State Natural Area, conserve upland and wetland wildlife habitat, and expand recreation opportunities. This land acquisition project was objected to by a member of JFC.
- **Forest County:** This acquisition in the Town of Nashville will ensure continued sustainable county forest management on highly productive forest land, enhance recreation access, and safeguard watershed and wildlife habitat on 160 acres, which was a project objected to by a JFC member.
- **Sand Creek, Bayfield County:** This acquisition of productive forest lands in the towns of Bayfield and Bell will ensure continued forest management on highly productive forest lands. In addition to providing public access for nature-based outdoor activities, the project will protect Lake Superior watersheds and safeguard wildlife habitat on 1,999 acres adjacent to over 75,000 acres of Bayfield County Forest lands. This land acquisition project was objected to by a JFC member.

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