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RESOLUTION # 25-2023

Resolution to Object to the State Removing Future Taxable Land by Purchasing Conservation and Access Easements

Resolved by the Board of Supervisors of Oneida County, Wisconsin:

WHEREAS, Oneida County has 791,413 acres of area which consist of 78,091 acres of public lakes and rivers, 11,183 acres of federal land, 129,322 acres of State, DNR and Commissioner of Public Lands, 81,733 acres of County Forest, 1,703 acres of other County Lands, 10,694 acres of towns, churches and school exempt lands, 124,502 acres of Managed Forest Land (MFL) open lands and 78,643 acres of MFL closed lands for a total of 515,911 acres; and,

WHEREAS, excerpting those lands Oneida County has less than 35% of its area to levy all state, county, all towns, schools and Nicolet College tax levies; and,

WHEREAS, Oneida County's economic growth and growth of the tax base is totally dependent on MFL property, which has been left in reserve for years with hardly any taxes paid on it; and,

WHEREAS, the State is purchasing conservation and access easements by using the Knowles Nelson Stewardship funds, which is borrowed money and increases the burden on current and future generations to pay off; and,

WHEREAS, the current outstanding principal debt of the Stewardship fund as of December 2022 is \$452,995,930 and if carried to maturity would cost the taxpayers \$578,841,025; and,

WHEREAS, the State's current debt payment for land and conservation easements is approximately \$381,927 each week in interest and \$848,379 in principal for a weekly total of \$1,230,306; and,

WHEREAS, on April 13, 2022 the DNR purchased conservation and access easements on 12,410 acres in Oneida County, but the Joint Finance Committee stopped that purchase; and,

WHEREAS Governor Tony Evers, then used \$4.5 million dollars of American Rescue Plan Act monies to fund the cancelled purchase, which removed 12,410 acres in Oneida County from land available for future growth and tax base; and,

WHEREAS, the DNR is proposing purchasing conservation and access easements on an additional 54,928 acres of MFL land within Oneida County, which will impact not only the future tax base of the eight towns in Oneida County, but also the overall future tax base of Oneida County; and,

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Oneida County Board of Supervisors objects to the above proposed purchase of conservation and access easements; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the State of Wisconsin and the DNR ought to cease the unsustainable and runaway debt of the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund; and,

52 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the State create a statute prohibiting purchases and
53 easements of land when 35% of the land within a town or county is public land not including MFL;
54 and,
55

56 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that at a time when affordable housing is one of our most
57 important issues, now is not the time to drive up the cost of home ownership by reducing future
58 available land into conservation and access easements; and,
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60 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that if the State does purchase more land or public access,
61 that the tax burden of public land ownership be equitably distributed among all Wisconsin
62 Counties; and,
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64 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that a copy of this resolution be provided to the Governor,
65 all northern counties, and all state and federal representatives of the northern counties.
66

67
68 Vote Required: Majority = 2/3 Majority = _____ 3/4 Majority = _____
69
70 The County Board has the legal authority to adopt: Yes No _____ as reviewed
71 by the Corporation Counsel, _____, Date: _____
72 0-16-23

73
74 Consent Agenda Item: _____ YES NO

75
76
77 Offered and passage moved by: Robert Briggs
78 Supervisor Robert Briggs
79

80
81 Seconded by _____

- 82
83
84
85 _____ Ayes
86
87 _____ Nays
88
89 _____ Absent
90
91 _____ Abstain
92
93 _____ Adopted

94
95 by the County Board of Supervisors this _____ day _____, 2023.
96
97 _____ Defeated

98
99
100
101 _____ Tracy Hartman, County Clerk
_____ Scott Holewinski, County Board Chair