NORTH CENTRAL AREA LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION – Meeting Minutes

Forest, Florence, Lincoln, Langlade, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, & Wood Counties

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NORTH CENTRAL AREA LAND & WATER CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Meeting Date: 1/30/25

Meeting Location: Winter Planning Meeting – Hosted by Portage County

In Attendance: Kayla Littleton – Forest County, Tom Boisvert – Lincoln County, Michele Sadauskas – Oneida County, Kirk Langfoss – Marathon County, Kirstie Heidenreich – Marathon County, Jared Mader – Marathon County, Caleb Armstrong – Marathon County, Andrew Shep – Marathon County, Brooke Bembeneck – Marathon County, Katie Bahr-Bender – Langlade County, Audrey Gossett – Langlade County, Tracy Arnold – Portage County, Patty Benedict – Portage County, Nancy Eggleston – Portage County, Barb Peeters – Wood County, Kendra Wilhelm – Wood County, Alan Wirt – Vilas County, Quita Sheehan – Vilas County, Cathy Higley – Vilas County

Counties Present: Forest, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas, and Wood Counties

Others Present: Kelli Myers – WI Land+Water, Alex Elias – DATCP, Matt Woodrow – DATCP, Andrea Topper – DATCP, Nicole Hayes – WDNR, Robert Hoffman – WDNR, Tom Nedland – WDNR, Ben Uvaas – WDNR, Brad Johnson – WDNR

1. Kirstie Heidenreich called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.
2. Introductions were done of those in attendance.
    a. Kirstie Heidenreich welcomed the new County Conservationists in attendance: Al Wirt, Kayla Littleton, and Katie Bahr-Bender.
        i. Resources for new conservationists were discussed. Resources include the mentorship program and county conservationist support group.
3. Approval of Agenda.
    a. A motion to approve the agenda as presented: Quita Sheehan – Vilas County, Seconded by Katie Bahr-Bender – Langlade County
        i. Vote: All ayes, no nays, motion carried.
4. Approval of 7/26/24 meeting minutes.
    a. A motion to approve the minutes as presented: Katie Bahr-Bender – Langlade County, seconded by Brooke Bembeneck – Marathon County
        i. Vote: All ayes, no nays, motion carried.
5. Treasurer's Report
    a. Kirk Langfoss provided a report.
    b. Please see the attachment with the minutes.
    c. The finances of the organization are strong, and an annual net revenue is expected.
    d. During the spring meeting, the 2026 budget will be discussed.

6. WI Land+Water Conservation Board of Directors
    a. Tom Boisvert submitted an update.
    b. Please see the attachment with the minutes.
7. Reminder of WI Land+Water Annual Conference in Green Bay
    a. March 5th-7th, 2025.
    b. Registration is currently open.
8. Budgeting and Planning Items
    a. Use of Area Association funds for accountant consultation and/or tax preparation
        i. Kirk Langfoss gave an overview of the Association's current standing in regards to tax exempt status. It is unclear if NCLWCA will need to submit additional information to the IRS.
        ii. It was discussed that a professional accountant/tax preparer should be used to determine NCLWCA's tax exempt status, and rectify any potential issues.
        iii. It was discussed that a professional accountant/tax preparer should file any necessary tax information with the IRS annually.
        iv. A motion to approve the use of NCLWCA funds to seek professional tax advice: Quita Sheehan – Vilas County, seconded by Tracy Arnold – Portage County
            1. Vote: All ayes, no nays, motion carried.
    b. Possible area association trainings in 2025 and beyond?
        i. It was discussed that NCLWCA funds could be utilized to sponsor training opportunities for our area.
        ii. Tom Boisvert mentioned non-metallic mining training may be a topic for a future training.
        iii. This topic can be explored further. There were no immediate training needs brought to attention at this time.
    c. Possible NCLWCA youth conservation camp scholarships
        i. It was discussed that NCLWCA funds could be utilized to provide scholarships to students in our area wishing to attend the WI Land+Water Youth Conservation Camps.
        ii. This topic will be discussed further at the spring meeting, and a draft scholarship template will be developed for review.
        iii. **A motion to approve the use of NCLWCA funds to provide two (2) Youth Conservation Camp Scholarships: Tracy Arnold – Portage County, seconded by Brooke Bembeneck – Marathon County**
            1. Vote: All ayes, no nays, motion carried.
    d. Possible NCLWCA LCC scholarships for annual WI Land+Water Conference
        i. It was discussed that NCLWCA funds could be utilized to provide scholarships to Land Conservation Committee members in our area wishing to attend the WI Land+Water Annual Conference.
        ii. Kelli Meyer shared that other Area Associations are considering a local scholarship opportunity like this as well.
        iii. This topic will be discussed further at the spring meeting, and a draft scholarship template will be developed for review.
        iv. **A motion to approve the use of NCLWCA funds to provide one (1) LCC scholarship to the annual WI Land+Water Conference: Kayla Littleton – Forest County, seconded by Tracy Arnold – Portage County**
            1. Vote: All ayes, no nays, motion carried.
    e. 2025 Meetings

