WI LAND+WATER

AREA ASSOCIATION GUIDE

LAST UPDATED 01.2024

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This guide is meant to be a continuous reference document.

If you have questions about anything that follows, contact the WI Land+Water Conservation Training and Membership Services Manager.

BYLAWS

WI LAND+WATER BYLAWS AND AREA ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

WI LAND+WATER BYLAWS

The WI Land+Water bylaws outline the basis for the organization of area associations. They note that the State of Wisconsin is divided into eight areas for the purpose of electing representatives to the WI Land+Water board of directors (BOD). Each county is assigned to an area. Changes to the boundaries of the areas are approved by a majority vote of the area association's BOD for all affected areas. The WI Land+Water BOD incorporates the area's boundary changes with the next area association election cycle.

Read more about the definitions and roles of area associations as defined by WI Land+Water in section 4.1 of the WI Land+Water bylaws.

AREA ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

The bylaws of every area association are available on the WI Land+Water website.

Every area association's bylaws outline similar rules to make changes. They require a two-thirds majority vote by the area association's BOD and must be sent to every Director at least seven days prior to the BOD meeting.

Proposed area association bylaw changes may not conflict with WI Land+Water bylaws about area boundaries or the election of area representatives to the WI Land+Water BOD.

Area associations' leadership elections operate on a two-year cycle. WI Land+Water recommends that each area association reviews and revises, as needed, their bylaws on a similarly regular basis.

Read more about making area association bylaw changes in Article VII of your area association's bylaws.

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

ELECTION OF THE WI LAND+WATER BOD MEMBERS

Article 4.1 of the WI Land+Water bylaws outlines the process of electing members to the WI Land+Water BOD.

Each county in an area appoints one Land Conservation Committee (LCC) member and one Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) staff person to form the area association BOD. Elections are open to nominations from all individuals within the area.

By June 20th of even-numbered years, the LCC representatives on each area association's BOD elect one LCC area representative and one alternate. Similarly, the LWCD representatives on each area association's BOD elect one LWCD area representative and one alternate. These elected area representatives serve and vote on the WI Land+Water BOD. All elections must be done in writing, whether by print or electronic, unless there is only one nominee for each position.

All area representatives on the WI Land+Water BOD serve a two-year term, or until a successor is elected. Consecutive term limits may be established by the area association BOD. Only the Lake Winnebago Area Association bylaws contain language that the area representative shall serve a maximum of two consecutive terms unless re-elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the area association BOD.

Within Article 5 of each area association's bylaws, language outlines how area representatives stand for the entire area at all times and should regularly report to the area BOD and membership on WI Land+Water's affairs, activities, programs, accomplishments, and current issues.

WI L+W BOD - 2 REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH AREA ASSOCIATION : 16 MEMBERS

Lake Michigan Area	Lake Winnebago Area	South-eastern Area	Southern Area	Western Area	West Central Area	North-western Area	North Central Area
LCC	LCC	LCC	LCC	LCC	LCC	LCC	LCC
LWCD	LWCD	LWCD	LWCD	LWCD	LWCD	LWCD	LWCD

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

AREA ASSOCIATION STRUCTURE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The majority of area association bylaws specify that the area association is governed by a board of directors made up of one LCC and one LWCD representative from each member county. Each BOD member has one vote on matters brought to the BOD. *Read more about the structure of the area association's BOD in Article 4.1 of the area association's bylaws.*

The Lake Winnebago Area Association is the only area association that does not use a BOD structure. Instead, it uses a voting structure consisting of a simple majority of the association's counties.

OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Each area association's officers consist of the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and area coordinator. They make up the executive committee of the area association's BOD, that as needed, carries out certain routine matters of business between area association meetings. These activities include planning, authorizing expenditures, and keeping the association informed.

The responsibilities for these roles are largely consistent across all of the area associations. The main difference is that the Lake Winnebago Area Association specifics that the role of the area coordinator, "lead-advisor," is rotated on a regular alphabetical scheduled from one county to another so that each county shares the duties and experience.

Read more about the structure of the executive committee in Aritcle 4.2 of the area association's bylaws.

Read more about the powers and duties of the executive committee in Article 5.3 of the area association's bylaws.

Read more about the powers and duties of each officer position in Article 5.2 of the area association's bylaws.

President	Vice President	Secretary	Treasurer	Area Coordinator

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

AREA ASSOCIATION FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS & REPORTING

Most area association's bylaws outline how one of the roles of the treasurer is that they shall arrange for audits of the association's financial records at the direction of the area association's BOD.

