

Clean Wisconsin

(Founded as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade)

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Clean Wisconsin calls on Joint Finance to reverse decisions on Smart Growth and Public Lands

Madison, WI -- Wisconsin's Joint Finance Committee made decisions that will harm Wisconsin's communities and special places this last Wednesday and Thursday. These decisions will affect Wisconsin's natural resources and will have economic consequences for communities across the state. Clean Wisconsin calls on the Joint Finance Committee to reverse their decisions on the Smart Growth program and to use the DNR Stewardship Funds to buy land the state already owns before Wisconsin lands and tax payers are affected.

The Joint Finance decision would force the Department of Natural Resources to buy land already owned by another state agency, the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands. The DNR would have to use up much of its Stewardship Fund money to buy this land. This is senseless.

The Board lands, almost all are in northeastern part of the state, are already protected, open to the public, and well managed. These purchases would leave little money in the Stewardship Fund for protecting other ecologically sensitive and beautiful lands across the state from the developer's axe.

Another decision, to repeal the state's Smart Growth Comprehensive Planning laws, throws out years of work and state funding of community planning. The Smart Growth law, passed in 1999 with support from builders, realtors, municipal groups and conservation groups, required that local communities making land use decisions write and adopt comprehensive plans by 2010. It also provided grant money for local communities to research and develop their comprehensive plans.

Roughly 40% of Wisconsin's communities have already taken advantage of the grants to help them plan for smarter, more efficient development. Local comprehensive planning allows communities to create more effective and efficient transportation systems, create more cost effective plans for water and sewer services and to resolve legal disputes with neighboring communities. Local comprehensive planning saves Wisconsin's communities and tax payers money while allowing local communities to have the final say in how their development and growth will proceed.

Now, as a result of the votes by a few short sighted individuals on the Joint Finance Committee, the long term outlook for protecting Wisconsin's land for future generations and for growing Wisconsin's communities and reducing taxes through smart comprehensive planning looks bleak.

Clean Wisconsin calls on the Legislature to restore the Smart Growth program including the planning grants and to reverse the JFC decision to use the DNR Stewardship Funds to buy land the state already owns.

Clean Wisconsin, an environmental advocacy organization founded as Wisconsin's Environmental Decade, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and corporations accountable.

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