i. WI Land+Water Annual Conference (March 3-5)
    1. It was determined that we do not need to formally meet as an Area Association during the annual conference.
ii. Virtual Spring Meeting
    1. Wood County is hosting.
    2. A poll will be sent out to determine the date, but it will likely be held in May.
iii. Summer Tour
    1. Lincoln County is hosting.
    2. The event will likely be held in August.
    3. Tom Boisvert stated that the topics are not finalized. However, reclaimed non-metallic mining sites, shoreline stabilization projects, and NRCS projects at a cranberry operation are topics up for consideration.

9. WI Land+Water Youth Education Committee (YEC) Update
    a. Patty Benedict will be retiring soon, and as a result is no longer the YEC representative for the North Central Area.
    b. Caleb Armstrong is the new YEC representative for the North Central Area, and he provided a verbal update.
    c. 2025 Envirothon will be held on April 11th, 2025 at the WI Lions Camp in Rosholt, WI.
    d. Middle School Conservation Camp will be held at Upham Woods June 15th-18th.
    e. High School Conservation Camp will be held at the North Lakeland Discovery Center June 23rd-26th.
10. County Updates
    a. Forest
        i. Kayla Littleton provided an update.
        ii. A new conservation technician has been hired, and the anticipated start date will be in June.
        iii. The non-metallic mining program is being revitalized.
        iv. The Forest County plant sale will be advertised soon.
        v. In the near future, the Farmland Preservation Plan will be revised for Forest County.
    b. Florence
        i. No update available.
    c. Lincoln
        i. Tom Boisvert provided an update.
        ii. 2024 cost-share projects included: 2 well decommissioning's, 3 grazing projects, and 3 shoreline stabilizations.
        iii. 2025 projects are planned to include: 4 grassed waterways, a rock-lined outlet, 3 shoreline stabilizations, 1 grazing project, and 1 stream crossing.
        iv. Lincoln County supervisors will be presented with an opportunity to potentially add a Conservation Specialist position.
        v. Lincoln County will begin the process of updating the Land and Water Resource Management Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan in 2025.
    d. Langlade
        i. Katie Bahr-Bender provided an update.
        ii. Katie is now the County Conservationist.
        iii. Audrey Gossett was recently hired as the new Conservation Specialist.
        iv. The Nutrient Management Farmer Education (NMFE) classes for Langlade County will be held in March.

e. Marathon
    i. Kirstie Heidenreich provided an update.
    ii. Marathon County is currently in the process of considering adding winter manure application restrictions. This change to the Marathon County Ordinances would need to be reviewed by DATCP. This change would be beyond state standards.
    iii. Working with a local village to complete a wellhead protection project. Staff have been working with a landowner within the protection area to establish managed grazing systems and other conservation best management practices.
    iv. A fish movement study in the Big Eau Pleine reservoir is being completed in 2025.
    v. Marathon County will be undergoing the 5 year Land and Water Resource Management Plan update and review process in 2025.
f. Oneida
    i. Michele Sadauskas provided an update.
    ii. The Oneida County Land and Water Department has been providing assistance in revising the County's Comprehensive Plan. Several areas have been updated to incorporate conservation focused language to highlight challenges and solutions.
    iii. Two stream crossing projects are anticipated to be installed in 2025. Oneida County is collaborating with local townships to complete this work. Additional funding through the WDNR was pursued for these efforts.
    iv. One shoreline stabilization project is anticipated to be installed in 2025.
    v. Due to the variety of grants, the project positions within the Oneida County Land and Water Department are going to be highly diversified in 2025.
    vi. Oneida and Lincoln Counties are collaborating on a stream crossing inventory project. A grant was submitted to WDNR to hopefully fund these efforts.
g. Portage
    i. Tracy Arnold provided an update.
    ii. Patty Benedict is retiring. Everyone thanked her for her dedication to conservation during her time at Portage County.
    iii. The Portage County Healthy Lakes and Rivers Program is doing very well. Several fish stick projects are in the process of being installed. Additional projects will be installed this summer. Tracy encouraged other Counties to pursue WDNR funding for these projects.
    iv. Tracy serves as a representative on the state non-metallic mining board. She mentioned that training opportunities may be coming in the future regarding non-metallic mining program administration.
    v. Lake management planning efforts are going well. Several new lake management plans are scheduled to be completed in 2025.
    vi. Portage County is completing several grazing projects
    vii. Several producer led field days have occurred and more are planned.
h. Vilas
    i. Alan Wirt is the new County Conservationist for Vilas County.
i. Wood
    i. Kendra Wilhelm provided an update.
    ii. Wood County received ARPA funding for a variety of conservation projects. These funds will be used to install conservation practices, fund agricultural test plots, complete groundwater

testing, and provide assistance for landowners installing reverse osmosis systems due to nitrate concerns. A drone was purchased with this funding as well.

iii. Wood County is assisting with organizing the Farm Profitability Expo.
iv. In 2024, Wood County helped landowners install 3,456 acres of cover crops, and 202 acres of residue management.
v. A shoreline stabilization project is in the process of being constructed.
vi. The Wood County tree and shrub sale was extremely successful. The quantity of all items sold increased.

