

PROPERTIES PURCHASED WITH FUNDS FROM THE  
KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM  
ON WHICH ONE OR MORE  
NATURE-BASED OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IS PROHIBITED

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025



SUBMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
October 30, 2025

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). For more information on the Stewardship Program, please contact:

Bureau of Facilities and Lands  
Internal Services Division  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 7921  
101 S. Webster Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921  
Phone: 608-267-7465

Real Estate Program: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/RealEstate>

Stewardship Grants Program: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stewardship/GrantHome>

Public Access Lands mapping: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fl/RealEstate/PALApplication>

Additional copies of this report may be obtained from the DNR Bureau of Facilities and Lands.

## BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Legislature created the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program in 1989 to serve the public by expanding outdoor recreation opportunities, protecting fish and wildlife habitat and preserving valuable natural areas. The Stewardship Program is named for two of Wisconsin's most revered conservation leaders: Warren Knowles (Governor 1965-1971) and Gaylord Nelson (Governor 1959-1963, U.S. Senator 1964-1981). Based on the Program's continued success delivering quality outdoor recreation opportunities for the public, the Wisconsin Legislature reauthorized the Stewardship Program in 1999, 2007, 2019 and 2021.

Pursuant to the 2007 reauthorization, the Legislature requires that lands acquired with Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program funds be open for nature-based outdoor activities (NBOAs) unless otherwise approved by the DNR Natural Resources Board (NRB). Section 23.0916(1)(b), Wis. Stats., defines nature-based outdoor activities as "...hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, cross-country skiing, and any other nature-based activity designated by rule by the department..." No additional NBOAs have been added by rule.

Chapter NR 52, Wis. Adm. Code, became effective on August 1, 2010, and describes criteria the NRB may consider when reviewing a proposed acquisition where one or more NBOAs would be prohibited. Proposed Stewardship acquisitions (DNR or grant-funded) require NRB review and approval if the landowner plans to prohibit one or more NBOA post-acquisition. Section 23.0916, Wis. Stats., allows the NRB to approve acquisition of property with an NBOA prohibition only if the prohibition is necessary to protect public safety or unique animal/plant communities. Per Chapter NR 52.05(1)(a)5., Wis. Adm. Code, an NBOA prohibition is assumed to be necessary for public safety on a parcel 5 acres or smaller, located within the boundaries of cities and villages, if:

- The parcel is not adjacent to a parcel where the NBOAs to be prohibited are allowed; or
- The parcel is not adjacent to a public waterway

In accordance with s. 29.089(1m)(b), Wis. Stats., prohibition of hunting, fishing or trapping in State Parks and on State Trails is allowed if the property is within 100 yards of a designated use area or if the NRB determines that prohibiting hunting, fishing or trapping is necessary to protect public safety or protect a unique animal or plant community. NRB approval is not required prior to acquisition for properties acquired with Stewardship grant assistance by local governments or nonprofit conservation organizations where the NBOA prohibition originates from an entity other than the grant recipient.

By November 15 of each biennium, the department is required to issue a report on all lands purchased in fee title during the preceding biennium in whole or in part with funds from the Stewardship Program on which public access for any NBOA is prohibited (s. 23.0916(6), Wis. Stats.). This report satisfies the NBOA reporting requirement for fiscal years 2023-2024 (FY24) and 2024-2025 (FY25).

## **2023-2025 BIENNIUM**

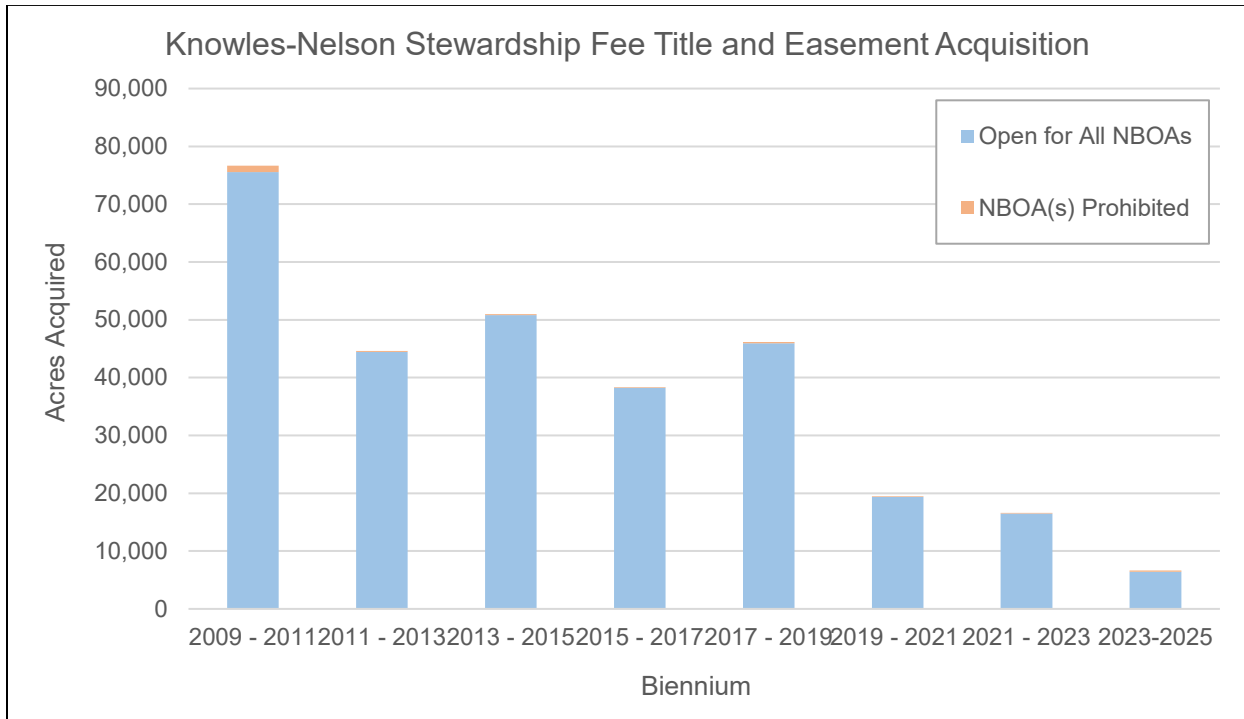
In the 2023-2025 biennium, DNR awarded Stewardship grants supporting fee title acquisition of 6,017 acres. Approximately 99.4% of those acres are open to the public for all NBOAs.

