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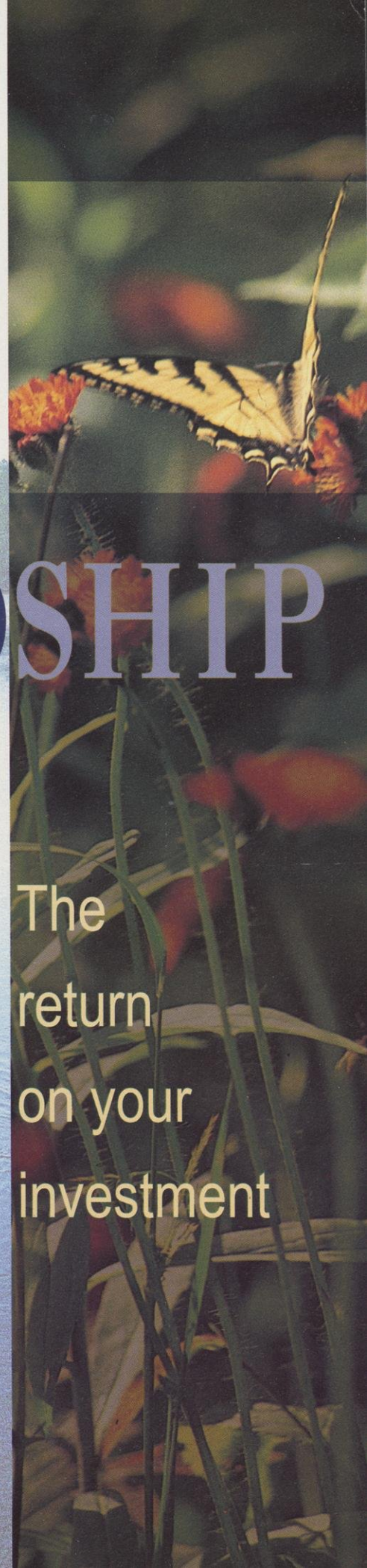
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S

TEWARDSHIP



The
return
on your
investment



What a portfolio!

So, how did you spend nearly \$23.1 million every year for the past four years?

Let's see: You helped a local community association resurface the popular Elroy-Sparta Trail, and you funded more than 100 projects to make state parks more accessible to all people. You made roughing it a little smoother by renovating 15 state campgrounds. You even fixed a leaky dam at Governor Dodge State Park.

What else? You added 80 acres of prime northern wet mesic forest — the type of woods that once covered much of northern Wisconsin — to the Jay Creek State Natural Area in Jackson County. You widened the ribbon of wetlands and uplands in the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. You secured cleaner water, better fishing and 7,000 feet of shoreline along the Milwaukee River, and you protected the rare Cooper's hawk and the delicate dwarf lake iris in Door County's Mink River Estuary.

You also built a volleyball court and a playground in the village park with the people of Woodman (pop. 116). And you deserve the applause for giving the majestic solitude of the extraordinary wild Turtle-Flambeau Flowage to the people of Wisconsin.

Yes, you did all these good things — and many, many more — through the Stewardship Program.

The Stewardship Program was established by the Legisla-

ture in 1989 to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to maintain and increase recreational opportunities across the state. It's the latest in a series of programs ensuring that the things people love about Wisconsin — its naturally diverse beauty and its wealth of possibilities for outdoor fun — will be here for future generations to discover and enjoy.

Stewardship is funded through general obligation borrowing: The state sells bonds to investors to raise money, then pays back the debt with taxes that will be collected through the year 2010. The cost is spread out over time and shared with future users of public lands and outdoor facilities.

Each year the Stewardship Program distributes nearly \$23.1 million for projects all across the state. Come take a look at how you have contributed to Wisconsin's well-being.

And by the way — thanks!



PHOTOS BY ROBERT QUEEN

Stewardship raises Wisconsin to new heights: Scaling bluffs at Interstate State Park; an osprey's view of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage.





JEAN B. MEYER

Communities on the state trail system often get an economic boost from increased tourism. Stewardship funds are used to expand and improve the trail network.

