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## **LAND TRUST COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO GOVERNOR WALKER'S BUDGET ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Madison, WI – Gathering Waters Conservancy commends Governor Scott Walker for following through on his campaign promise to support the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. “With his executive budget proposal, Gov. Walker has made it clear that the Stewardship Program is a top priority for his administration,” said Mike Strigel, Executive Director of Gathering Waters Conservancy, the umbrella organization for Wisconsin’s 50 land trusts.

“We agree that the state must focus its scarce resources on priority lands,” Strigel added “And we look forward to working with the Legislature and the DNR to ensure that Stewardship remains efficient and effective and is used to benefit individuals and families throughout Wisconsin.”

Named for two of Wisconsin’s most respected former governors and land conservation champions – Republican Warren Knowles and Democrat Gaylord Nelson, the Stewardship Program has protected over 600,000 acres of Wisconsin’s special places, like the Baraboo Hills State Recreation Area, the Hank Aaron State Trail in Milwaukee, and the Wild Rivers Legacy Forest—64,000 acres of forest, wild lakes and rivers in northern Wisconsin.

“Everyone who enjoys spending time outdoors in Wisconsin benefits from the Stewardship Program. It guarantees that our children and grandchildren will have special places to hike, bird watch, hunt, fish, trap, and paddle,” Strigel said. “As the Governor has stated, this program plays a critical role in Wisconsin’s \$13 billion tourism industry and \$22 billion forestry industry, leverages millions of private and federal dollars, and enjoys broad public support.”

Stewardship is one of only a handful of state programs that leverages private, local, and federal funds to match the state’s investment of taxpayer dollars. Under the program, land trusts and local governments match these state dollars, often at more than a 2:1 rate. To date, these partners have raised over \$188,000,000 to match the state’s investment.

**Gathering Waters Conservancy** is a statewide land conservation organization founded 17 years ago to strengthen Wisconsin’s private non-profit land trusts. Through technical assistance, outreach and public policy advocacy, Gathering Waters helps land trusts, landowners, and communities protect the places that make Wisconsin special. [www.gatheringwaters.org](http://www.gatheringwaters.org).