

RESOLUTION TO CALL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PELICAN RIVER FOREST

WHEREAS, the Pelican River Forest (the Forest) is a working Forest that comprises almost 70,000-acres of diverse forestland in Oneida, Langlade and Forest Counties of Northern Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the Forest contains hardwood and softwood species of trees including Ash, Maple, Oak, Aspen, and Pine used for saw timber, veneer, pulpwood for papermaking, heating fuel, and more, that are the basis of sustainable raw materials that support Wisconsin's essential Forest Products Industry that provides over 135,000 jobs and \$38-billion in annual economic input; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin is the number one Papermaking State in the U.S., and number one in Paper Manufacturing Employment, and the Forest is essential to supporting this leadership and the \$1.5-billion in annual International Forest Product Exports that stimulates Wisconsin's economy; and

WHEREAS, the Forest has a variety of features that attract residents and visitors that support the rapidly growing Outdoor Recreation Industry sector of the economy that results in a \$9-billion annual contribution to Wisconsin's gross domestic product and employs 89,000 people; and

WHEREAS, the Outdoor Recreation Industry economy is Wisconsin's fastest growing sector and outpaces the State's overall economy by three times the rate, and the Forest will provide statewide economic benefits, and the Forest will continue to be a job creator now and long into the future; and

WHEREAS, natural outdoor spaces provide unequalled opportunities for family oriented recreational activities, including for family members that have limited and challenging physical mobility issues; and

WHEREAS, thousands of small businesses in the tourism, hospitality, leisure, and amenity sectors rely upon the necessity to have access to outdoor spaces including forestland, wetlands, rivers, streams, ATV/UTV and snowmobile trail systems, all of which are contained within the Forest; and

WHEREAS, the Forest will provide hunting and sport-fishing opportunities for local residents and bring enthusiasts to the region to participate in these economies; and

WHEREAS, the Forest contains the headwaters of the 225-mile long National Scenic Wolf River that flows through eight Counties and provides vital economic contributions to thousands of small businesses and working people that rely upon family oriented tourism, hospitality, and leisure activities; and

WHEREAS, the Wolf River Basin drains 3,700 square miles of land and provides exceptional canoeing, kayaking, rafting, and fishing opportunities that attract people from all over the world; and

WHEREAS, the Forest contains the Headwaters Area of the Upper Wisconsin Basin, including the 430-mile long Wisconsin River that flows through fifteen Counties and provides countless family recreational opportunities, and 40,000 people depend on these waters for drinking water; and

WHEREAS, the Forest will continue to contribute to County and State tax collections by being enrolled in Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law Program while insuring Forest Product Industry Businesses and employees have access to renewable inventories of forest stock; and

WHEREAS, the Forest will generate revenues from recreational vehicle user fees, fishing and hunting license fees, and hospitality and tourism activity that combine to make the Forest a fiscally responsible enterprise; and

WHEREAS, the Forest supports significant natural resources that Indian Tribes rely upon, including water, fish, animals, medicinal plants, and Wild Rice; and

WHEREAS, the Forest protects water quality and will contribute to the effective strategy of combating climate change by storing ever increasing amounts of carbon dioxide as the trees continue to grow, and by storing the equivalent amount of emissions from over 4-million automobiles per year; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin lags behind our neighbors Michigan (by 10%) and Minnesota (by 6%) in the amount of public land set aside for outdoor recreation and sustainable working forestland, and Wisconsin should catch up with or exceed our neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin has a once in a lifetime opportunity to establish the largest continuous section of forestland that will connect County Forests with the Nicolet National Forest to provide a wildlife and recreation corridor between these essential natural habitats; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin has the enviable opportunity to receive the majority of funding from the U.S. Forest Service and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for a conservation easement attached to the Forest that will forever preserve all economic and recreational benefits of the Forest; and

WHEREAS, if Wisconsin were to miss out on accepting funding from the U.S. Forest Service and National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, those funds would go to some other State where they would establish a forest, and this would be a fiscally irresponsible and regrettable lost opportunity; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin's portion of the funding will come from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, a program that is specifically intended to take advantage of opportunities exactly like the Pelican River Forest, and an endowment will ensure upkeep and maintenance; and

WHEREAS, a 2020 statewide survey found that 93% of Wisconsin citizens think the Legislature should dedicate public funding from the Knowles-Nelson Fund for land, water and wildlife conservation and preserve outdoor spaces for recreation and working forestland, and public support for the Pelican River Forest is unprecedented; and

WHEREAS, establishing the Pelican River Forest perfectly aligns with the long-term strategic planning objectives of numerous Townships, Villages, and Counties in Wisconsin to responsibly preserve outdoor recreational space and working forests to insure economic opportunities long into the future.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Post Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (PLPRD) expresses its strong support for the establishment of the Pelican River Forest; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that PLPRD calls upon the Wisconsin State Legislature and the Governor to fully support and accept all forms of funding to establish the Pelican River Forest, including funding from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Adopted This 2nd Day of December, 2023.

I hereby Certify that the forgoing resolution was duly adopted by the PLPRD Board of Commissioners
Legal meeting on the 2nd day of December, 2023.

Authorized Signature_____

Title_____