



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Bipartisan Plan Unveiled to Protect Over 12,000 Environmentally Precious Acres

MADISON – A bipartisan group of legislators today unveiled a plan to protect more than 12,000 environmentally precious acres of land while also providing property tax relief for some local governments as well as increasing management efficiency of and increasing public access to state-owned forests.

“By working together, we have been able to produce a plan that will protect the environment, promote recreation and provide property tax relief,” said Representative Scott Jensen (R-Town of Brookfield).

Under the proposal, two million dollars of the State’s Stewardship Fund would be used each year to transfer environmentally precious land from the State’s Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) to the DNR, whose mission is to conserve environmentally sensitive lands. In turn, the BCPL would use these proceeds to consolidate and upgrade its holdings of timberland. The income from the timber harvested from these properties would be used to provide financial assistance to local governments and aids for school libraries, while the forestland would be available for public recreation.

Presently, the state agency which holds these 12,000 acres, BCPL, is not required to pay property taxes on the land. When these precious lands are transferred from BCPL to the DNR, the State will start making payments to local governments in lieu of taxes, thereby providing tax relief for some local governments.

“I think this is a good step forward,” said Cowles. “This legislation will increase opportunities for the public to enjoy our tremendous natural resources.”

"Our main industries in the North are forestry and recreation/tourism," Sherman noted. "Both of which are dependent upon the continued existence of large tracts of working forest and protected natural resources. This proposal improves our ability to protect the resource and better manage our forests for hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation and forestry."

“I am pleased to be a part of an effort which will help ensure a healthy and sustainable timber economy,” said Decker, “while protecting Wisconsin’s unique natural areas.”

“BCPL is grateful to have bipartisan support for this plan to ensure BCPL’s natural areas are protected while providing this agency with a key tool to improve timber land management and reduce forest fragmentation,” said Tia Nelson, Executive Secretary of the BCPL. “This bill is good public policy.”

The proposal has been embraced by legislators from both parties.

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