

**RESOLUTION  
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Public Works Committee  
INITIATED BY



Lori Williams and  
Thomas Sweeney  
DRAFTED BY

Public Works Committee,  
Land Conservation Committee and  
Planning and Development  
Committee  
SUBMITTED BY

March 13, 2015  
DATE DRAFTED

**Opposition to Freezing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund**

1 **WHEREAS**, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program has been providing money to the state, local  
2 governments, land trusts and other non-profits (NGOs) to purchase and protect land since 1989. It has  
3 helped protect more than 500,000 acres. These lands benefit all of us in Wisconsin by providing jobs,  
4 supporting local economies, protecting our water resources & air quality, promoting tourism & healthy  
5 lifestyles, guaranteeing places to hunt, hike, fish and explore close to home; and,  
6

7 **WHEREAS**, the Public Works Parks Division has utilized the stewardship fund in the recent past as an  
8 alternative funding source for various park projects and planned to utilize this fund for future park  
9 projects within Rock County. Past and future projects included or would include land acquisition and  
10 park development projects; and,  
11

12 **WHEREAS**, the Land Conservation Department (LCD) identified the stewardship fund as an  
13 alternative funding source for the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program  
14 for lands that fell within the Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) leased Public Hunting Program  
15 areas located in Rock County; and,  
16

17 **WHEREAS**, the LCD and DNR were committed to the development of a partnership for protecting  
18 the working lands of Rock County, through the PACE Program, while facilitating DNR interests of  
19 increasing public access opportunities within the public hunting areas; and,  
20

21 **WHEREAS**, the proposed freeze on the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund dissolves this  
22 partnership, slows the progress of protecting working lands and slows the ability of the DNR increasing  
23 public access to private lands for hunting and fishing opportunities; and,  
24

25 **WHEREAS**, the Planning & Development Committee recommended and the County Board adopted  
26 policies in the Rock County Comprehensive Plan 2035 to protect agricultural and natural resources  
27 with viable and useful implementing tools such as the stewardship fund; and,  
28

29 **WHEREAS**, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund has been used by land trusts and other  
30 NGOs to purchase conservation easements in Rock County for the protection of working lands and  
31 natural areas; and,  
32

33 **WHEREAS**, the Public Works Committee, the Land Conservation Committee, and Planning and  
34 Development Committee have stated their opposition to freezing the stewardship funds as identified in  
35 the Governor's proposed 2015-2017 budget.  
36

37 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled  
38 this 23 day of April, 2015, urges Governor Scott Walker to reconsider the proposed  
39 freeze to the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund and requests the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly  
40 to take action which maintains the stewardship fund in its entirety; and,  
41

42 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the County Clerk forward this Resolution to Wisconsin Governor  
43 Scott Walker; Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, Cathy Stepp; Senator Janis Ringhand;  
44 Senator Steve Nass; Representative Mark Speitzer; Representative Andy Jorgensen; Representative Deb  
45 Kolste; and Representative Amy Loudbeck.

15-4B-277

## **Opposition to Freezing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund**

### **Executive Summary**

Governor Walker has proposed to freeze the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund until 2023, as introduced in the 2015 – 2017 State Budget proposal. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund is available each year in the form of grants to local units of government and nonprofit conservation organizations. These grants help fund land acquisition and recreational development statewide. This fund has helped protect over 500,000 acres of natural areas and working lands since its inception in 1989. Rock County, local units of government and nonprofit conservation organizations have relied on the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund to provide critical financial support for past, present and future projects.

The Rock County Public Works Department Parks Division has utilized this fund for park improvement projects and to add land to the County Park System. The Parks Division was granted funds from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Funds to complete many of the projects in the Beckman Mill County Park. All projects are outlined in the County's Park Revitalization Plan. By securing this funding the Park Division was able to secure funding from additional grant sources and matching County funds. As a direct result of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds, the vast network of volunteers associated with this park provided in-kind contributions that led to the completion of projects making this park what it is today.

In addition the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Funds were utilized by nonprofit conservation organizations such as the Green-Rock Audubon Society for the purchase of lands in the Town of Newark on the East Branch of Raccoon Creek. The lands have had extensive work completed by volunteers resulting in a beautiful natural area. Another example of NGOs working in Rock County is the Natural Heritage Land Trust used these funds to facilitate the acquisition of land adjacent to the DNR's Avon Bottoms Wildlife Area in Avon Township.

The Rock County Land Conservation Department has been working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop a formal partnership to preserve productive agricultural lands in conjunction with providing recreational access (hunting) in the proximity of Evansville, Footville, and Orfordville. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program Fund would have been used to reduce the County's fiscal exposure as it relates to the Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easements (PACE).

