

Emergency Resolution

WWF Support for Continued DNR Payment of Aid in Lieu of Taxes to Local Units of Government for Land Purchased for Recreational Lands

Whereas, past and current Legislatures and Governors have been strong supporters of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund which since 1990 has purchased over 300,000 acres of land for fish, wildlife, parks, forests and natural areas in Wisconsin; and

Whereas, these Stewardship lands provide millions of days of recreational use, including hunting, fishing and trapping, for citizens from throughout the state and provide a strong recreational base to draw in hundreds of thousands of people from other states and thereby provide billions of dollars to Wisconsin's tourism economy; and

Whereas, when the Department of Natural Resources purchases land for recreational purposes, it is removed from the local property tax role and the DNR does not have to pay property taxes for the property; and

Whereas, in the past, to assist local units of government to offset this loss of property tax revenue, the Legislature instituted "Payments in Lieu of Taxes", however the amount of the payments were often as less than a dollar per acre; and

Whereas, because of this loss of property tax revenue, local units of government would often oppose the purchase of DNR lands for hunting, fishing and trapping; and

Whereas, the Legislature in 1991 remedied this situation by raising the Payment in Lieu of Taxes for DNR purchased lands to be the equivalent of what a private landowner would pay in property taxes for the property, thereby offsetting the loss of property tax revenue to the local unit of government; and

Whereas the proposed State Budget proposes to **totally** eliminate the Payment of Aid in Lieu of Taxes for any new DNR Stewardship purchases of land, which will hurt the revenue base of local units of government and lead to their opposition to further DNR purchases of land for hunting, fishing and trapping; and

Whereas, property purchased with Stewardship lands is open to broad recreational use by citizens from throughout the state and other states and it is unfair to local units of government to subsidize this wide-spread use through loss of local property tax revenue.

Now therefore be it resolved that the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation at its Annual Meeting in Stevens Point, Wisconsin on April 8-10, 2010 does hereby strongly support the DNR paying Payments in Lieu of Taxes equivalent to the purchased lands' full property taxes and requests that the Legislature change the State Budget Bill to continue making such payments.

Now therefore it be further resolved that the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation send a copy of this resolution to the Governor, the Legislature, the Natural Resources Board and the DNR Secretary,

Submitted by the Executive Committee of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
and by Jerry Knuth, Chair of the WWF Forestry and Parks Committee