
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



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2021 Wisconsin Act 173
[2021 Senate Bill 664]

**Unobligated Stewardship
Funds for Water
Infrastructure Projects in
State Parks**

BACKGROUND

The Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship program, administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), authorizes the state to incur public debt to acquire land to expand recreational opportunities and protect environmentally sensitive areas; develop outdoor recreational facilities on state conservation lands; and provide grants to local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations to acquire or develop land for outdoor recreational activities, acquire forestland, and develop all-terrain and utility terrain vehicle trails and facilities.

The stewardship program consists of five subprograms. State law establishes the amounts that DNR may obligate in each fiscal year through 2025-26 for expenditures under each of these subprograms. State law specifies that if DNR does not obligate an amount authorized to be obligated for a subprogram in a fiscal year, it may not adjust the annual bonding authority for that subprogram by raising the annual bonding authority for the next fiscal year.

Under current law, portions of unobligated amounts for the land acquisition, property development and local assistance, and recreational boating aids subprograms from prior fiscal years are obligated for specific purposes. For example, the statutes direct DNR to obligate not more than \$4,500,000 of the unobligated amount for these subprograms from fiscal year 2016-17 to fund critical health and safety-related water infrastructure projects in state parks, prioritizing projects in those state parks with the highest demand.

2021 WISCONSIN ACT 173

2021 Wisconsin Act 173 requires DNR to obligate up to \$5,600,000 of the unobligated amount for the land acquisition, property development and local assistance, and recreational boating aids subprograms from fiscal year 2020-21 for high-priority and medium-priority water infrastructure projects in the state park system, in that order of priority.

Effective date: March 13, 2022

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