

# THE NOTE

## WHAT'S NEW(S)

MEMBERSHIP

ADVOCACY

TRAINING

YOUTH ED

SOURCE WATER

SOC

## WELCOME TO THE E-NOTE

**E-Note keeps you in the loop with the latest updates in county conservation and with what's happening in WI Land+Water.**

**To our members. For our members.**

## EVENTS CALENDAR

- Sept. 18 North Central Area Association meeting
- Oct. 6 Land and Water Conservation Board meeting
- Oct. 14 Legislative/Administrative Committee meeting
- Oct. 16 Lake Michigan Area Association meeting
- Oct. 22 Great Lakes Committee meeting
- Oct. 29 Southern Area Association meeting

- Nov. 10 Standards Oversight Council Advisory meeting
- Dec. 1 Land and Water Conservation Board meeting
- Dec. 17 County Conservation meeting  
Board of Directors meeting  
Technical Committee meeting
- Dec. 18 Legislative/Administrative Committee meeting

These events are subject to change, due to social distancing limitations. Please check our events page on our website or contact Penny Pohle with questions.



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Follow us



Membership Directory



Email us if there is a staff or supervisor change in your county.

## MESSAGE FROM MATT

As the fall season begins, living in a pandemic has become the new, previously unimaginable “normal” (now entering its 27<sup>th</sup> week, by my count), with virtual meetings and remote classrooms, six feet of distance in public, and an abundance of hand washing and sanitizer. Between the COVID-19 crisis, social unrest across the country, large-scale economic instability, and a presidential election just weeks away, few among us can recall a time our nation has faced greater uncertainty about what the future holds and exactly what the path forward looks like. We can be sure, however, that in order to navigate that path successfully, it will take leadership, perseverance, and adaptation – three attributes that we are thinking a lot about at WI Land+Water.

It is rare accomplishment for a nonprofit to enjoy such sustained leadership on its board as has WI Land+Water. The trend continues with the most recent incarnation of our board, following the county board elections in April. We welcome into leadership positions [Monte Osterman from Racine County](#) as Chair and [Bob Micheel from Monroe County](#) as President, whose professionalism and lived conservation experiences will be a steady hand at the helm. We also welcome to the board the talents of Amy Piaget from Dane County, Bob Mott from Oneida County, and Brian Haase from Waushara County.

Our new Board members succeed outgoing members whose strong, measured leadership served this organization, and previous incarnations of it, in countless ways and for several decades. Outgoing Chair Dave Solin and outgoing President Greg Baneck, along with former Executive Committee members Kurt Calkins and Ben Wojahn, have left an indelible impression on WI Land+Water and we are so appreciative of their service.

As we look forward to the months ahead, we will need to demonstrate perseverance and adaptation, as we have always done. The wheels of the state biennial budgeting process are starting to grind, and Wisconsin, like so many of our counties, will in all likelihood find itself in a challenging fiscal situation due to the pandemic. WI Land+Water will be focused on the unfinished business of securing a 31% funding increase from the state to county conservation departments – a goal we were painfully close to achieving in the last legislative session before the pandemic hit. Though we face new challenges, our case that supporting locally led county conservation is the best investment Wisconsin can make in the health of our lands and waters remains strong. We will continue to make that case and will keep WI Land+Water members apprised of our priorities as we develop them ahead of the state budget process.

Whether it is working to revise a nutrient management plan or restoring streambanks to better withstand more intense

storm events (or dozens of other things, really), on the subject of adaptation, WI Land+Water’s county conservation members do it better than anyone. In that very limited sense, life in a pandemic isn’t any different. On-the-ground conservationists are always adapting their approach, their practices and their programs, to best meet the need of their communities. Read more about it in [the members section](#).

For WI Land+Water to continue to operate safely, restrictions around large-group gatherings – such as the Annual Conference, County Conservation Meeting, Envirothon, and dozens of trainings and meetings – have forced us to adapt. We held a successful virtual County Conservation Meeting this past July, with Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes giving an inspiring keynote address. Over 100 people attended and connected, hearing from 20 different presenters. We even worked in a happy hour session! More on this successful virtual event can be found in this issue [here](#). This experience demonstrated that such virtual events present opportunities to connect and engage in new and interesting ways, and in some cases, with those whom would not otherwise be able to attend. We are planning a virtual December County Conservation Meeting, accordingly.

