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## **Governor Doyle Announces Forest Legacy Easement Purchase in Baraboo Hills**

MADISON – Governor Jim Doyle today announced that agreements have been reached with 16 landowners that will allow the state to buy conservation easements on approximately 1,000 acres of forest land in the Baraboo Hills.

“These easements will allow us to continue preservation of Wisconsin’s most unique and critical habitats,” Governor Doyle said. “I commend the participants in this program. Together, we’re guarding against forest fragmentation, maintaining the natural habitats of wildlife, and ensuring a walk in the woods isn’t interrupted by construction cranes and bulldozers.”

The Forest Legacy Program, a state-federal partnership, plays a key role in protecting forested lands in the state. Of the state’s 16 million acres of forests, 70 percent are in the hands of private owners. Conservation easements provide a maximum amount of protection at a lower cost than purchasing the property outright.

Under the program, 75 percent of the costs of a conservation easement are federally funded, with the remaining 25 percent coming from private, local, or state sources. The negotiation of conservation easements ensures privately-owned environmentally important forest lands are protected from non-forest uses (e.g., commercial development) while, at the same time, allowing landowners to own, manage, and enjoy their property.

“Efforts to maintain the forests of the Baraboo Hills in a contiguous block helps to ensure these forests can continue to provide ecological, economical, and social values from which we all benefit,” said Paul DeLong, DNR Forestry Division Administrator. “By using easements to protect land, we can stretch conservation dollars further and maximize public benefits.”

The Baraboo Hills has long been recognized for its beauty, its wealth of recreational possibilities, and its ecological and environmental importance. Located in Sauk and Columbia Counties, it is one of the largest blocks of upland forest still standing in southern Wisconsin, home to a relatively large non-fragmented forest that is a key habitat for nesting and breeding songbirds.

Other areas purchased under the Forest Legacy Program include the Northern Forest, the West Central and Central Sands area, and the Kettle Moraine State Forest areas.

Additional information about the Forest Legacy Program in Wisconsin can be found at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/legacy/faq.html>.

Information about the Baraboo Hills, including a map of the area, can be found at: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/legacy/flabaraboo.html>.