1. General Land Acquisition

\$6.7 million

supports the purchase of land for state parks and forests, wildlife areas and other DNR properties

2. Recreational Development

\$3.5 million

for maintaining or improving state park facilities and building new recreation projects

3. Local Park Aids

\$2.25 million

the matching grants are used to purchase and develop local parks

4. Lower Wisconsin River

\$2 million

used to purchase land along the Lower Wisconsin River for recreation, scenic beauty, and resource protection

5. Urban Rivers

\$1.9 million

provides matching grants to local governments to acquire land to protect natural resources and provide recreation along rivers in cities and villages

6. Natural Areas

\$1.5 million

earmarked for lands with special scientific or ecological value, to help the DNR and nonprofit conservation groups protect rare or endangered habitats and species

The structure of Stewardship

Stewardship funds are distributed in 12 categories, assuring that the program's far-reaching goals for conservation and recreation will be met in a variety of ways. The dollar figure is the amount that can be spent annually on projects in each category.

7. Habitat Restoration Areas

\$1.5 million

devoted to restoring wildlife habitat previously used for agriculture

8. Trails

\$1 million

used to expand and develop the state trail system

9. Streambank Protection

\$1 million

protects water quality and fisheries through the purchase of land and easements along streams

10. Urban Green Space

\$750,000

grants help local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations purchase scenic or ecologically valuable sites in urban areas

11. Ice Age Trail

\$500,000

nonprofit organizations use grants to acquire land for the Ice Age Trail

12. Natural Areas Heritage Match Grant

\$500,000

matches donations of land or money for natural areas

ACQUISITION

NORTH OR SOUTH, EAST OR WEST, STEWARDSHIP PROTECTS THE LAND THAT SAYS “WISCONSIN.”



ROBERT QUEEN

Lower Wisconsin Riverway

It's just you, a canoe and 92.3 scenic miles of shimmering water, mist-shrouded bluffs, wild backwaters and sandy shores. It's the Lower Wisconsin Riverway — a valley of stunning natural beauty winding from Prairie du Sac in Sauk County to the confluence of the Wisconsin and the Mississippi at Wyalusing State Park in Grant County.

Although parts of the river's banks have been publicly owned since 1917, it wasn't until 1989 that the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway boundaries were made official by law. When it's complete, the Riverway will encompass 77,314 acres of breathtaking riverine landscape unmatched in the Midwest. About 38,000 Riverway acres have been acquired so far.

The Department of Natural Resources purchases land within Riverway boundaries with Stewardship funds set aside specifically for this important project. A recent acquisition, the 525-acre Blackhawk Ridge Recreation Area near Sauk City, features hilly oak woods criss-crossed by horse and ski trails. The site has historical significance, too — it contains Indian mounds, which will be protected in cooperation with area Native American tribes.

Hook Lake/Grass Lake Natural Area

Not all Stewardship acquisitions are as vast as the Turtle-Flambeau. Consider the Hook Lake/Grass Lake Natural Area just four miles south of Madison's city limits in Dane County.

Parcels recently purchased with Stewardship funds and a contribution from Ducks Unlimited have brought the total area of this property to approximately 600 acres.

Hook Lake is a relic bog; Grass Lake, one of the few remaining deep water marshes in the county. This wetland/upland/grassland complex supports native plant and animal species and provides something even rarer than some of the species it contains: a glimpse of what the southern Wisconsin landscape looked like prior to European settlement.

Although it's small, the Hook Lake/Grass Lake Natural Area has a big place in the lives of urban dwellers, who visit the property to hike, ski, hunt and study the living past.

Natural areas near urban areas bring the outdoors closer to home.



ROBERT QUEEN

DON BLEGEN



The bracing Flambeau River. Wild places refresh the senses and restore the spirit.

Turtle-Flambeau Flowage

Should the buy of a lifetime come along, it helps to have a little money set aside. So, when the Chippewa and Flambeau Improvement Company offered the entire 14,321-acre Turtle-Flambeau Flowage to the State of Wisconsin in 1990 for a mere \$9 million and some change, Wisconsin was ready — thanks to the Stewardship Program's General Land Acquisition fund.

The extraordinary Iron County waterway is the North at

its very best. Set deep in a forest of hardwoods and white birch, the flowage's undisturbed, serpentine shores offer seekers of the wild a mystery in every secluded bay. What's around the bend? Try eagles and osprey nesting in stands of old-growth hemlock. A bear lumbering down to the water for a drink. Stringers of walleye and panfish, or perhaps a duel with a muskellunge. And one, or two, or a few of the flowage's 314 islands to explore.

