

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

SUBJECT: Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund

FOR: June 2013 Board meeting

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Kurt Thiede, Land Division Administrator and Ruth Oppedahl, Executive Director, Natural Resources Foundation

SUMMARY:

2011 Wisconsin Act 148 enables the department to request over-the-counter voluntary contributions from the four million citizens who currently buy annual "services" from department to provide a permanent endowment for the management of our state owned lands.

The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund exists so we can start now to ensure the future enjoyment of our lands and water. The Fund is an endowment established for the sole purpose of managing habitat on our state lands. Whether you fish, hunt, camp, trap, atv, canoe, hike, bike, photograph, bird watch or watch your children and grandchildren experience our 1.5 million acres of natural resources, the Fund creates an enduring means of addressing our unmet habitat management needs.

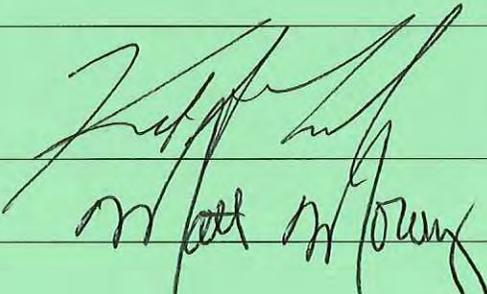
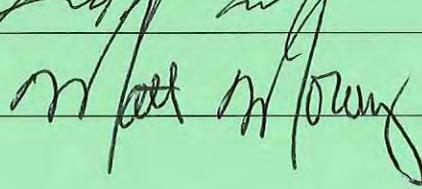
The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin will manage the fund, and make annual disbursements to the WDNR. The Foundation will also solicit donations to the Fund from its members, corporations and other interested donors.

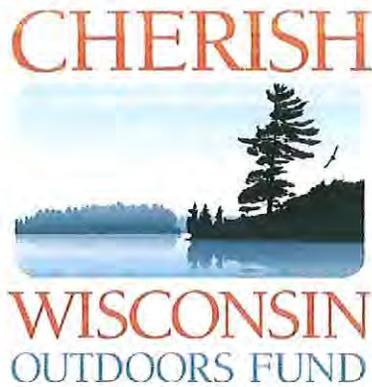
The department and the Foundation will present the Board with an overview of the Fund, its purpose, marketing strategies, and implementation timeline.

RECOMMENDATION: INFORMATION ONLY

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):

- Background memo N/A
- N/A
- N/A

Approved by	Signature	Date
Not Applicable, Bureau Director		
Kurt Thiede, Administrator		6/17/13
Cathy Stepp, Secretary		6/18/13



The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund exists so we can start now to ensure the future enjoyment of our lands and water.

The Fund is an endowment fortified by investments from citizens like you.

Whether you fish, hunt, camp, canoe, hike, bike, photograph, bird watch or watch your children and grandchildren experience our 1.5 million acres of natural resources, the Fund provides us all with an enduring means of addressing our unmet habitat needs. Our work is just beginning, and it will never end. The Fund is created to last lifetimes, because our precious lands and waters must last lifetimes.

The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund. Give now. Enjoy forever.

Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund: Project Summary

Over the past two decades, the growth in acres of state-owned, high-quality conservation lands has outpaced the growth in the state's capacity to manage these lands. While the purchase of land is a one-time cost, its management needs—maintaining wildlife habitat, watershed health, aesthetics, and populations of endangered and threatened plants and animals—are a perpetual need that must be continually addressed. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been unable to fund all of the state's land management needs. However, there is great potential for Wisconsin's citizens to support the care of these treasured public lands.

In March 2012, a piece of legislation was signed into law that has the potential to dramatically reduce this gap and greatly improve management of our state's public lands and the natural resources they support. This law enables the DNR to request voluntary contributions from the four million citizens who currently buy annual "services" from DNR. These services include hunting and fishing licenses, snowmobile and ATV registrations, campground and trail fees, etc. Once collected, the contributions will be transferred to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (Foundation) to build a permanent public lands endowment that will support habitat management on state lands throughout Wisconsin.

This endowment has the potential to grow to millions of dollars over time, supporting vital on-site stewardship for our state landscape treasures. Interest from the endowment will support the care and maintenance of state-owned and managed natural areas, parks, forests, wildlife areas, trails, and waterways. Every \$1 million in the endowment will distribute approximately \$50,000 per year for land stewardship.