While we are optimistic that we could see a vaccine developed by early 2021, necessary planning has already begun for our March Annual Conference, and for the first time in our association’s history, it will be a virtual event too. Our conference is top-notch event that our members, sponsors, presenters, and attendees have grown accustomed to experiencing. We hold ourselves to a very high standard for this annual event. At this point, critical planning decisions must be made and we are simply not convinced that we can safely meet those high expectations with an in-person event, even with COVID restrictions in place.

Going virtual will certainly be a challenge. There will be things we simply cannot supplement, such as the energy that pulses through the room when our members gather to celebrate the successes – big or small – of our shared work. Yet the strength of our Association has always been our members in the passion and dedication they bring, the challenges they best, and the care with which they treat each other. We will work to ensure that this event is an experience worthy of putting our WI Land+Water stamp on it, one that puts our people first, and provides the space for those valuable peer-to-peer connections to be rekindled, created, and nurtured. We hope you will join us.



Matt Krueger  
Executive Director

## RESOURCES

### Stay Informed

WI Land+Water is providing the latest updates regarding COVID-19 impacts on our website.

[More information here.](#)



COVID-19  
response

# DESPITE COVID, A SUMMER OF CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

The Tasch wetland restoration project in Fond du Lac County with a multi-year harvestable buffer agreement.

## County conservation departments take necessary health precautions and make significant progress on projects

If you looked at the work accomplished by Fond du Lac County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) this summer, you would not have known that we were in the midst of a global pandemic. From partnerships, grants, and cost-sharing funding that the department was working on going into the new year, this summer had shaped up to be especially busy, even before the pandemic came in March.

Many county conservation departments across Wisconsin were in similar situations. As state and local health precautions were made, county offices took a variety of approaches to ensure the staff and public was safe while working through the busiest three months of the year. Some county offices, like Portage County LWCD, closed the office to the public for several months, and were able to work remotely. Other counties alternated staff coming into the office to maintain social distancing, and others even managed to take necessary precautions while staying open.

Despite these adjustments, county conservation departments were able to be there for landowners and producers and install important projects on the landscape. We interviewed Paul Tollard, Fond du Lac County Conservationist, and Steve Bradley, Portage County Conservationist, about their experiences with balancing COVID-19 and summer demands.

### In what ways have you been able to meet the needs of the public with precautions in place?

*Bradley:* "Our office has been closed to public walk-ins and are by appointment-only. We usually meet people in the parking lot. When making on-site visits and lake association meetings, we try to keep as much of it outside, while adhering to wearing masks and social distancing."

*Tollard:* "We are co-located in a USDA Agricultural Service Center and coordinated with local USDA agencies in the building to follow local, state, and federal guidelines to the greatest extent possible. Even with our building closed to the public, the Fond du Lac LWCD staff are mostly field staff. We are very used to meeting with landowners in the field, so the pandemic has not really impacted our work. We are currently meeting with landowners in the office parking lot, if not in the field, and so far that has been working very well. In short, business as usual."

### What are some of the changes you've made to county programs to meet your goals?

*Bradley:* "We've really just seen a shift in the type of work being done and what is prioritized. For example, we accomplished a lot of wild parsnip treatment."

"Our youth education program had to get more creative with social distancing measures in place. We have a very successful prairie pollinator program, where students participate in a presentation on prairies and pollinators. At the end of the presentation, each student receives a prairie plug to plant in their school prairie or take home. We started all the seeds in January at our houses to make sure they would be ready for April and May presentations."

"A bit of a surprise came in March when schools closed, and no presentations were able to occur. We had thousands of prairie plants growing at our houses and nowhere for them to go. Plan B came when

one of our local Farmer Led Groups stepped up to take the pollinator pledge. They allowed us to plant our prairie plugs on areas of their property they weren't using to farm. Not only did this benefit the farm with increased pollinators, but it now provides additional educational sites for school groups to visit."

*Tollard:* "We used less staff to sort our trees for the County Tree Sale Program this spring and we went to a drive-thru for the tree order pick up. The tree program went very well and we plan to continue with the drive-thru pick up in the future. We also had to move the Ag and Household Clean Sweep that was scheduled for April to the end of October."