Land acquisition myths

If you've lived in Wisconsin long enough, you've likely heard the phrase: "What the Lord giveth, the DNR taketh away."

The jab masks uncertainty about how the Department of Natural Resources acquires property and what happens to the local tax base when it does.

"A lot of people think that the DNR can just go out, claim a piece of property, and that's that," says Dick Steffes, chief of the Realty Management and Operations Section in DNR's Bureau of Property Management. The assumption stems from a misunderstanding of "eminent domain" — the right of a government to take private property for public use.

"Although the department can exercise eminent domain, it's a method we seldom, seldom use," Steffes says. "First of all, it's our policy to buy land from willing sellers. We don't threaten landowners and say 'If you don't sell to us, we'll just take your land.' That's no way to do business."

Eminent domain is raised only when there's an overwhelming public need that outweighs private ownership. Steffes offered the example of the Bearskin State Trail in Oneida County: "An absentee landowner refused to sell a small piece of property connecting two parts of the trail. Bicyclists, hikers, and snowmobilers had to get off the trail, go around the property on a public road with no shoulders that was also a major route for logging trucks, then get back on the trail. It was just too hazardous."

The DNR must obtain approval from the Natural Resources Board, the governor and the natural resources committees in both houses of the Legislature before it can take a landowner to court on eminent domain.

"Fortunately, we were able to negotiate the Bearskin transaction out of court," Steffes says. "We've had fewer than 10 instances in the past 20 years in which the idea of eminent domain was even raised, and there are no cases in which the department actu-

ally condemned land over that time."

And after the DNR buys property? Well, everybody knows the land is taken off the tax rolls and the local community will never see another cent of revenue from it again, right?

Stewardship coordinator Craig Walters says that statement is only partially correct. "It's true that public land is taken off the tax rolls," Walters notes. "But the DNR must pay 'aids in lieu of taxes' to help local communities pay for schools, roads and other necessities."

In the past, the department was required to contribute aid, but at a discounted rate and only to towns, villages and cities. Counties and school districts did not receive DNR aid payments, so other state aids were used to offset the loss in tax base. "Still, the arrangement led some landowners to believe that DNR land acquisitions made their property taxes go up," Walters says.

In 1992, the tax laws were changed. The DNR now pays aid in lieu of taxes based on the parcel's purchase



price and the jurisdiction's tax rate. "The money is distributed to all taxing jurisdictions, not just towns, villages and cities," says Walters. "The DNR is treated just like a regular taxpaying property owner."

MICHAEL WEINER

(above) A careful survey is part of a good land transaction.
(left) Forest floor.

GRANTS

STEWARDSHIP GRANTS MAKE GOING THE EXTRA MILE EASIER.

Ice Age Trail

A thousand miles is a lot of ground to cover, especially if you're doing it on foot. But that's exactly what fans of the Ice Age Trail hope to be able to do someday — with the help of Stewardship.

About 470 miles of the National Scenic Trail following the edge of the glacier's last stand in Wisconsin are now in public ownership. "That was the easy part, because many of those miles crossed through state and county parks" says Bill Moorman, state trails coordinator. "Now comes the challenge of purchasing the remaining miles from willing sellers."

The Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation, a nonprofit organization, raises funds to ensure there's money available when landowners are ready to sell. (Other organizations are welcome to join in the effort, too.) Stewardship matches those donations dollar for dollar to double the foundation's buying power and bring the end of the trail in sight.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT QUEEN

With Stewardship, you can follow the path of the Ice Age or go around and around at your favorite park.

The Woodman Village Park

Expect to be pleasantly exhausted after an hour in Woodman, Grant County (pop. 116). The Woodmen, women and children get tired of challenging each other, so it's likely you'll be asked to join in a pick-up basketball game, an impromptu volleyball match, a set of tennis or even a contest to see who can swing higher on the swingset.

The tiny village built sports courts and erected playground equipment in the village park with a grant from Stewardship's Local Park Aids fund. Stewardship funds were also used to pave park paths, do some landscaping, construct new sanitary facilities and make a picnic area accessible for all. The community put up half the money and Stewardship provided the rest. With Stewardship, Wisconsin communities large and small can make life more fun for their residents. Tennis, anyone?