WI Land+Water recommends the following related to area association financial reporting:

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1 **EACH AREA ASSOCIATION SHOULD BE REGISTERED WITH THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS) AS A TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION, WITH A UNIQUE EMPLOYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (EIN).**

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2 **EACH AREA ASSOCIATION ACTIVELY REGISTERED WITH THE IRS AS A TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION SHOULD ANNUALLY FILE WITH THE IRS BY THE 15TH OF THE 5TH MONTH FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE FISCAL YEAR (I.E. CALENDAR YEAR ORGANIZATIONS FILING DEADLINE IS MAY 15) THE FOLLOWING:**

a. Form 990-N -- Small tax-exempt organizations generally are eligible to file Form 990-N to satisfy their annual reporting requirement if their annual gross receipts are normally $50,000 or less.

- https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/annual-electronic-filing-requirement-for-small-exempt-organizations-form-990-n-e-postcard

b. Form 990-EZ -- An organization that has gross receipts less than $200,000 and total assets at the end of the year less than $500,000.

c. Form 990-PF or Form 990 -- Must be filed by an organization exempt from income tax under section 501(a) (including an organization that hasn't applied for recognition of exemption) if it has either (1) gross receipts greater than or equal to $200,000, or (2) total assets greater than or equal to $500,000 at the end of the tax year.

d. Those area associations that have not applied for recognition of exemption will need to do so.

- https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/automatic-revocation-how-to-have-your-tax-exempt-status-reinstated
- File Form 1023 or Form 1023-EZ -- application for recognition of exemption 501(c)(3).

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

AREA ASSOCIATION FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS & REPORTING (CONT.)

3

IF AN AREA ASSOCIATION IS UNCERTAIN ABOUT ITS IRS TAX-EXEMPT STATUS, IT MAY USE THE IRS TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATION SEARCH TOOL, RECOGNIZING THAT AN ORGANIZATION THAT HAS NOT FILED A FORM 990-N FOR THREE CONSECUTIVE YEARS MAY HAVE HAD ITS TAX-EXEMPT STATUS AUTOMATICALLY REVOKED.

a. More information about the automatic revocation process can be found at the IRS Automatic Exemption Revocation for Non-Filing: Frequently Asked Questions webpage.

b. Area associations whose tax-exempt status was revoked may apply for reinstatement. More information at https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/automatic-revocation-how-to-have-your-tax-exempt-status-reinstated.

c. File form 1023 or Form 1023-EZ -- application for recognition of exemption 501(c)(3).

4

ADDITIONALLY, EACH AREA ASSOCIATION SHOULD SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT WITH THE STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (DFI) - HTTPS://WDFI.ORG/

Area associations should have received a notice (in the form of a blue postcard) from DFI with instructions to submit annual report filings online (https://www.wdfi.org/apps/corpar/). Annual filings may also be filed by U.S. mail. Annual filing fees are $25 per year.

5

IF THERE IS A TRANSITION IN THE AREA ASSOCIATION TREASURER POSITION, INCOMING TREASURERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT CHECK-SIGNING AUTHORIZATION IS TRANSFERRED TO THEM.

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

AREA ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP TRANSITION BEST PRACTICES

An effective officer transition helps to maintain seamless continuity of the organization's progress, goals, and growth. It allows for new people to gain experience in these roles and can contribute to renewed interest in the area association. To help ensure a smooth transition, WI Land+Water recommends that each officer has a transition plan.

Below you can find some ideas on what to do and include for the plan.

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1 **MAINTAIN UPDATED INSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS AND DESCRIPTIONS WITH ANY CHANGES THAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED DURING YOUR TENURE.**

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2 **CREATE A YEARLY CALENDAR AND PLANNING TIMELINE WITH NOTABLE EVENTS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF PLANNING FOR THEM.**

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3 **DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD, MEET WITH THE INCOMING PERSON AND TALK ABOUT WHAT THE ROLE INCLUDES.**

- Go over the details of the position as described by the area association bylaws and the actual day to day.
- Document any ongoing projects or duties, and any associated processes.
- Specify whether you are able to be reached after the transition for any urgent questions.
- Find the best way to share documents for document retention of the position.

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4 **SHARE ANY WORDS OF WISDOM/GOALS THAT YOU HAD DURING THE POSITION.**

ROLES + RESPONSIBILITIES

ADVISORS FROM AGENCIES

Most agendas for area association meetings reserve spots for natural resource agencies to provide updates, where relevant. It is recommended to reach out to agency staff and directly invite them to come. Additionally, the area association's listserv is open for agency staff and others to join and learn about upcoming meetings.

