



Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association

2025-26 Legislative Priorities

Reauthorize & Support 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.

Maximize funding in the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

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 all available federal funds for the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) — for **total funding of \$18 million annually in transportation funds**. A robust TAP program will guarantee more projects can advance across the state that prioritize walking and biking.

Make Permanent the Office of Outdoor Recreation

WPR supports permanent funding for the Office of Outdoor Recreation and its three staff positions. Outdoor recreation is a key economic driver, and sustained investment ensures Wisconsin remains competitive. The Office also plays a vital role in supporting local Park & Recreation programs by connecting communities to resources, elevating outdoor opportunities statewide, and fostering collaboration across public and private partners to strengthen local economies and outdoor access.

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 fully funding 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.

Support Out of School Time Grant Program and Ensure Access to Communities

Across Wisconsin, many out of school time (including after school programs) are administered by the local Park and Recreation department. These programs provide safe, engaging environments for youth, reducing risky behaviors while promoting physical activity, social development, and academic enrichment. WPR supports funding for Out of School Time grants, while also ensuring local governments can also be eligible.



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Restore Eminent Domain for Bike & Pedestrian Paths

Restoring the use of eminent domain for pedestrian and bike paths is essential to enhance public safety, stimulate economic growth, and attract a younger workforce to Wisconsin. Improved infrastructure reduces pedestrian fatalities, boosts property values, and generates billions in annual economic activity while supporting local jobs. Additionally, enabling these projects helps retain federal funding and addresses delays that increase costs and safety risks for communities.

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 life-guard, day camp counselor – that shape their career trajectory. WPR supports generating additional funding for youth workforce readiness.

WPR 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. WPR also represents public Park and Recreation Boards and Commissions, students, commercial firms, and retired members.

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