ROBERT QUEEN

Water Spirit Nature Area

Tucked along the west side of Big Cedar Lake near West Bend lies the 110-acre Water Spirit Nature Area — a living monument to what local units of government, nonprofit groups and state government can do to protect something special.

The water quality of the kettle lake, 135 feet deep in parts, is excellent despite heavy use by residents and recreational boaters and anglers from the Milwaukee metropolitan area. About seven years ago, that quality was threatened by manure runoff from a nearby farm. The Big Cedar Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (PRD), a local unit of government charged with protecting the lake, sought state grants to purchase the farm. No funds were available. With public approval, the PRD used its taxing authority to purchase the farm.

The Cedar Lakes Conservation Foundation, a local nonprofit group, bought the PRD farm. Then the foundation applied for and received a Local Park Aids Stewardship grant and used the funds to buy an ecologically significant 40-acre farm adjacent to the PRD farm. The two farms became the Water Spirit Nature Area. With appropriate deed restrictions in place, the foundation returned ownership of the nature area to the PRD.

"Without Stewardship, we would never have been able to make this work," says Geoffrey Maclay, an area resident who helped arrange the transactions. The Water Spirit Nature Area features hiking trails, and local volunteers have planted more than 25,000 trees and a prairie on the site.



Stewardship provides grants for preservation, recreation and conservation. (above) Skimmer dragonfly; (facing page, top) birdwatching at dusk; (facing page, bottom) a sled takes flight.

STEPHEN J. LANG

Working together for Wisconsin

There isn't a nonprofit conservation organization in all the realm that hasn't wished for more funds to protect rare habitat or secure more breathing room for a favorite species. Nor is there any community in the kingdom that doesn't need more public places or help with the development of public spaces.

Enter Stewardship. By providing funds to nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) to cover half the cost of purchasing property, and by helping communities acquire land or develop, restore or renovate public properties, Stewardship brings together the ability of the DNR, local units of government and private citizens to preserve Wisconsin's special places.

"With Stewardship, two equally beneficial things happen: The state can leverage its limited funds, and nonprofit organizations can leverage theirs," says Janet Beach Hanson, DNR's nonprofit conservation organization manager. "Nonprofits that acquire land can preserve twice as many acres as they were able to before Stewardship." The department works in partnership with nonprofit organizations, local governments and individual landowners across the state on many different types of conservation projects.

The idea behind the grants is simple: Land conservation is too big a job for a state agency to handle alone.

"Citizens have an important role to play in protecting the environment and Stewardship was created with that in mind," Beach

Hanson says. "Members and volunteers of nonprofit groups have the talent, energy, enthusiasm and commitment; what they often lack is sufficient funding. Now Stewardship grants are available to help them preserve the natural features of their local communities."

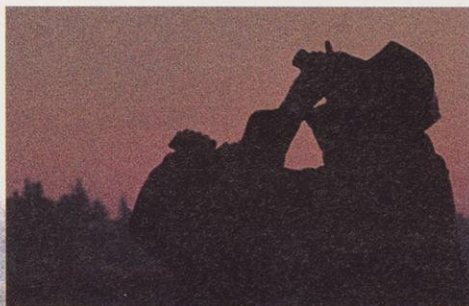
The Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit conservation organization, has been a partner with the Department of Natural Resources on a number of Stewardship projects. Kim Wright, director of land protection for the conservancy's Wisconsin chapter, says the organization has used funds from Stewardship's Natural Areas program to acquire about 2,648 acres at eight different sites. "Stewardship enabled us to double our efforts, to really stretch the private contributions we receive from our members," says Wright. "It's given us a chance to protect some exceptional plant and animal communities."

To be eligible for the Stewardship program, nonprofit conservation organizations must be tax-exempt and have the capacity to purchase and manage land. "We're looking for viable groups that plan to be here in the future," says Beach Hanson. She recommends that interested organizations begin by contacting the community services specialist (CSS) in the nearest DNR district office. "It's one-stop shopping," she says. "You can discuss your group's project with the CSS to see if it might be eligible for any of the Stewardship programs before the paperwork begins. If it seems like a good match, the CSS will help you prepare a project application." (See page 10 for a list of CSSs.)