"One of the other challenges this year has been holding in-person field days for the Demonstration Farm Networks and other grants that we have in the county. We have been trying to have smaller groups or virtual field days, but groups have been limited to 10 or less which makes it difficult to host field days and trainings."



The Buechel streambank restoration project in Fond du Lac County with a multi-year harvestable buffer agreement for the area adjacent to the stream.

### Have you noticed any pandemic-related challenges when working with producers or landowners?

*Bradley:* "Larger agricultural projects were much slower this year, but the low-cost soft practices are certainly increasing. On the non-agricultural side, things were normal or slightly busier. Another thing to note is that wearing masks during onsite visits can get uncomfortably warm and everyone likes to share their opinions about the pandemic."

*Tollard:* "We have not experienced any landowners or farmers backing out of projects due to the pandemic so far. In fact, contractors were so busy this year that there might be projects that get delayed until 2021. We have been fortunate that contractors were able to keep working and our projects are getting completed, even if things are slightly behind schedule. A big shout-out to Wisconsin DATCP Technician Drew Zelle for his help this year."

### Are there any "silver linings" to come out of all of this?

*Bradley:* "We're all happy to be part of a team that can tackle challenges, be creative, and still provide services to our residents, even with all the restrictions. We worked together to find a new way to get the job done!"

### What is one quarantine hobby or accomplishment that you're proud of?

*Tollard:* "I taught myself to play guitar a few years ago, so once or twice a week during the Safer at Home shut down I would play a "quarantine" song and share it with family and friends."

# NEW BOARD SPOTLIGHT



## Monte Osterman, Racine County

Monte Osterman is the new Chair of the WI Land+Water Board of Directors and the Vice President of the Executive Committee. Monte has served as a member of the Racine County Land Conservation Committee since 2010 and been involved as a leader in WI Land+Water since 2013.

### What opportunities do you see for WI Land+Water and what can we make progress on over the next few years?

I feel like our greatest opportunities are in the areas of public outreach, internal management, and increased sustainability of our organization. WI Land+Water is fast becoming the authoritative voice for conservation efforts in our state. Building on that reputation provides us greater access to non-traditional partners, as well as diverse funding sources. Our organization has matured greatly over the last five to six years, with the merger being the driving factor. That attitude toward positive growth predates improvements in our internal management procedures, which in turn will make us more sustainable. I often say we have put our grown up suits on, and that is something to be extremely proud of.

### What excites and inspires you about serving on the Board?

I am motivated by the diverse communities our work touches. I am amazed at how far reaching conservation efforts go and how those activities affect every person in our state. Our work creates an impression on anyone who puts food to fork, or touches the water in any way, which is a huge responsibility.

### Why do you think it is important to be active and engaged on a county conservation committee?

I feel the future of our communities' health, both rural and urban, is entwined in the overall health of our water and land resources. I am convinced that proper stewardship of these assets will strengthen development throughout our state and increase viability and profitability of working lands, as well as enhance public health through water quality improvements.

### What is an interesting fact about Racine County that few may know?

Although our population density is mostly urban, 75 percent of our land mass is in either rural, agriculture, or parkland. Also, our marina boasts charter fishing cruises with the highest catch rate of all fleets on Lake Michigan.

### What are some of your favorite outdoor activities?

I learned to swim as a child in Wisconsin lakes and I still LOVE doing that, as well as fishing and biking. I don't get much chance these days to take advantage of our world class outdoor recreational opportunities, but I pack a great deal of it in when I do get the chance.



## Bob Micheel, Monroe County

Bob Micheel is the new Vice Chair of the WI Land+Water Board of Directors and President of the Executive Committee. Bob is the County Conservationist in Monroe County and has served the county for over 30 years, calling it his "dream job." Bob is a graduate of UW-Stevens Point.

### What opportunities do you see for WI Land+Water and what can we make progress on over the next few years?

Before we can tackle the many challenges facing Wisconsin, we need to prioritize financial security for WI Land+Water, including sustainable funding for our land conservation departments. WI Land+Water has an opportunity to strengthen our organizational capacity around climate change, racial justice and equity, as well as influence land-use policy.