11. Agency Reports
    a. WI Land+Water
        i. Kelli Myers provided an update.
        ii. WI Land+Water is encouraging each County to be involved with advocacy. This is helpful when pursuing a variety of legislative priorities – including funding for increased conservation staffing.
        iii. Michael Hook has been organizing Young Conservation Professional pop-up events throughout the state.
        iv. The Standards Oversight Council staff position has been hired, and the new staff member will begin on February 10th.
    b. WDNR
        i. Various WDNR staff provided updates.
        ii. <u>Nonpoint Program</u>
            1. Terry Kafka's position request has been submitted. WDNR is hoping to advertise for this position in the near future. Kirstie Heidenreich and Shane Wucherpfennig will be sitting on the interview panel.
            2. Jason Knutson has been hired as the new Bureau Director.
            3. April 15th is the deadline for TRM and NPS grants.
            4. WDNR reviews NOD applications as they come in.
        iii. <u>Waterways & Wetlands</u>
            1. It was asked by Tom Boisvert if the WDNR Waterways and Wetlands Program would be willing to hold a northern area training on ordinary high water mark and navigability determinations. Nicole Hayes stated that these trainings used to be annually, but the WDNR has not hosted one recently. The WDNR would like to host these again.
            2. Tom Nedland informed the group that future trainings involving WI Land+Water, DATCP, Counties, and other partners are being planned to better understand each stakeholder's involvement in waterway and wetland areas.
            3. It was confirmed during the meeting that projects utilizing state and/or federal dollars are exempt from WDNR permitting fees.
            4. Information and updates were provided via handouts. Please see the attachments for more information.
    c. DATCP
        i. Alex Elias started in October as the new DATCP Agency Liaison.
        ii. The Bureau Director position is currently vacant.
        iii. Lisa Trumble retired, and that position is currently posted.

iv. Matt Woodrow stated that after almost 25 years with DATCP, Stacy Dehne is leaving for an engineering position with DOA. DATCP is working to backfill her position as quickly as possible. A job posting can be expected this coming month.
v. Sarah Hovis is currently the primary contact for the Counties that were within Stacy Dehne's coverage area.
vi. Cultural Resources reviews will now be directed to regional DATCP staff. Sarah Hovis is the contact for the Northern Region.

d. NRCS
i. No update available.

12. Other Business
a. None

13. Adjourn at 2:50 p.m.
1. **Motion to adjourn: Katie Bahr-Bender – Langlade County, seconded by Brooke Bembeneck – Marathon County.**
a. **Vote: All ayes, no nays, motion carried.**

Host County			
	Planning Meeting/ Area Poster & Speaking Contest January/February	**Virtual Spring Meeting May/June**	**Summer tour/Meeting August/September**
2025	PORTAGE	WOOD	LINCOLN
2026	VILAS	FLORENCE	MARATHON
2027	WOOD	FOREST	ONEIDA
2028	FLORENCE	LANGLADE	PORTAGE
2029	FOREST	LINCOLN	VILAS
2030	LANGLADE	MARATHON	WOOD
2031	LINCOLN	ONEIDA	FLORENCE
2032	MARATHON	PORTAGE	FOREST
2032	ONEIDA	VILAS	LANGLADE
2033	REPEAT ORDER ALPHABETICAL	REPEAT ORDER ALPHABETICAL	REPEAT ORDER ALPHABETICAL

Elected and Appointed Terms		
Role	**Individual**	**Term/Appointment Expiration**
President	Kirstie Heidenreich	April 18th, 2026
Vice President	Linnaea Newman	April 18th, 2026
Treasurer	Kirk Langfoss	April 18th, 2026
Secretary	Tom Boisvert	April 18th, 2026
LCC Rep. WI Land+Water BOD	Mike Ritter	May 16th, 2025
LCC Alt. Rep. WI Land+Water BOD	Linnaea Newman	April 18th, 2026
LCD Rep. WI Land+Water BOD	Tom Boisvert	April 18th, 2026
LCD Alt. Rep. WI Land+Water BOD	Tracy Arnold	April 18th, 2026

Beyond the Business Meeting:

Before the business meeting the Area Conservation Poster and Speaking Contests were held. Portage County was the host for the 2025 Area Contest. First place winners from the Poster and Speaking Contests will be advancing to the State Contest in Green Bay, WI.