Communities of all sizes can acquire land for parks, riverways and nature preserves through the program's Urban Green Space and Urban Rivers funds. Again, Stewardship will contribute half of what it will cost to acquire a parcel.

Stewardship grants generally are awarded through statewide competitions. There's one aspect of Stewardship, however, in which the funds are earmarked for specific regions. Each DNR district receives a certain amount of Local Park Aids money to be spent only in that district to help communities develop and improve local parks and buy additional land for recreation.

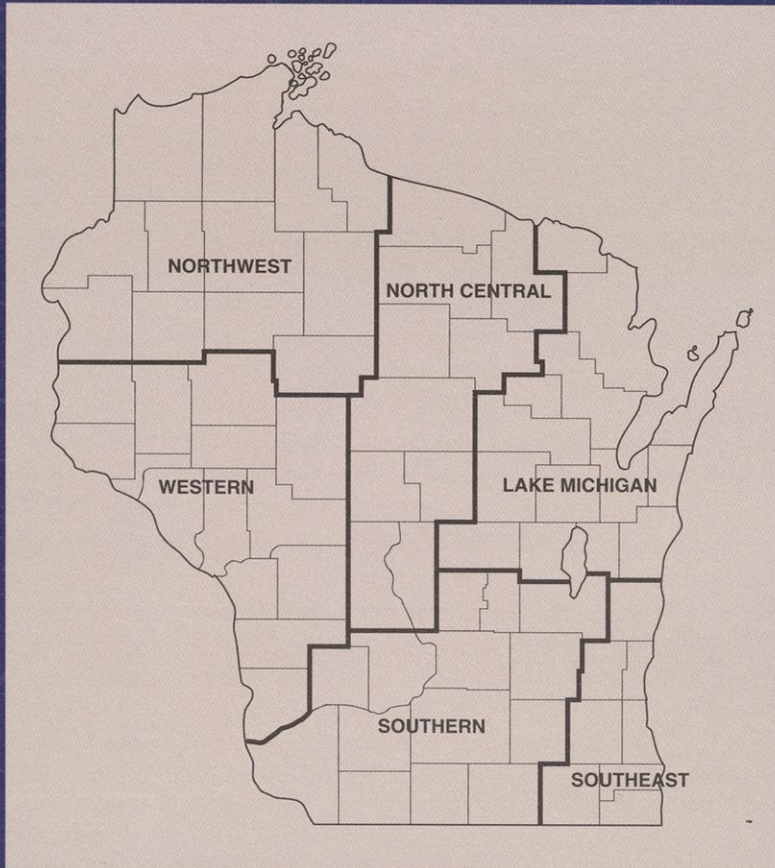
Duane Hofstetter, DNR grant program manager, says Stewardship's Local Park Aids program helps spread the fun around. "With grants distributed in this way, even small communities benefit," he says. "Maybe a town wants to put in a basketball court, or a village needs to improve disabled accessibility in a well-used park. It could be a city that wants to build a new picnic area or a trail system. Stewardship can provide half the funds for the project."



DEWIS YOCKERS



JEAN B. MEYER



Your DNR district community services specialist can help your community or non-profit conservation organization learn more about Stewardship programs:

Southern District:

Darlene Karow, (608) 275-3265
Stephanie Brouwer, (608) 275-3218

Southeast District:

Tom Blotz, (414) 263-8610
Dan Kaemmerer, (414) 263-8704
Gene Parks, (414) 263-8622

Lake Michigan District:

Jeff Pagels, (414) 492-5821
Gary Hanson, (414) 492-5823

Western District:

Jake VanderVoort, (715) 839-3751
Mary VanFossen, (715) 839-1631

North Central District:

Pat Zatopa, (715) 369-8928

Northwest District:

Phil Wallace, (715) 635-4159
Diane Conklin, (715) 635-4130

Yellowlegs in a Mississippi River backwater.



DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING WITH STEWARDSHIP TO MAKE BEAUTIFUL PLACES EVEN BETTER.