In this biennium, DNR acquired 285 acres of fee title land using Stewardship funds. Approximately 91.7% of those acres are open to the public for all NBOAs.

In all cases, NBOA prohibitions are the result of documented public safety concerns and have been approved by the Natural Resources Board.

Exhibit A below summarize NBOA access on land acquired with Stewardship funds in the last biennium (fee title and easement). Project-specific information is in Exhibits B and C. Further details are available from DNR.

**Exhibit A: Acres acquired with Stewardship funds (fee title and easements) open for all NBOAs vs. those subject to NBOA prohibition(s).**



	2009 - 2011	2011 - 2013	2013 - 2015	2015 - 2017	2017 - 2019	2019 - 2021	2021 - 2023	2023 - 2025
Acres Open for all NBOAs	75,530 (98.5%)	44,432 (99.6%)	50,841 (99.8%)	38,251 (99.6%)	45,931 (99.5%)	19,401 (99.6%)	16,524 (99.4%)	6,432 (96.8%)
Acres with NBOA Prohibition(s)	1,115 (1.5%)	183 (0.4%)	124 (0.2%)	134 (0.4%)	230 (0.5%)	79 (0.4%)	101** (0.6%)	215 (3.2%)
Total Acres	76,645	44,615	50,965	38,385	46,161	19,480	16,625	6,647

\* The 2021-2023 biennium data was revised to remove an approved acquisition that was cancelled by the project sponsor and did not ultimately use KN Stewardship funding in the biennium. See Exhibit C – City of Schofield.

**Exhibit B. Stewardship Grant Acquisitions Subject to s. 23.0916(6), Wis. Stats.: July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2025**

<b>Grant Recipient</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Stewardship Grant Amount</b>	<b>Project Acres with NBOA Prohibition(s)</b>	<b>Prohibited NBOA(s)</b>	<b>Reason</b>
City of Platteville	Grant	Southeast Rail Corridor Trail Acquisition	\$136,700.00	13.59	Hunting and Trapping	Public Safety
Village of Mukwonago	Waukesha	Indian Head North Acquisition	\$81,400.00	2.88	Hunting and Trapping	Public Safety
Crossroads at Big Creek	Door	Londo Acquisition	\$37,155.00	18.78	Hunting and Trapping	Public Safety
City of Schofield	Marathon	Lake Wausau Public Access Acquisition	\$72,225.00	0.13	Hunting and Trapping	Public Safety

## **Exhibit C. Stewardship Grant Acquisitions with NBOA Prohibitions**

**Grant Recipient:** City of Platteville

**Project Name:** Southeast Rail Corridor Trail Acquisition

**County:** Grant

**Details:** DNR issued a grant contract to the City of Platteville on 04/18/2025. The grant helped the city purchase five parcels (13.59 acres) to expand the City's trail network and provide an additional parking area/trailhead. The parcels are on rolling terrain following an abandoned rail line. The Natural Resources Board approved the hunting and trapping prohibition on the parcels at the January 2025 board meeting.

**Grant Recipient:** Village of Mukwonago

**Project Name:** Indian Head North Acquisition

**County:** Waukesha

**Details:** DNR issued a grant contract to the Village of Mukwonago on 03/04/2025 for acquisition of 2.88 acres in the Village of Mukwonago. This parcel will connect to the existing Indian Head Park area and will expand hiking, fishing, canoeing, kayaking and access to the Mukwonago River for residents and visitors. The Natural Resources Board approved the hunting and trapping prohibition on the parcel at the January 2025 board meeting.

**Grant Recipient:** Crossroads at Big Creek, Inc

**Project Name:** Londo Acquisition

**County:** Door

**Details:** DNR issued a grant contract on 03/04/2025 to Crossroads at Big Creek, Inc for the acquisition of 18.78 acres in the Town of Sturgeon Bay. The parcel is undeveloped farmland with frontage along Big Creek and no structures. Once acquired, Crossroads at Big Creek intends to improve the habitat for wildlife and pollinators and manage the property for public outdoor recreation, similar to the rest of their property. The Natural Resources Board approved the hunting and trapping prohibition on the parcel at the January 2025 board meeting.

**Grant Recipient:** City of Schofield

**Project Name:** Lake Wausau Public Access Acquisition

**County:** Marathon

**Details:** The City of Schofield was originally awarded a KN Stewardship grant for acquisition of a Lake Wausau public access site during the 2021-2023 biennium. The NRB approved a hunting prohibition on the property and the project was therefore included in the report for that biennium. This acquisition, however, did not move forward and the city ultimately acquired a replacement parcel during the 2023-2025 biennium. DNR amended the existing grant contract (issued on 04/01/2022, for 0.13 acres) with the City of Schofield. The parcel and an adjacent city-owned parcel will be developed into a Lake Wausau boat launch facility. The parcel will be available to the public for recreational activities including hiking, lake access/fishing, limited trapping, and nature observation. The Natural Resources Board approved the hunting prohibition and trapping restriction on the final parcel at the February 2025 board meeting.