

Citizen Resolution # 720323



Removal of administrative barriers to Stewardship Program projects (Legislation Required)

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program was created in 1989. Nine out of 10 Wisconsinites support the program, and it has bipartisan support. The program has enabled the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), local communities and conservation nonprofits to conserve land, create parks and fisheries, protect habitat, and expand recreational opportunities. This program has benefitted every county in the state.

A step in the administrative review process has delayed and attempted to halt a number of Stewardship Program projects, including the Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs and the Pelican River Forest projects. A single legislator on the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) has the ability to stop Stewardship projects with an anonymous vote. This raises a number of concerns including: budget -approved funding not being spent as intended; JFC intervention in a program that the legislature has already voted on; inefficiencies in land stewardship and conservation; and a lack of transparency and accountability for decisions made by elected officials.

Since funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is approved by the JFC and the legislature through the state budget process, further review of individual grants may not be necessary as it duplicates work the legislature and JFC have already done. The Stewardship Program, like other state-funded programs, should be administered by the DNR without additional involvement by the JFC.

Do you support a change to the administrative approval process of Stewardship Program projects, removing the Joint Finance Committee's review of individual projects?

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