Great River Trail campsites

After a day touring the Mississippi River bottomlands by bicycle, it's nice to have a comfortable place to stretch your legs, sip a cool drink, and watch the river flow. Cyclists (and hikers) need only make a short turn off the Great River Trail at Perrot State Park near Trempealeau to find 97 campsites at the ready for rest and relaxation.

Park managers will use Stewardship funds to upgrade the park's electrical service, add showers, and make the upper and lower campgrounds accessible for all. The Stewardship Program continues the Wisconsin tradition of offering enjoyable outdoor accommodations in beautiful settings.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT QUEEN

Roche a Cri stairway

Once the impressive vista of the Central Wisconsin plain was hidden from human sight, revealed only to those hardy (or foolhardy) enough to scale a huge rock jutting 300 feet into the air. Today that same fabulous view is available to everybody, with Stewardship-funded improvements to Roche a Cri State Park.

Roche a Cri, located just north of Adams/Friendship in Adams County, was once an island in glacial Lake Wisconsin. The water's gone, of course, but the rock remains. With a sturdy white oak stairway and boardwalk built by a determined Wisconsin Conservation Corps crew, and a ground-level interpretive area for those unable to climb, everyone can take in the view from the top. The "stairway to heaven" protects the soft stone, the plants, and the signatures of time — Indian petroglyphs and graffiti more than a century old — carved into the rock's face.

It's hard to improve on nature, but attractive picnic areas and a stairway to the top of a Central Wisconsin landmark make the outdoors easier to enjoy. Stewardship funds support construction projects in state and local parks.



BENEFITS

STEWARDSHIP RENEWS COMMUNITY PRIDE AND RESTORES LANDSCAPES TO THEIR NATURAL SPLENDOR.



RON PIENING

Neighborhood streams are valuable natural features that shouldn't be neglected. Stewardship grants give communities a head start on river revitalization.

Urban Rivers

Major transportation routes and sources of economic vitality — that's what rivers were before the arrival of trains and trucks caused many Wisconsin communities to turn their backs on the water. Stewardship's newest fund helps to return rivers to their rightful place as thriving landmarks in urban landscapes.

The Urban Rivers fund helps communities buy land along their riverways to improve the environmental quality of the river corridor and to restore and preserve these special areas for everyone to enjoy. Land bought with Urban Rivers funds may be used for riverwalks, boat access, greenways, parks and other recreational needs.

"We'd like to draw people back to their rivers," says Dave O'Malley, DNR urban rivers specialist.

O'Malley says the program emphasizes planning, so communities and local, county and state agencies work together to look at their riverways as a whole. "Working on isolated sections won't help revitalize a river," he says. "With a good plan, communities can offer more recreation for residents, appeal to tourists and improve water quality." Beloit and River Falls are two cities looking into Stewardship's Urban Rivers program on behalf of the Rock and the Kinnickinnic. Does the river in your town need a little attention?

Goose Pond Sanctuary

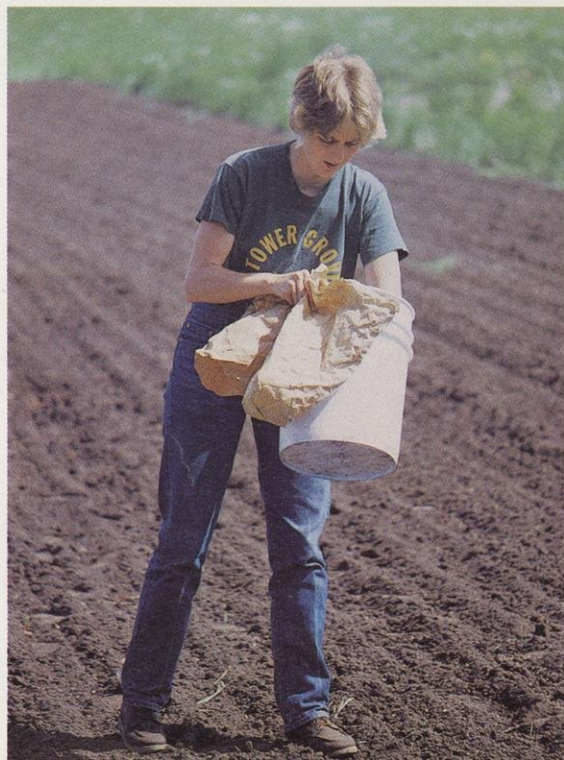
It's called Goose Pond, but the geese will soon be making room for bobolinks and blue-winged teal, mallards, pheasants, grasshopper sparrows and even the occasional badger on this grassland and wetland restoration project just south of Poyette in Columbia County.

