

APRIL AGENDA ITEM 5.A. – RESOLUTION

WHEREAS: On August 13, 2008, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board unanimously approved the purchase of 970 acres in Waukesha and Walworth Counties known as the “Rainbow Springs property” using money from the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund (KNSF), and

WHEREAS: Such approval was premised on the Department of Natural Resources’ statement that “management plans for the property include an emphasis on restoring decreasing wetland types, palustrine emergent wetlands, riparian wetlands and adjacent uplands”, and

WHEREAS: At the time of the Board’s approval about 240 acres of the Rainbow Springs property consisted of a golf course and related facilities, surrounded by a buffer zone, and

WHEREAS: The Board’s approval was further premised on the Department’s statement that the golf course would be leased back to the seller for two years, and that subsequently the Department planned “to restore the entire property to a natural condition over a period of a few years.” and

WHEREAS: The lease on the 240 acres expired October 31, 2010, and

WHEREAS: Local interests in the area have advocated that the Department continue operation of the golf course into the indefinite future, and

WHEREAS: Use of the KNSF to purchase land for the development or continuing use of a golf course is expressly prohibited by Wisconsin statute, and

WHEREAS: A member of the Wisconsin legislature has publicly stated an intention to introduce legislation to exempt the Rainbow Springs Golf Course from the statutory prohibition, and

WHEREAS: The primary purpose of acquiring state properties with the KNSF is to provide for wildlife habitat and nature based outdoor recreation, and

WHEREAS: Golf courses do not provide wildlife habitat or opportunity for nature based outdoor recreation, and

WHEREAS: The Rainbow Springs property is located in the ecologically rich Mukwonago River watershed -- which provides critical habitat in a highly developed portion of Wisconsin -- and is immediately adjacent to the Lulu Lake State Natural Area, and

WHEREAS: The Mukwonago River flowing through the Rainbow Springs property is a high quality class 2 trout stream that will need habitat work and access, both of which are incompatible with the simultaneous use of a golf course on the same riverside property, and

WHEREAS: Restoration of the entire Rainbow Springs property would provide opportunities for a wide array of nature based outdoor recreation including, but not limited to, the five that are specifically named in statute as encouraged uses on land purchased using the KNSF, and

WHEREAS: Continued use of the property as a golf course would jeopardize three million dollars of wetland restoration funding from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That both because of the deleterious impacts on the area's habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities, and because of the unwelcome precedent of carving out individual statutory exceptions to the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund to allow special interests to prevail over the general good and welfare of the citizens of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board opposes passage of legislation to allow the long term continued operation of the Rainbow Springs Golf course, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that it is the desire of the Board to see the Department work with the federal government and cooperating nonprofit conservation organizations to attain funding and commence restoration of this unique and irreplaceable state property as quickly as possible.

Adopted this 27th day of April, 2011 by the Natural Resources Board at its meeting in Madison, Wisconsin.

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD

Jonathan P. Ela, Chair