If you know any agency staff that would like to join the listserv, reach out to the Conservation Training & Membership Services Manager at WI Land+Water to help them get added.

NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service

USDA - NATIONAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
Federal

WISCONSIN
DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
State

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
FORWARD
WISCONSIN

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
State

MEETINGS + EVENTS

ANNUAL PLANNING AND LIABILITY INSURANCE

ANNUAL PLANNING

Several area associations use the first meeting of the year to schedule the rest of the meetings for the year. This is effective to get the upcoming dates on people's calendars and avoid overlapping events. WI Land+Water appreciates area associations sharing meeting dates, once scheduled, with the Conservation Training and Membership Services Manager.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

Area associations typically hold tours that may involve a "field trip" component such as farm tours, project site visits, hikes, bus rides, etc. Each area association should consider purchasing a general liability insurance policy to protect the area association in the event of an injury that occurs on annual tours. Rates will vary, but such a policy could be obtained for around $500 per year.

Area association annual tours may also include visits to private homes, businesses, or farms. As part of the planning process, area associations should also ensure that the tour site host has sufficient and appropriate insurance coverage, prior to the visit.

Regardless of the liability insurance carried by both the area association and the private home, business, or farm tour site host, area associations should consider utilizing a waiver form for annual tour participants, which could provide enhanced protection to area associations and tour site hosts by stipulating there is a risk for participants, in spite of relevant area association/tour site host liability coverage.

The 2014 Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Liability Law (Wisconsin Act 269) provides some farms limited liability.

MEETINGS + EVENTS

SUMMER TOUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOST COUNTIES

Most area associations host summer or fall tours where one county highlights different projects, sites, and/or partnerships. The following recommendations are intended to provide steps towards ensuring a successful tour.

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1 **START PLANNING EARLY, EVEN A YEAR IN ADVANCE. THIS IS IDEAL TO CONNECT WITH CONTACTS, GAIN APPROVAL, AND DETERMINE TIMING.**

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2 **WHEN DECIDING ON THE DATE OR THE DATE IS UPCOMING:**

- Avoid Friday afternoons
- Assuming your tour will be primarily an outside event, start paying attention to the weather forecast well ahead of time. Build in possible contingency plans. Can the day be rearranged to avoid morning or afternoon storms? Do you have options to move into a building or under a shelter at the various tour stops?

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3 **WHEN THINKING ABOUT YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE:**

- Keep in mind the anticipated tour attendees when choosing sites. Long distance walks may not be possible for all attendees. Make sure your tour registration materials make any accessibility challenges or physical fitness requirements clear.
- Keep the event on schedule!

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4 **CONSIDER TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENTS WELL IN ADVANCE:**

- Are you going to use a bus to travel as one group? Can the tour stops accommodate a bus?
- Would it be better to travel in individual vehicles?

MEETINGS + EVENTS

SUMMER TOUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOST COUNTIES (CONT.)

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5 WHEN CHOOSING WHICH LOCATIONS TO STOP AT:

- Find something unique to your county/area. It does not always have to be directly related to conservation.
- If possible, engage the tour site host in talking about the site.
- Don't overbook your day. Fewer tour stops and ample discussion time is preferable to racing from site to site and sacrificing group interaction.
- Make sure your tour route has restroom facilities and your schedule allows for adequate bathroom breaks.
- If you are going to a non-farm facility as part of the tour (utility company, wastewater treatment plant, unique local business, etc.) be sure to check ahead of time for dress code requirements, limitations on number of people, etc.
- Build in a fun but educational location for lunch.
- After the event, be sure to send out thank you notes to the people and organizations who graciously gave their time to make the tour a success.

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6 WHEN YOU ARE PLANNING FOR FOOD AND DRINK:

- Make sure to have refreshments available at the start of the day, and throughout the day as possible (especially water).
- Don't skimp on the food. It doesn't have to be fancy, but be sure there's plenty.
- The weather forecast might help you make your food selections. Hot soup on a cool and rainy tour day could be very welcomed by attendees.
- Consider the dietary restrictions of attendees and have options available for anyone with special dietary needs.

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7 WHEN PROMOTING THE TOUR:

- Be sure that the information sent out announcing the tour includes details such as where to meet, when, costs, cancellation policy, rain date, or if the tour will happen as scheduled, rain or shine.
- If your tour will have physical requirements or potentially pose challenges for some individuals, make sure your tour registration materials make that clear.