The Madison Audubon Society used a Stewardship Habitat Restoration Grant to acquire 74 acres on the site. The group is returning 18 acres to wetland and restoring about 50 acres to tallgrass prairie. A one-acre plot of winter cover for wildlife will also be planted.

Habitat restoration funds are used to acquire and restore land for wildlife. At Goose Pond, volunteers "undeveloped" the site by removing fences and planting more than 40 species of native Wisconsin plants.

Stewardship habitat funding also supports a special project called the Glacial Habitat Restoration Area (GHRA). The idea is to establish grassland and wetland habitat on a "landscape scale" across Columbia, Dodge, Fond du Lac and Winnebago counties. Habitat will be restored in relatively small tracts and become part of the rural mosaic of farms and blocks of public land; the goal is to restore 10 percent of the available uplands to grassland and 10 percent of the historical wetlands in the GHRA. Land will be acquired through easements, purchase or donations.

Restoring grassland habitat: Volunteers sowed the prairie seed at Goose Pond, where the Madison Audubon Society acquired land with Stewardship grants. (facing page) A female bobolink.



BARB REUTER



STEPHEN J. LANG

Federal funds supplement Stewardship

Three federal programs help stretch the scope of Wisconsin's Stewardship Program. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program (commonly called the Pittman-Robertson program) and the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program provide funding for land acquisition and for some DNR staff involved in acquiring property and managing fisheries and wildlife areas. These programs supplement Stewardship funds on some projects for restoring wildlife habitat and improving fisheries.

Wisconsin also receives funds from the LAWCON (Land and Water Conservation) Program, the only federal program for local park development. Funding for LAWCON is decided in congressional budget debates. In the late 1970s, Wisconsin's LAWCON funds averaged about \$6-7 million per year, but that figure has dropped to \$500,000 a year, split about half-and-half between DNR properties and local parks. In part, the Stewardship Program was instituted to help make up for the shortfall.

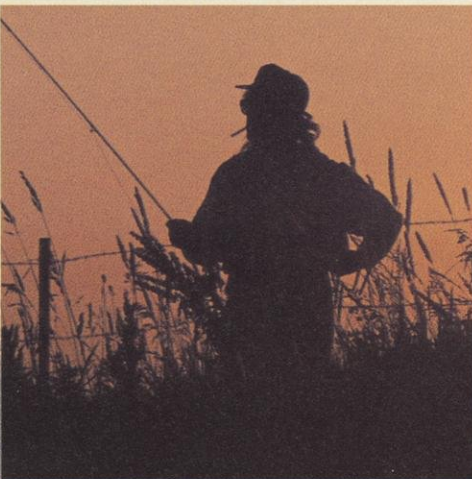
Double your contribution

People who have taken the concept of stewardship to heart are heartened by Stewardship's Natural Heritage Area Match Grant Program: Donations of land, easements or funds from individuals are matched dollar-for-dollar to preserve choice natural areas around the state.

If you want to protect what's wild about Wisconsin, keep the Natural Heritage Area Match Grant in mind. Contact Mark Martin at (608)266-8916 for details.

ROBERT QUEEN

Whether you're angling for a fish or aiming for a basket, it's likely that a combination of federal aid programs and Stewardship grants helped stretch the dollars of your community or nonprofit conservation group.



DUANE HOPFSTETTER

PARTNERSHIPS

NATURE BENEFITS WHEN NONPROFIT GROUPS, COMMUNITIES AND STATE AGENCIES JOIN TOGETHER IN STEWARDSHIP.



ROBERT QUEEN

Wild bergamot and butterflies grace Quincy Bluff Preserve, a landscape managed jointly by The Nature Conservancy and the Department of Natural Resources.

