



Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association

121 S. Pinckney Street, Suite 420 · Madison, Wisconsin 53703
(608) 441-2677 · Fax: (608) 441-2676 · wisconsinlandwater.org

2024 OUTSTANDING CONSERVATION EMPLOYEE AWARDS

Nominee Information- Melissa Schlupp, 505 Broadway, Baraboo, WI 53913
melissa.schlupp@saukcountywi.gov (608) 355-4838

Award Category- Outstanding Conservation Employee- County Conservationist

Department Name- Sauk County Land Recourses and Environment Department (LRE)

Title- Conservation Manager

Years of Service- 12

Education and background, past and present career responsibilities, level of professional knowledge and ability- Melissa is a graduate of UW-Platteville. From there she served in AmeriCorps in Iowa, worked for Pheasants Forever as a Farm Bill Biologist in Iowa, WDNR in the Voluntary Public Access (VPA) program, WDNR as a Bat Technician work in 2010-11, In 2012 Melissa started her career with Sauk County LRE. Soon after, Melissa was promoted to the Conservation Manager- to present.

Nominator Information- Mitch McCarthy, 505 Broadway, Baraboo, WI 53913
mitchell.mccarthy@saukcountywi.gov (608) 355-4836

Summarize your entry in five sentences or less- Justine Bula summarizes Melissa so well. *“Melissa Schlupp is a force to be reckoned with! She is our manure storage hero, film festival guru, and farmland preservation champion, Melissa is the heart of our department. Melissa is our fearless leader who brings out our best and has created a team that it is truly an honor to be a part of. We are incredibly lucky to have a Conservation Manager who advocates for the work of our department and the people behind the projects.”- Justine Bula*

Tell us in 500 words or less how the nominee meets the award criteria and guideline

If there was a picture in the dictionary showing the “Best County Conservationist”, then there is no doubt an image of Melissa would be on that page. In the three different County Land Conservation Departments I’ve worked for; Melissa is hands down the best County Conservationist. Melissa’s leadership, effectiveness, and commitment to conservation inspires others to go beyond the status quo. Melissa encourages others to pursue their passions, be innovative, get out of your comfort zone, and grow as a person.

“A mark of an effective leader is their ability to spotlight their vulnerability and fallibility in front of their employees. Melissa routinely practices this habit, and we love her for it!” - Serge Koenig.

“Melissa’s door is always open, whether it’s discussing professional ideas or sharing personal matters with her. Having that level of trust in your boss is hard to come by.”- Brian Sadler

“Melissa continuously encourages staff to follow their passions or interests when it comes to conservation projects and programs. Her trust and belief in herself and her coworkers have made such a positive impact on the natural resources of Sauk County.” – Gus Johnson



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Melissa might be most renowned for her organization, a trait needed to juggle the wide array of programs and projects that she oversees. Her countless binders are a life saver for staff. Melissa welcomes and encourages input from her team, and she sees her employees as equals and treats us as such. She displays an incredible amount of patience and flexibility. There has yet to be a challenge that has come up that she has not been willing to tackle. Like, assuming the role of Interim Director of the Sauk County LRE (Land Conservation, Planning and Zoning, and Parks) since October.

Melissa's outstanding contributions to better public understanding of natural resource conservation were on display at the 2023 Farm Tech Days in Sauk County. This particular event took months to plan and had thousands of attendees. Melissa solved all the dilemmas that came up, delegated rolls with grace and collaborated with countless of organizations. Melissa strengthens statewide partnerships in many ways. This year she organized a DNR Leaders Farm Tour. This event toured sites that are regenerating their soils and addressing non-compliant sites through nature-based approaches instead of costly traditional approaches. Melissa also serves on WI Land+Water Leg. and Admin committee, she presents at the annual conference, and she testifies to congress to gain support for all Land Conservation Departments.