The Rock County Comprehensive Plan 2035 directs the County to ensure the viability of agricultural and natural resources. Adopted policies were designed to support efforts to preserve and protect these important regional elements including seek funding opportunities through partnerships.

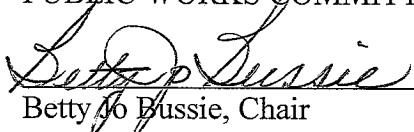
As stated earlier, the proposal as submitted by Governor Walker in the 2015 – 2017 State Budget, is to freeze this fund until 2023. The Public Works, Land Conservation, and Planning and Development Committees have discussed this issue and are opposed to the proposal.

This resolution is advisory in nature.

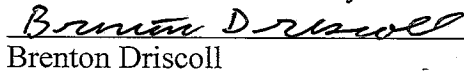
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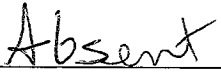
Respectfully submitted,

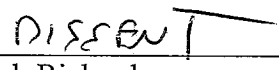
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

  
Betty Jo Bussie, Chair

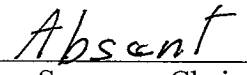
  
Eva Arnold

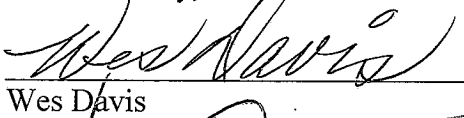
  
Brenton Driscoll

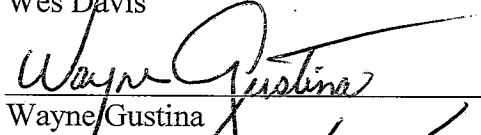
  
Brent Fox

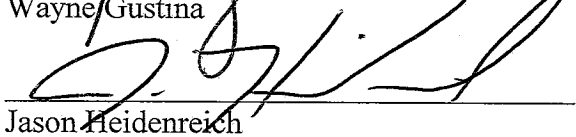
  
Rick Richard

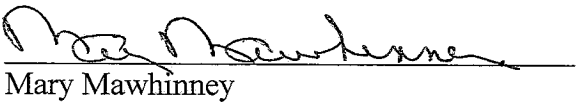
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

  
Alan Sweeney, Chair

  
Wes Davis


  
Wayne Gustina

  
Jason Heidenreich

  
Mary Mawhinney

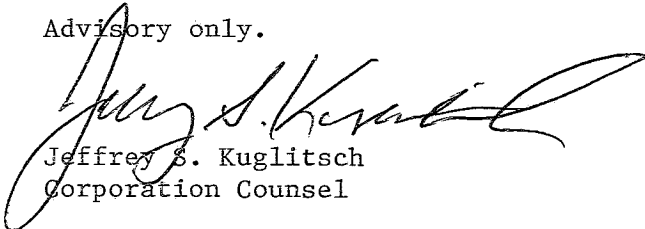
FISCAL NOTE:

No fiscal impact.

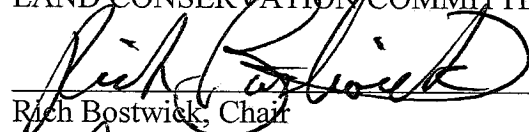
  
Sherry Oja  
Finance Director

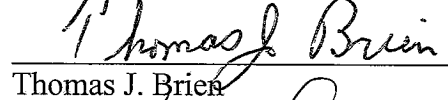
LEGAL NOTE:

Advisory only.

  
Jeffrey S. Kuglitsch  
Corporation Counsel

LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

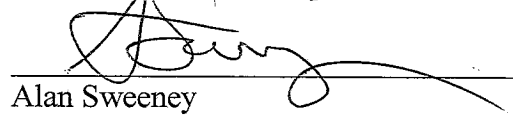
  
Rich Bostwick, Chair

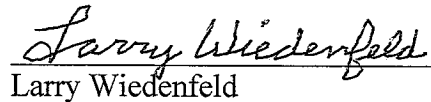
  
Thomas J. Brien

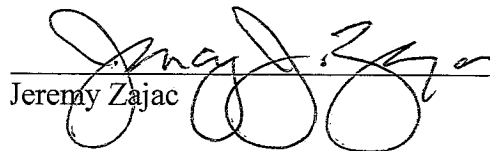
  
Wes Davis

Jason Dowd

David Rebut, FSA Representative

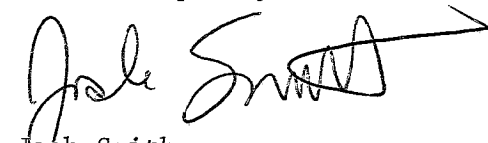
  
Alan Sweeney

  
Larry Wiedenfeld

  
Jeremy Zajac

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Matter of policy.

  
Josh Smith  
County Administrator