

**Wisconsin Counties Association
Wisconsin Stewardship Program
Public Access Policy**

WHEREAS the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund was reauthorized through 2007 Wisconsin Act 20, and

WHEREAS local governments and non-profit conservation organizations have historically been major partners with the Department of Natural Resources in addressing the goals of resource conservation and providing a wide variety of public outdoor recreation as envisioned by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program; and

WHEREAS to receive Stewardship funds, local governments are required to prepare and adopt Park and Open Space plans which establish local policies for the acquisition of parklands and their planned uses, and

WHEREAS Wisconsin Statutes 23.0916 defines “nature-based outdoor activities” and establishes the framework for access requirements to non Department of Natural Resources lands under the Stewardship program, and

WHEREAS the access requirement framework, under s.23.0916 Wis Stat impacts on the sovereignty of local government ordinances, policies and regulations to protect public safety, manage competing or conflicting parkland uses and the continuing eligibility of local governments with such ordinances and policies to receive future Stewardship grant funding; and

WHEREAS local governments have acquired more than 15,000 acres for parks and trails while providing more that \$91 million in local financing and private sector contributions to match Stewardship grants; and

WHEREAS over the past 20 years, 92 percent of all lands acquired through Stewardship grants are open to hunting and 98 percent open to fishing, and

WHEREAS existing Wisconsin Statute, 29.038, provides the proper mechanism for the Department of Natural Resources to address any perceived abuse of authority on the part of a local government in enacting regulations of hunting, fishing, trapping or management of wild animals, and

WHEREAS local governments should not be penalized by a denial or restriction of Stewardship grant funding for enacting ordinances and regulations they are authorized and obligated to implement.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Counties Association opposes any attempts to undermine the sovereignty of local government ordinances, policies and regulations to protect public safety, manage competing or conflicting parkland uses or deny or in any way restrict Stewardship grant funding to local governments that have enacted such ordinances, policies or regulations.