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NATURAL RESOURCES FOUNDATION MAKES MAJOR GIFT TO SUPPORT WISCONSIN DNR CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

(Madison, WI) Today, the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, a non-profit group based in Madison, Wisconsin, bucked the trend of dire economic news by making one of its largest gifts to support the conservation programs of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources (DNR.) Over \$313,000 in gifts was presented at today's meeting of the state's Natural Resources Board.

“During these tough economic times, we are more committed than ever to supporting public conservation projects that benefit everyone who lives in or visits Wisconsin,” noted Charlie Luthin, executive director of the Foundation. “We have a responsibility to protect the gifts of nature that contribute to our economic health and our overall quality of life,” Luthin continued. “We are proud of our historic relationship with the DNR. This gift is just another sign of our strong partnership to protect Wisconsin's resources for our families and the future,” Luthin concluded.

Department of Natural Resources Secretary Matt Frank thanked the Foundation for its support of the agency's work on behalf of the state's natural resources and its citizens. “The DNR truly values its strong partnership with the Natural Resources Foundation,” Frank said. “In the midst of a national economic crisis, the needs of our state lands and wildlife depend more than ever on all partners contributing what they can. The Foundation's donation helps the DNR continue its work with rare and endangered species, conservation education and community conservation efforts and more,” Frank said.

The gift will be split among twenty different programs identified as conservation priorities by DNR and Foundation staff. The largest portion of the gift, over \$146,000, will go to support rare and endangered species, including Kirtland's warblers, Karner blue butterflies, box turtles and others on state and federal lists. Nearly \$120,000 will support invasive species control and land management at Wisconsin's State Natural Areas. Finally, almost \$30,000 will support community conservation and property management programs with another \$20,000 to support conservation education projects.

Kim Grveles, Assistant Zoologist and Ornithologist with the Natural Heritage Inventory at the DNR, credited the Foundation for her successful work with the rare Kirtland's warbler. “Because of Foundation funding, we are finding new Kirtland's warbler locations, monitoring nesting events, documenting nest outcomes, and increasing nest productivity by safe-guarding the nesting site from predatory and human disturbances,” said Grveles.

With increased cuts to government programs, Grveles' was blunt in her assessment, "If it wasn't for the Foundation, I'm not sure I would have a job." Grveles continued, "In these tough economic and political times, I can count on them to be enthusiastic about the work that I do and to offer encouragement for finding new funding sources. They are an amazing, talented and resourceful group of people who never seem to tire of the hard work that keeps successful conservation projects going in Wisconsin."

With today's announcement, the Foundation brought its total cash contribution to conservation programs at the DNR to nearly two million dollars since 1986. Bruce Braun, chair of the Foundation's board, was eager to share the credit for that record, "the public has embraced our mission and thousands of donors have made this gift today possible. We are truly fortunate to live in a state with both abundant natural resources and a population that holds an equally abundant respect for those resources."

In addition to today's gift for conservation programs at the DNR, the Foundation also announced \$10,000 in small grants to community conservation projects through its C.D. Besadny Conservation Grants Program. The program provides financial support to public and private organizations and agencies working on conservation projects at a small-scale, local level.

A complete list of funded projects referenced in this release is available on the Foundation's Web site, www.wisconservation.org. Follow the link on the home page.

Editor's Note: Photos of programs and projects supported by this gift are available from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Contact Jeffrey Potter, Director of Communications, at 608-261-4392 for photos or more information.

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The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a 501c-3 non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. For more than twenty years, the Foundation has worked with citizens, businesses, non-profits and the government to promote the protection and enjoyment of Wisconsin's public lands, waters and wildlife. Learn more and donate online at www.wisconservation.org.