Other Notable Involvement

- Manure storage ordinance hero
- Film festival guru
- Farmland preservation champion
- Tree Sale innovator (took it online)
- Brought the LRE into the digital age
- Sauk County Farm soil health savior (lease requirements for soil health)
- Sauk County Farm Master Plan Facilitator
- Pollinator Protector
- Conservation Cup crown winner
- LRE Staff Capacity growth

We are incredibly lucky to have a Conservation Manager who advocates for the work of our department and the people behind the projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mitchell McCarthy".

Mitchell McCarthy
Watershed Coordinator
Sauk County LRE

Letters of Support



Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913
(608) 355-3245 www.co.sauk.wi.us

December 19, 2023

Re: 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award

Dear Review Committee,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for Melissa Schlupp as a nominee for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. Having had the privilege of working alongside Melissa for the past 12 years at Sauk County, I am confident in affirming that she is a truly exceptional and deserving candidate for this esteemed recognition.

In my 28 years of employment here in Sauk County as a Conservation Technician working under various department heads, I have observed that Melissa consistently ranks very high among her peers. Her approachability and willingness to acknowledge her own imperfections create an inclusive and supportive work environment. This transparency fosters trust and collaboration among team members, ultimately contributing to the success of our conservation initiatives. It also translates into improved communication, problem-solving, and overall job satisfaction among employees.

Her tenure speaks volumes about her unwavering commitment to the cause of conservation. Melissa's passion for environmental stewardship, coupled with her exemplary leadership qualities, makes her a standout candidate for the Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. Her impact on our team and the broader community is immeasurable, and I am confident that recognizing her achievements will not only honor an outstanding individual but also inspire others in the field.

I wholeheartedly endorse Melissa Schlupp for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award and believe that her contributions to the field deserve the highest commendation. If you have additional questions, feel free to contact me at (608) 355-4837 or serge.koenig@saukcountywi.gov.

Serge Koenig

Serge Koenig
Conservation Technician
Sauk County LRE



Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913
(608) 355-3245 www.co.sauk.wi.us

December 19, 2023

Re: 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award

Dear Review Committee,

I am writing to provide my support for the nomination of Melissa Schlupp, Sauk County LRE Conservation Manager for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award.

Melissa Schlupp is a force to be reckoned with! There are so many reasons she is more than deserving of recognition for her hard work and this award. From her dedication, innovation, and organization to her positivity, kindness, and support that she shows to all. Melissa exemplifies all the traits of a true leader. She works hard for the people of Sauk County and for her staff. She might be most renowned for her organization, a trait needed to juggle the wide array of programs and projects that she oversees.

Our manure storage hero, film festival guru, and farmland preservation champion, Melissa is the heart of our department. Melissa is our fearless leader who brings out our best and has created a team that it is truly an honor to be a part of. We are incredibly lucky to have a Conservation Manager who advocates for the work of our department and the people behind the projects. Thank you for all that you do and for being you!

If you have additional questions, feel free to contact me at (608) 355-4842 or justine.bula@saukcountywi.gov

Justine Bula

Justine Bula
Education Coordinator
Sauk County LRE



Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913
(608) 355-3245 www.co.sauk.wi.us

December 19, 2023

Re: 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award

Dear Review Committee,

There really hasn't been a year that Melissa Schlupp would not be a front runner for an outstanding employee award. The challenges that Melissa has taken on this last year in particular, clearly illustrate how deserving she is of this recognition. In addition to her usual duties, 2023 also brought Farm Tech Days to Sauk County, hosting a DNR Leaders Farm Tour, and acting as director for our combined department of land conservation, planning and zoning, and parks.

As a manager, Melissa has an uncanny ability to recognize opportunities for improvement. She is always finding ways to be more efficient with our time and funds. She has brought our office many great tools for not only department documentation but also community outreach and interaction. She keeps us striving for positive change.

