



Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association

2023-24 Legislative Priorities

Fix Local Government Funding

Wisconsin's system of funding local governments is broken. WPR supports our local government partners in a campaign to reform local government funding. The over reliance on property taxes to pay for local services, including parks, shifts the strain on residents and small businesses. WPR asks the legislature to create a better way of funding local governments that includes revenue options other than property taxes to continue delivering critical services, including parks and recreation.

Maximize Trail Funding

Biking and walking trails connect our communities and provide an entry for new visitors to experience our local parks and recreation services. WPR supports utilizing additional federal funds for the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) — for a **total funding of \$18 million annually in federal transportation funds**— and providing **\$1.2 million in state transportation funds** to assist small (under 5,000 population) communities meet the 20% TAP project match requirement. A robust TAP program will guarantee more projects can advance across the state that prioritize walking and biking.

Strengthen the Park & Recreation Workforce

The local park & recreation industry has seen a drastic decrease in staff over the last 10 years. Park and Recreation is often the first-time employer for many young people and provides key experiences – such as lifeguard, day camp counselor – that shape their career trajectory. WPR supports generating additional funding for youth workforce readiness. In addition, WPR is interested in legislation to examine training constraints for the Commercial Driver's License program for Tier 4 (e.g. municipal employees) and lowering the slide attendant age requirements to mirror lifeguards at age 15.

Support Tourism Capital Investment Grant Program

Last year, using ARPA funds, the state created a Tourism Capital Grant Program, to assist local and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to restore, through capital investments, tourism related economic activity. There were 210 eligible applicants under the ARPA program requesting a total of \$260 million, 27 of which received grants totaling \$21.9 million. This was twice the amount awarded than originally proposed. The 27 grant recipients are making vital investments in local communities that support Wisconsin's economy, create jobs and are making their communities better places to visit, live and work. There clearly is enormous demand and opportunity for investments into tourism capital projects. WPR supports utilizing the state's surplus to provide another round of Capital Grants, similar to the ARPA program. The Governor's budget includes a one-time investment of **\$50 million GPR** for this program.

Fully Fund Child Nutrition Programs

Outside of schools, park and recreation agencies are the largest public provider of healthy meals and snacks to children. WPR supports the **\$4.9 million GPR** increase over the biennium to fully fund the school breakfast reimbursement aid program at 15 cents per meal. In addition, WPR encourages the legislature to consider funding to support breakfast and lunch programs to ensure healthy food access for kids participating in park and recreation programming on days when school is closed.



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Continued Support for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

Stewardship grants are an essential tool for Wisconsin's rural, urban, and suburban communities to obtain and improve public lands and make other investments in outdoor recreation. Continued investment in Local Units of Government (LUG) projects benefit Wisconsin residents, tourists, and the state's bottom line.

WPRRA is a membership association that represents over 1,200 individuals delivering a broad spectrum of services in Wisconsin. Our members include Park, Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation professionals in local, county, state, school district, private and agency settings. WPRRA also represents public Park and Recreation Boards and Commissions, students, commercial firms, and retired members.

For additional information or questions about WPRRA's legislative priorities, please contact:
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