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Governor Doyle Column: Gaylord Nelson's Earth Day

Gaylord Nelson, the Father of Earth Day and one of Wisconsin's favorite sons, once said that "the ultimate test of man's conscience is his willingness to sacrifice something today for generations of tomorrow, whose words of thanks will not be heard."

Last year, Wisconsin said goodbye to Gaylord Nelson, and gave thanks for the tremendous legacy he gave to us.

But as we approach the 36th anniversary of Earth Day, Gaylord Nelson's legacy is thriving in Wisconsin. We're making major investments that not only will secure our environmental future, but also grow our economy and create jobs for our citizens.

The land conservation program Nelson pioneered is alive and well and now bears his name – the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program. In the last three and a half years, we've used it to preserve 150,000 acres of lands for future generations to hunt, hike, fish and camp. This includes a recent purchase to create the Wild Rivers Legacy Forest – 100 square miles of forest, lakes, and rivers in Florence, Forest, and Marinette counties. It is the largest conservation purchase in state history. Had we not acted to preserve this land, it may have been sold off, piece by piece, and developed – its unspoiled beauty lost forever to bulldozers and buildings. Instead, these lands will continue to provide local jobs in the forestry industry, while preserving fish, wildlife habitat, and public access for generations.

We're also protecting the waters that help define Wisconsin's beauty. I've joined with seven other Great Lakes states governors in signing agreements to provide unprecedented protections to the Great Lakes, making sure that the waters aren't diverted to Arizona and New Mexico. We also signed a comprehensive national action plan – the first ever single set of national priorities and strategies – to restore and protect the Great Lakes well into the future.

We're making enormous progress on the cleanup of the Fox River – one of the largest environmental cleanups in history. And we recently celebrated the completion of a ten-year, \$6.3 million cleanup project at Newton Creek and Lake Superior's Hog Island Inlet in Douglas County, one of the most contaminated sites on Lake Superior.

We're investing in local communities to protect public health and safeguard the environment where it affects us most, from improving wastewater treatment to controlling invasive species to providing more recreational trails for hikers, bikers, and snowmobiles.

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And we're growing Wisconsin's economy and protecting our environment by setting high goals for pollution reduction and granting businesses the flexibility they need to reach those goals. We signed Green Tier agreements with eight Wisconsin businesses, securing commitments from those businesses to reduce pollution beyond what state laws require.

I am proud of the progress we have made, and I think it is only fitting for the state that Gaylord Nelson called home. But the Wisconsin tradition inspires us to remain vigilant and achieve more.

In the coming year, we will continue to pursue my agenda to *Conserve Wisconsin*. From increasing energy efficiency of state government to producing more energy from renewable sources, our efforts will protect the environment of our state and create thousands of jobs for Wisconsin families.

We'll also implement the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan – a blueprint for ensuring that wildlife species in decline do not become threatened or endangered, and that our children and grandchildren will be able to see our native wildlife in their natural habitats and not just in history books.

And we'll continue to work on groundwater quantity management so that all Wisconsin citizens have clean water to drink and to enjoy.

In Wisconsin, let's rededicate ourselves to Gaylord Nelson's vision – to protect our planet and preserve what he called the "real wealth of our nation": its forests, rivers, lakes, oceans, and all the great gifts of nature with which we have been blessed.

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