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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wisconsin's public lands get permanent funding source from Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund

\$50,000 will be invested in Walworth and Dunn counties thanks to a successful public-private partnership between WDNR and the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin.

[Madison, WI — September 27, 2017] — The Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund, a permanent endowment funded through small donations made when patrons purchase a hunting or fishing license or reserve a campsite, will make its first disbursement to care for public lands at Bluff Creek and Clover Valley Fen State Natural Areas and the Tyrone Tract of the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area.

"These projects represent some of the most biodiverse and ecologically significant properties in Wisconsin," said Ruth Oppedahl, executive director for the Natural Resources Foundation. "We feel so proud that the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund's first disbursement will make such a meaningful impact."

This announcement comes just ahead of Public Lands Day on Saturday, Sept. 30, and funding will be split between these two high-use properties that are home to a wide variety of game, non-game, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (endangered, threatened, or in decline).

These projects represent work done by the Natural Resources Foundation and the Department of Natural Resources to identify high priority properties for conservation work. In addition, their proximity to major metropolitan areas (Milwaukee, Madison, and Eau Claire) also makes them great candidates due to their popularity with outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds.

The first project will focus on 552 acres of prairie and savanna restoration at Bluff Creek and Clover Valley Fen State Natural Areas in the Southern Kettle Moraine State Forest in Walworth County. The project will improve trout stream habitat, native prairie, fen, and sedge meadow, and reduce woody brush in the oak woodlands. This work will improve hunting and angling opportunities, while enhancing the sites' beauty and accessibility for outdoor recreation along the Ice Age Trail, horse, and snowmobile trails through the two State Natural Areas.

"Cherish Wisconsin is a perfect example of the passion that our partners share with DNR for the outdoors—I look forward to seeing the great work on these properties be enjoyed by users of all kinds, from hunters to wildlife watchers," said Kurt Thiede, deputy secretary for Wisconsin DNR.

The second project will focus on 180 acres of oak savanna and native prairie restoration at the recently acquired Tyrone Tract of the Lower Chippewa River State Natural Area in Dunn County. This project will involve intensive removal of woody brush and other invasive vegetation in savanna and prairie habitats.

The Tyrone Tract is home to many animals designated as Species of Greatest Conservation Need, like gopher snakes, prairie skinks, lark sparrows and northern long-eared bats. In addition, the area is home to many prized game species, like white-tailed deer, bear, turkey and waterfowl. Restoration work will greatly improve wildlife habitat and enhance the recreational experience for many hikers, bikers, paddlers, hunters and anglers.

The Tyrone Tract of the Lower Chippewa State Natural Area was recently purchased from Xcel Energy by the DNR and



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represented the largest contiguous ownership of privately owned land in Dunn County. Over the last decade, in partnership with DNR, Xcel Energy has taken an active role in the restoration of degraded oak savanna and prairie habitats on the property. These efforts were in the early stages and more work is needed; this grant will move that work forward.

"From hunters to anglers to hikers and bikers, canoers and kayakers, there's a broad range of opportunities in both these areas and so it makes them really exciting," said Don Kirby, executive director at Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

These projects were chosen through a grant application process that involved rigorous review by an engaged stakeholder group including Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, National Wild Turkey Federation, Friends of Wisconsin State Parks, Ruffed Grouse Society, and Wisconsin Conservation Congress. The final recommendation from the stakeholder group was reviewed by Natural Resources Foundation's Board of Directors and the final disbursement from the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund was approved.

About the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund

Created in 2012 by an act of the Wisconsin State Legislature, the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund is a permanent endowment committed to enhancing our public lands and waters while supporting habitat management activities for their ecological, recreational, biological, aesthetic, and economic value. The Fund is held by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, a private nonprofit 501c3 organization.

Donations to the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund derived, primarily, from hunters and anglers who choose to make a small \$2 donation when purchasing a license through the GoWild system. Additional donations are also made by campers using the Reserve America system. Individual donors committed to Wisconsin's public lands have also made large donations directly to the Fund through the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Learn more at CherishWisconsin.org.

About the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a nonprofit organization that connects generations to the wonders of Wisconsin's lands, waters, and wildlife through conservation, education, engagement, and giving. Since 1986, the Foundation has contributed more than \$6.24 million to public and private conservation efforts to protect the lands, waters, and wildlife of Wisconsin.

The Foundation currently holds more than 80 endowment funds with more than \$7 million in assets dedicated to conserving lands, protecting wildlife, and promoting conservation in Wisconsin in perpetuity. The Foundation coordinates programs designed to connect people to the land by exploring significant sites and getting expert-led tours of some of our state's most important conservation projects. The Foundation is proud to partner with more than 500 conservation partners throughout Wisconsin county. Learn more at www.WisConservation.org.