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4 **A RESOLUTION**

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6 Calling upon the State of Wisconsin to reauthorize the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson
7 Stewardship Program and increase its appropriations to the largest county in Wisconsin
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10 WHEREAS, in his 1949 “The Land Ethic,” famed conservationist and longtime
11 Wisconsin resident, Aldo Leopold wrote, “A land ethic. . . [affirms nature’s] right to
12 continued existence, and, at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state. .
13 . [changing] the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain
14 member and citizen of it.”; and
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16 WHEREAS, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
17 (DNR), Wisconsin has lost approximately half of its wetlands from prior to European
18 settlement, and according to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning
19 Commission report, “A Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection
20 and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin” 1997 Planning Report No. 42, “of
21 the more than 24,370 square miles of original presettlement vegetation occupying the
22 landscape at the beginning of European settlement in southern Wisconsin, over 99.5
23 percent has been either significantly degraded or lost.”, and a 2010 update reports
24 degradation of important natural areas has continued in southeastern Wisconsin; and
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26 WHEREAS, in 1989 the Wisconsin Legislature and Governor Tommy Thompson
27 created the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program (the Program),
28 named in 1993 for Wisconsin conservationists who respectively were a former governor,
29 and a former governor and United States Senator, the latter of whom as a senator
30 helped create Earth Day; and
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32 WHEREAS, according to the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) January
33 2019 Informational Paper 61, the Program began as a 10-year initiative authorized to
34 spend a total of approximately \$231 million to “acquire land to expand nature-based
35 outdoor recreational opportunities and protect environmentally sensitive areas”; and
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37 WHEREAS the State of Wisconsin has twice reauthorized the Program, which
38 the LFB reports resulted in the purchase of 669,806 acres between July 1, 1990 and
39 June 30, 2018, bringing the total of publicly held land to approximately 5.9 million acres,
40 approximately 17 percent of the State’s land area, but without reauthorization the
41 program expires at the end of the Wisconsin 2020 Fiscal Year; and

42 WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Governor proposed extending the Program beginning
43 in the Wisconsin 2021-2023 Fiscal Biennium for 10 years until the end of Fiscal Year
44 2031-2032 at a rate of \$70 million per year while also designating \$700 million in
45 general obligation bonding supported by the State general fund and altering the
46 Program to better reflect the composition of grant applications; and

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48 WHEREAS, the Program has directly benefitted Milwaukee County financially as
49 the Program recently helped fund 2016 Adopted Capital Project WP492-Oak Leaf Trail
50 Root River Extension, which lengthened the Oak Leaf Trail to traverse the Rock Sports
51 Complex and provide another direct connection of the Trail with the City of Franklin (File
52 No. 17-445); and

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54 WHEREAS, as of June 30, 2018, the LFB reports Milwaukee County local
55 governments have received more than \$4.8 million and nonprofit conservation
56 organizations have received more than \$4 million in grants for land acquisition and local
57 assistance grants from the Program, totaling nearly \$9.9 million and conserving 378
58 acres in Milwaukee County; and

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60 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County would like to see more Program dollars spent in
61 Milwaukee County as the County has roughly a fifth of the State's population and
62 commerce conducted in Milwaukee County is by far the single largest contributor to
63 State coffers; and

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65 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County would like to see the continuance of the Program
66 to safeguard nature for its own sake but also for future generations to enjoy the wonder
67 and peace of wild areas; and

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69 WHEREAS, the Committee on Parks, Energy, and Environment, at its meeting of
70 March 16, 2021, recommended adoption of File No. 21-316 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,

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72 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby calls upon the State of Wisconsin
73 to reauthorize the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Program (the Program)
74 for another 10 years, providing adequate funding for expansion of land available for
75 nature-based outdoor recreational opportunities while protecting and connecting
76 environmentally sensitive areas; and

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78 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Milwaukee County requests the Wisconsin
79 Department of Natural Resources increase its Program appropriations for land
80 acquisition and local assistance grants in Milwaukee County; and

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82 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Office of Government Affairs staff is
83 authorized and requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the
84 Wisconsin Governor and state policymakers, and support legislation that achieves the
85 criteria outlined in this resolution.

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