

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Date: July 20, 2005

Contact: Julia Solomon, Outreach and Policy Coordinator, Gathering Waters Conservancy
608-251-9131 x 14; julia@gatheringwaters.org

Field Trips Celebrate Stewardship Fund

Recently, Wisconsin's premier land protection program, the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, has found itself in the spotlight. Articles and public statements commemorating the life of Gaylord Nelson have praised his foresight in laying the foundation for the conservation program that bears his name. When beginning his partial veto process this week before signing the state budget, Governor Doyle singled out the Stewardship Fund as a vital program that protects Wisconsin's natural heritage and deserves full funding.

Many Wisconsin citizens are not familiar with the Stewardship Fund, and now is a great time to learn more about this program that may have helped protect the special places in your own backyard. A series of field trips this summer gives the public a chance to explore some of the natural areas protected with the help of the Stewardship Fund.

Vicki Elkin, executive director of Gathering Waters Conservancy, says "The Stewardship Fund is important to everyone who lives in Wisconsin, because it protects the places we care about. Field trips are a great chance to get out and experience Stewardship properties near you."

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund was established fifteen years ago, and helps purchase critical lands for state parks, trails, forests, natural areas, stream banks for fishing and wildlife areas for hunting. Since its creation, the Stewardship Fund has protected more than 330,000 acres of Wisconsin's most important natural areas and recreation land. The Fund is authorized at \$60 million per year through 2010.

"At a cost of less than one-half of one percent of the state budget, the Stewardship Fund is saving the best of what remains of outdoor Wisconsin. It's a great investment that is critical to our state's tourist economy and our high quality of life," says Althea Dotzour, policy coordinator for Gathering Waters Conservancy.

What kinds of lands are protected by the Stewardship Fund? They represent the full range of natural features in Wisconsin—blufflands, wetlands, prairies, wild lakes, and hardwood

forests, to name a few—and some of them are on display this summer. Gathering Waters Conservancy and land trusts throughout Wisconsin are sponsoring a summer-long *Parade of Preserves* consisting of field trips, tours, and work days to Stewardship properties all over the state. These events are open to the public and are designed to give community members a chance to share in the success of the Stewardship Fund.

“Many people don’t realize how many special places are protected with Stewardship Fund dollars,” says Elkin. “Chances are that your favorite local picnic spot, fishing area, or hiking trail is protected with the help of Stewardship funds.”

The list of *Parade of Preserves* field trips is included below. For more information about these trips or other opportunities to experience the Stewardship properties near you, contact your local land trust, or contact Julia Solomon at Gathering Waters Conservancy at (608) 251-9131 or julia@gatheringwaters.org.

Summer 2005 Stewardship Fund *Parade of Preserves*:

<u>Sponsoring Land Trust:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Date:</u>
Door County Land Trust	Bay Shore Blufflands Preserve.	Saturday, June 25th
West Wisconsin Land Trust	Maiden Rock Bluff and Pine Creek	Saturday, July 16
Mississippi Valley Conservancy	Sugar Creek Bluff State Natural Area	Saturday, August 6
Ozaukee Washington Land Trust	Huiras Lake State Natural Area	Saturday, August 20
West Wisconsin Land Trust	Wayward Beaver Lodge	Saturday, August 20

###