As a leader, she knows our strengths and allows us the freedom to pursue conservation goals in the way we do best as individuals. Not only is her leadership evident in our department meetings, but she has the confidence to bring her ideas to the table no matter how large the venue, be it conferences, committee or county board meetings, or connecting with cooperating agencies.

As a boss, Melissa's door is always open. She sees her employees as equals and treats us as such. She welcomes and encourages input from her team, although she is usually the one to come up with the best solutions. She displays an incredible amount of patience and flexibility. Whether I'm discussing professional ideas or sharing personal matters with her, I know that what's said to her in confidence won't get twisted or shared. Having that level of trust in your boss is hard to come by. She can also take a good prank and dish them out as well. If you have additional questions, feel free to contact me at (608) 355-4841 or brian.sadler@saukcountywi.gov.

Brian Sadler

Brian Sadler
Conservation Technician
Sauk County LRE



Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913
(608) 355-3245 www.co.sauk.wi.us

December 19, 2023

Re: 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award

Dear Review Committee,

I am writing to provide my support for the nomination of Melissa Schlupp, Sauk County LRE Conservation Manager for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award.

Melissa has been an excellent leader for the conservation department for several years now. When I started my career at Sauk County, she was instrumental in showing me all of the unique conservation challenges that faced Sauk County. Along with her passion for natural resource conservation, Melissa has been an excellent leader since stepping into her current role as Conservation Manager.

She always has projects in the works, and she keeps our department from 'stalling out' or just following the status quo. Her organized and clear-thinking approach to solving conservation issues is second-to-none. There has yet to be a challenge that has come up that Melissa has not been willing to tackle. Melissa continuously encourages staff to follow their passions or interests when it comes to conservation projects and programs. Her trust and belief in herself and her coworkers have made such a positive impact on the natural resources of Sauk County."

If you have additional questions, feel free to contact me at (608) 355-3292 or gus.johnson@saukcountywi.gov

Gus Johnson

Gus Johnson
Conservation Technician
Sauk County LRE



Land Resources & Environment Department
505 Broadway, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913
(608) 355-3245 www.co.sauk.wi.us

December 18, 2023

Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association

121 S. Pinckney Street, Suite 420

Madison, WI 53703

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to enthusiastically support the nomination of **Melissa Schlupp**, Conservation Manager at the Sauk Co. Land Resources & Environment (LRE) Department, for the **2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award**. Following are just a few examples of Melissa's efforts to serve our citizens while highlighting the importance of conservation practices:

- 1) Manure Storage Ordinance "Hero"
- 2) Conservation Film Festival "Guru"
- 3) Farmland Preservation "Champion"
- 4) Annual Tree Sale "Innovator" (took the sale on-line)
- 5) County Farm Soil Health "Savior" (soil health added to lease requirements)
- 6) County Farm Master Plan "Facilitator" (unanimously adopted by County Board)
- 7) Pollinator "Protector" (numerous gardens installed throughout the county)
- 8) 2023 Farm Tech Days "Dilemma Solver" (this year's event held in Sauk County)
- 9) LRE Staff Capacity Growth (RCPP Grants)
- 10) WI Land+Water Legislative/Administrative Committee "Member"
- 11) WI Land+Water Annual Conference "Presenter"
- 12) Interim Sauk Co. LRE "Director" (for past 3 months)

The last point is probably the most impressive to me...the fact that Melissa agreed to take on the added responsibility of Interim Director to augment department continuity and stability while the search for a new full-time Director took place. She has admirably accepted all the extra workload while identifying early on she had no interest in pursuing the appointment.

In closing, I am sure that I speak for the entire Sauk Co. LRE Committee in encouraging you to select Melissa Schlupp for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. If you have a question or need clarification on any point, please feel free to contact me at (608) 963-3565 or marty.krueger@saukcountywi.gov. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

MARTY KRUEGER

MARTY KRUEGER, Sauk Co. Supervisor
Chair, Land Resources & Environment Committee



December 14, 2023

Dear Review Committee,

The Sauk Soil Water Improvement group (SSWIG) is writing to provide our support for the nomination of Melissa Schlupp, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment (LRE) Conservation Manager for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. SSWIG is a producer-led watershed protection group in Sauk County. SSWIG began in 2019, when area farmers came together with the Sauk County LRE and UW Madison Division of Extension staff to discuss ways to collaboratively help and support area farmers. With the guidance of Melissa and her staff, SSWIG was formed and a network of farmers and partners that support SSWIG was created.