RELATIONSHIP WITH WI LAND+WATER

LIAISON, COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION, & LOCAL POLICY

LIAISON

The WI Land+Water Conservation Training and Membership Services Manager is the official liaison to the area associations. When possible, they will try to attend area association meetings and provide relevant updates. If you have any questions about area association duties, reach out to them first.

LISTSERV UPDATES

Area association listservs are hosted through WI Land+Water's Google Groups. The Conservation and Membership Services Manager regularly updates the listserv with new hires and LCC members, or departing ones. If you would like anyone to be added or removed from the listserv, whether they are a part of the LWCDs or LCCs or not, contact them.

MAINTENANCE OF THE AREA ASSOCIATION PAGES ON WI LAND+WATER WEBSITE

The liaison to the area associations can help update any information on the website. Send them agendas, minutes, bylaws updates, and updates of the officers and representatives on the WI Land+Water BOD. They will update the area association's page and add upcoming meetings and agendas to the Community Calendar on WI Land+Water's events page.

WI LAND+WATER COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

Most WI Land+Water committees strive to have representation from all areas of the state and multiple committees seek representatives from each of the area associations. This helps the distribution of information both to the committee and from the committee. Check to make sure you have representatives on relevant committees - if you do not, solicit representation among your area association and contact the committee chairs to request inclusion of your area association representative. For relevant committees, we recommend having standing committee updates included on area association meeting agendas.

ADVANCING LOCAL POLICY

WI Land+Water's local policy input process allows area associations to bring an issue to the state level to initiate robust discussion with key stakeholders, engagement with members statewide, and integration into the state's association's advocacy efforts. To begin, have a discussion with your area association to determine that the issue in question is shared outside of your county, requires greater examination at the state level, and is a priority WI Land+Water members and committees should tackle.

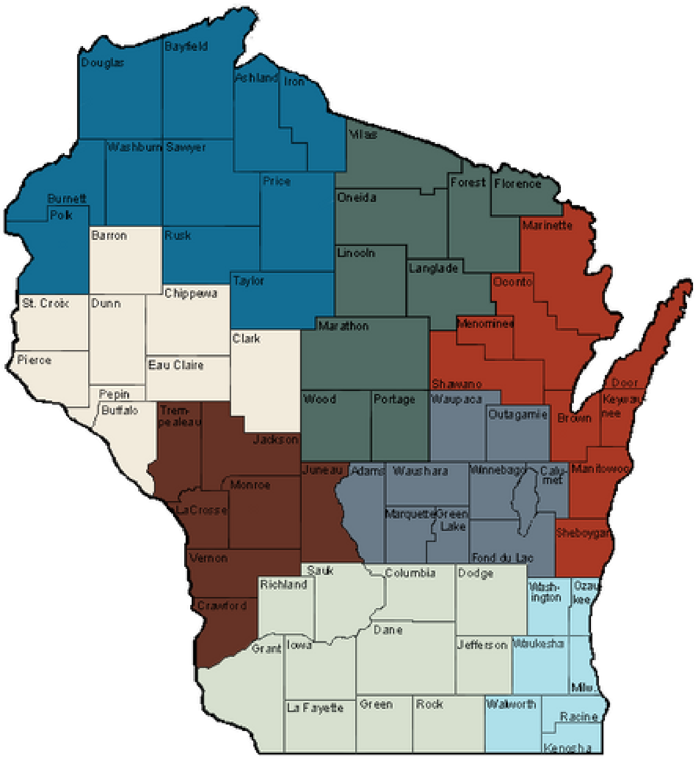
WI Land+Water's eight committees address a range of important conservation issues and are composed of county LCCs, LWCDs, and agency partners. They include:

- **Great Lakes Committee**
- **Health & Conservation Committee**
- **Legislative/Administrative Committee**
- **Mississippi River Basin Committee**
- **Public Outreach Committee**
- **Professional Improvement Committee (PIC)**
- **Technical Committee**
- **Youth Education Committee**

Learn more about the process for advancing local policy here: https://wisconsinlandwater.org/members-hub/committees/legadmin/local-policy-input

RESOURCES

MAP, CONTACTS, AND LISTSERV HOW-TOS



MAP

The Area Association map is also available on the WI Land+Water website:

https://wisconsinlandwater.org/members-hub/area-associations

CONTACTS FOR OTHER AREA ASSOCIATIONS

Learn more about other area associations and how to get in contact with them through their pages on the WI Land+Water website:

https://wisconsinlandwater.org/members-hub/area-associations

HOW TO USE THE WI LAND+WATER LISTSERVS

Visit the listserv page on our website to learn more about our listservs and how to use them:

https://wisconsinlandwater.org/members-hub/list-serves

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