Background & Need Statement

For over two decades the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund has provided funding for the acquisition of public lands across Wisconsin. These important lands provide habitat for wildlife, including rare and endangered species; recreational and educational opportunities for hunters, anglers, trappers, hikers, bikers, and bird-watchers; research sites for conservation scientists; and aesthetic value as green space for all citizens to enjoy.

Nearly 1.5 million acres of land and waterways in Wisconsin are state-owned and accessible to the people of Wisconsin, neighboring states, and the world. Wisconsin's state public lands currently include 282 State Wildlife Areas, 206 State Fishery Areas, 47 State Parks, 41 state trails and 6 state recreation areas, 12 state forests, and more than 600 State Natural Areas. As the state acquires new public properties through the Stewardship Fund, there is a responsibility to care for the wild lands and waterways purchased. Unfortunately, there is an increasing need to identify permanent funding to manage our state lands.

Wisconsin's public lands will not yield their potential—recreational, biological, aesthetic, and economic—unless new sources of funding are secured to care for them. The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund is an important solution to this problem.

Our Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund

For the past year, the Foundation has worked with DNR leadership to establish the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund. The law authorizes the Wisconsin DNR to request voluntary contributions of \$2 or more from citizens who buy a service from the agency, be it a hunting, trapping, or fishing license; a snowmobile or ATV registration; or a state park or trail sticker. DNR currently collects such fees from approximately four million citizens each year.

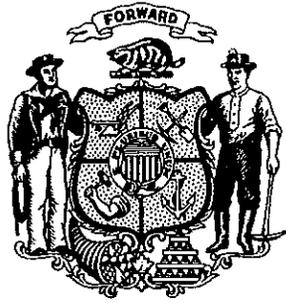
The contributions collected by DNR and 1,400 vendors throughout the state will be transferred to the Foundation to be managed as a **permanent endowment** that will generate annual distributions in perpetuity. The endowment will **support habitat management on state-owned and state-managed properties**.

As the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund grows over the years, it will become a major source of supplemental funding for DNR and partners to manage the state lands and waterways shared and enjoyed by all citizens. This model—using private funding for public lands and waters conservation—is unique in the country and could be a replicable model for other states to explore.

Project Description

With an initial target audience of four million self-identified citizens—those who currently buy a service from DNR—the potential to build the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund is substantial. However, citizens need to know about the voluntary contribution opportunity, learn what their contributions will go toward, and be reminded of the endowment's existence.

State of Wisconsin



2011 Senate Bill 441

Date of enactment: March 23, 2012

Date of publication*: April 6, 2012

2011 WISCONSIN ACT 148

AN ACT to create 20.370 (5) (fv) and 23.09 (23) of the statutes; **relating to:** authorizing the Department of Natural Resources to collect voluntary contributions in addition to fees charged for certain approvals, authorizing the voluntary contributions to be paid to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and making an appropriation.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 20.370 (5) (fv) of the statutes is created to read:

20.370 (5) (fv) *Resource aids — Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin payments.* All moneys received under s. 23.09 (23) (b) for payments to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin under s. 23.09 (23) (d).

SECTION 2. 23.09 (23) of the statutes is created to read:

23.09 (23) **VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS; NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION OF WISCONSIN.** (a) In this subsection, "approval" means any type of approval or authorization issued by the department under ch. 29, such as ch. 30, or s. 23.33 (2), 27.01, or 350.12, including a license, permit, certificate, stamp, tag, registration, or vehicle admission receipt.

(b) Any applicant for an approval may, in addition to paying any fee charged for the approval, elect to make a

voluntary contribution of at least \$2 to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to be used by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to establish an endowment program to support habitat management activities on land owned or managed by this state.

(c) All moneys collected under par. (b) shall be credited to the appropriation account under 20.370 (5) (fv).

(d) The department shall enter into an agreement with the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to make payments, at least annually, from the appropriation under s. 20.370 (5) (fv) to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to be used by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin to establish an endowment program to support habitat management activities on land owned or managed by this state. The memorandum of agreement shall include a description of the types of activities that the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin will support under the endowment program, the manner in which the endowment program funds will be managed, and, if the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin will make grants under the endowment program, the methods that will be used to award the grants.

* Section 991.11, WISCONSIN STATUTES 2009-10: Effective date of acts. "Every act and every portion of an act enacted by the legislature over the governor's partial veto which does not expressly prescribe the time when it takes effect shall take effect on the day after its date of publication as designated" by the secretary of state [the date of publication may not be more than 10 working days after the date of enactment].