

For Immediate Release

### **Alderman Celebrated as Wisconsin Conservation Policy Maker of the Year**

MADISON, September 13, 2010 --Milwaukee Alderman Nik Kovak has been named "Conservation Policy Maker of the Year" by Gathering Waters Conservancy, a statewide organization promoting land conservation in Wisconsin.

Kovak's award will be presented September 30 at The 2010 Land Conservation Leadership Awards Celebration in Madison.

Kovak, a Freshman Common Council member, is being honored for "his determined leadership in passing one of the strongest urban river conservation laws in the country," according to Gathering Waters' board member and River Revitalization Foundation Executive Director, Kimberley Gleffe.

Kovak championed the proposal of the Milwaukee River Work Group to create a zoning overlay district that will protect 800 acres of greenway along river corridors within a mile of downtown. On May 25<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Common Council approved unanimously the zoning rules designed to improve public access and preserve the natural and recreational areas along the Milwaukee River Corridor between the former North Avenue dam and the city limits at Silver Spring Dr.

The legislation was supported by the Work Group which campaigned for several months to align grass roots support for the measure. Gleffe notes "this is an example for other cities to replicate as a model of urban conservation at its finest."

In a statement about the legislation co-authored by Alders Ashanti Hamilton and Milele Coggs, Alderman Kovak wrote "As a city, we will be able to move forward while protecting an irreplaceable, prime natural public asset that provides us with natural open space and some the best hiking trails. . . found in any large city anywhere in the world."

Gathering Waters Conservancy has bestowed Land Conservation Leadership Awards since 2004. The organization is the statewide service center for non-profit land trusts, and annually honors organizations, policy makers and individuals for notable contributions to lasting land conservation in the state.

"It's very satisfying to be honoring landmark urban conservation efforts," says Mike Strigel, Gathering Waters Executive Director. "Often the Wisconsin land conservation headlines are about vast tracks of northwoods and permanent preservation of important farmlands. Rural land conservation is essential to the health and beauty of Wisconsin, but the conservation success we're honoring Nik Kovak for is equally important. His conservation leadership will benefit thousands of city residents who live with the Milwaukee River literally in their back yards."

For registration information visit [www.gatheringwaters.org/awards](http://www.gatheringwaters.org/awards).

**Gathering Waters Conservancy's mission** is to help land trusts, landowners and communities protect the places that make Wisconsin special. Our goal is to increase the amount of protected land in the

state through private voluntary action. We strengthen Wisconsin land trusts through direct technical assistance, government relations and outreach.

**The mission of the River Revitalization Foundation** is to establish a parkway for public access, walkways, recreation and education, bordering the Milwaukee, Menomonee and Kinnickinnic Rivers; to use the rivers to revitalize surrounding neighborhoods; and to improve water quality.

Contact.

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