Quincy Bluff Preserve

Home to sandhill cranes and northern harriers, the gently rolling landscape of the Quincy Bluff Preserve in Adams County features sedge meadows, oak woods, prairies, ancient sand dunes and sandstone mesas. The Wisconsin Chapter of the Nature Conservancy began assembling the preserve in 1990, acquiring parcels in the area first from individuals and later from the Georgia-Pacific Corporation. The Department of Natural Resources also owns land at Quincy Bluff, and the conservancy and the department jointly manage the preserve. With Stewardship funds, the conservancy can add

more acreage to the preserve, which will, when complete, encompass nearly 10,500 acres.

An area this large can be managed as an entire landscape. Fire, a vital component of natural communities in Wisconsin's Central Sands area, will be used at the site in controlled burns to mimic the wildfires that once swept through the prairies. In the years to come, the vast open expanses of Quincy Bluff Preserve will be bursting with prairie flowers and butterflies — an extraordinary gift for the generations to come.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT QUEEN

Green Circle Trail

Going around in circles may frustrate some, but the people of Stevens Point and environs seem to like it just fine. They follow the Green Circle Trail — a convenient, attractive 24-mile bicycle and foot path ringing the entire area.

Tom Schrader, Stevens Point's director of parks and recreation, said some residents thought it might be a good idea to connect area parks with a greenway. The Chamber of Commerce formed the Green Circle Committee

in 1989, worked out a route, and began talking to private landowners whose property the path would cross. Next, the committee held public meetings about the trail, then introduced local municipalities to the concept. "We wanted to bring this idea to the people first," Schrader says. Portage County, the cities of Stevens Point and Whiting, the village of Plover and the town of Hull thought the idea had merit.

The Stewardship Program is assisting the committee in purchasing an 18-foot wide corridor of land to encircle the area. Schrader says most residents are within a half-mile or so of the trail. "It's green space that's beautiful and useful," he notes. "And the project received an award from the National Park Service for building partnerships among people, their governments and business."

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Written by Maureen Meeozzi

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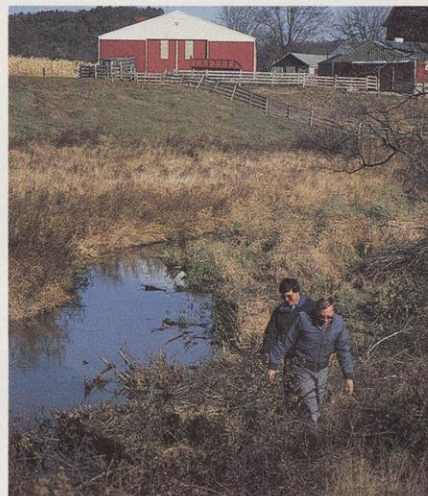
COVER PHOTOS: TIGER SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY, JEAN B. MEYER. CANOEING THE WISCONSIN RIVER, ROBERT QUEEN. CITY TODDLERS AND DUCKS, ROBERT QUEEN.

Little Lemonweir River

Scot Ironside, a DNR fisheries biologist, rested his arm on a fence post, looked out across a grassy stretch of Little Lemonweir River bank, and pulled a Yogi Berra: "It's in perpetuity forever!" he exclaimed.

Ironside and partner Phil Lepinski, a DNR land agent, are two of many DNR employees and members of non-profit groups who wear out their boots walking from property to property discussing the benefits of Stewardship's Streambank Protection fund with willing landowners.

The idea is to put a strip of land about 66 feet wide on both sides of the stream into a conservation easement. The buffer prevents runoff from muddying the waters and ruining fish habitat. "Using Stewardship funds, the department or a nonprofit conservation group buys certain rights — the right to leave the land cover undisturbed, the right to work on the streambank if necessary, the right to allow people to fish along the banks," says Lepinski. The money is paid to the property owner in one lump sum. The property owner retains the title to the land and pays the taxes. "The easement remains with the property when it's sold, so the streambank is protected into the future," Lepinski notes.



On the trail, on the banks — Stewardship grants build and strengthen partnerships among organizations, governments, businesses and individuals.

"The easement program gives landowners a great opportunity to make a big difference in the quality of a stream flowing right through their property," says Ironside. Although convincing landowners to enter the easement program was slow going at first, Ironside says business is picking up: "Word gets around. People see their neighbors doing something good and they figure it's worth a try."

Stewardship's Streambank Protection fund isn't just for rural waters — water quality in urban rivers and streams also can be improved with conservation easements.