In 2023, Melissa was instrumental in SSWIG's success. Melissa spearheaded the approval to set aside a small portion of the Sauk County for farm demonstration and test plots. SSWIG works in collaboration with the LRE and UW Extension to provide a public space for others to observe and learn. Furthermore, at the Sauk County farm, Melissa is the soil health savior by developing lease requirements to regenerate soil health.

Another example of how Melissa connects the public with local Sauk County farmers in 2023 was Farm Tech Days in Sauk County. There were over 10,000 attendees over a course of 3 days, and planning took months. At this year's Farm Tech Day's there were bus tours to local farms. When Melissa was asked which farms should be toured, without hesitation she suggested farms that are operated by SSWIG members. Hundreds of people toured and learned about regenerative agriculture practices all because of Melissa.

We encourage the committee select Melissa Schlupp, as the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at sswig.wi@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Logan M Buid
President SSWIG
Ron Bula

Ch
Ron Scher
James Yule



December 15, 2023

Dear Review Committee,

We are writing to provide our support for the nomination of Melissa Schlupp, Sauk County LRE Conservation Manager for the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. Since taking the manager position in 2019, Melissa has been an outstanding conservation partner manager. Her leadership has allowed and encouraged her staff to assist NRCS to deliver conservation assistance to Sauk County producers with many of the farm bill programs. See below some other highlights:

- Providing leadership to implement a 9 Key Element Plan for Lake Redstone.
- Melissa doesn't just expect her employees and partners to be in the field working with producers. She's down in the trenches with all the employees encouraging and teaching conservation ideas to the people of Sauk County.
- Working to get a Cooperative Conservation Agreement with USDA to bring additional opportunities to Sauk County for conservation assistance to producers and residents.
- Working as partner to assist the Village of Loganville with their phosphorus trading project to benefit water quality for the public and assist local agricultural producers at the same time.
- Always encourages NRCS staff to attend the WI Land+Water annual conference. In addition to serving on the Legislative/Administrative committee and presenting at the conference herself.
- Pushing for a Sauk County Farm Project that includes community gardens, educational trails, public involvement and education in conservation and the environment, in addition to incorporating soil health practices into the lease requirements.
- Striving to keep water clean and enforcing Sauk County's Manure Ordinance.
- Directing staff to apply and maintain requirements of not one but two Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – EQIP watershed projects for Sauk and neighboring counties in the Baraboo River Watershed.
- Providing outstanding support for the Sauk County Producer Led Group SSWIG (Sauk Soil Water Improvement Group).
- Promoting a creative use of funds such as with the Sauk County MDV program, to create new opportunities for the implementation of conservation practices.
- Supporting programs in Sauk County to involve the public in conservation such as the Sauk Film Festival, Tree Sale Program with online sale availability, nutrient management course instruction, pollinator protection, and 2023 Farm Technology Days support as it was hosted in Sauk County.
- Melissa has recently served as the Administrative Head for the Sauk County LRE department. She kept Sauk County natural resources a top priority for the whole department during this time.

We encourage the committee select Melissa Schlupp, as the 2024 Outstanding Conservation Employee Award. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at jon.field@usda.gov, janice.kelley@usda.gov, Patrick.bula@usda.gov or (608) 355-4420 ext. 3.

Sincerely,

Jon Field
NRCS District Conservationist Sauk County

Janice Kelley
NRCS Resource Conservationist Sauk County

Patrick Bula
NRCS Soil Conservationist Sauk County