### What excites and inspires you about serving on the Board?

I'm honored to represent western Wisconsin and being elected to serve on the board as Vice-Chair. The long history of leadership in this organization has created many opportunities for counties to be engaged and make a difference. I look forward to sharing what I have learned over three decades of conservation work, while collaborating with others across the state to address immediate and long-term natural resource challenges facing Wisconsin.

### Why drew you to conservation work and environmentalism?

Hunting and fishing are part of the fabric of the Micheel family, and I was introduced to the outdoors at an early age. However, the real catalyst to a future conservation career occurred at age eight, when my dad turned off the Saturday morning cartoons so that I could help him every weekend on our newly acquired woodland. The tree farm meant camping, exploring, planting and harvesting timber, and managing the land for wildlife, water, and soils. My father worked for the SCS in Winona County, Minnesota. During summers off from school, he would often take me along on jobs when he needed assistance, so by 12 years old, I was exposed to contour strip layout, surveying dam sites, and construction inspections.

### What is an interesting fact about Monroe County that few may know?

Although our county is two-thirds in the driftless area, all but one watershed basin originates within Monroe County. Like a spoke on a bike, all these waters originate in Monroe County and flow out to our neighboring counties.

### When you're not working, you're...

I'm enjoying time with my family and spending as much daylight in the woods tree farming. Or, when you read this, I will be hiking in the Rocky Mountains with my recurve bow in-hand looking for wapiti!!



### First Virtual County Conservation Meeting a Success

On July 9-10, WI Land+Water held its first virtual County Conservation Meeting. Despite the new format, the event was a resounding success.

Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes kicked off the event with an inspiring keynote about the state’s effort to combat climate change impacts. Over the course of the two days, around 100 attendees tuned into five breakout sessions. Session topics covered a wide range of topical issues, from climate change strategies to race, equity, and inclusion. The event even included a virtual happy hour, featuring a tour of Brix Cider from Dane County Conservation Specialist Marie Raboin, who also owns and operates the company with her husband.

Due to the ongoing pandemic and the success of our summer meeting, the winter County Conservation meeting will also be virtual. Mark your calendars for **December 17-18, 2020**. More details to come.



Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes delivers the keynote address, discussing climate change and the importance of locally led conservation, at WI Land+Water’s first virtual County Conservation meeting.

Watch all the recorded sessions online

#### Day 1

[Welcome and Keynote](#)

#### Breakout Session 1

- [Local Strategies for Climate Change](#)
- [Addressing Climate Change with Natural and Working Lands](#)

#### Breakout Session 2

- [County Conservation across Wisconsin](#)
- [A Retrospective of the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Program](#)

#### Happy Hour

- [Hey, you know what isn’t local? That beer you’re drinking!](#)

#### Day 2

[A Conversation on Racial Equity and Inclusion](#)

#### Breakout Session 3

- [An Update on DNR’s Targeted Performance Standard](#)
- [Adapting to the Challenges of an All-Hands-on-Deck Crisis](#)

#### Breakout Session 4

- [Financial Implications of COVID-19 on Counties](#)
- [Implementing Water Quality-Based Standards: Challenges and Opportunities](#)

#### Breakout Session 5

- [WICCI: Cutting-Edge Climate Data in Your Own Backyard](#)
- [Accessing Well Water Data](#)

## RESOURCES



## IN YOUR INBOX

### Weekly News.

This Week in Conservation gives you the latest headlines about Wisconsin conservation and agriculture.

### Monthly Trainings.

Stay relevant with the latest trainings, webinars, and educational events from SITCOM.

## 2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE IS NOW VIRTUAL

Mark your calendars for next year's conference  
March 3-5, 2021

The 2021 Annual Conference will be, for the first time ever, a virtual event! We will work to still bring you all the phenomenal features of our in-person conference.

We will bring you timely technical and professional development training sessions, many of which will provide Professional Development Hours or Continuing Education Units. There will be many valuable interactive networking opportunities, as well as the annual business meeting and silent auction.

Additional details and registration will be available this December. Make a plan to join us as we navigate 2021 together.

### Silent Auction

The Youth Education Silent Auction committee is working on organizing an online auction that will take place in conjunction with the conference. We are in the early stages of planning and will have more information coming soon.

In the meantime, please continue to think of items that your county would be willing to donate to the silent auction. We will work with you on the logistics and details, and will provide updates as soon as we can.

Please reach out to [Megan Steckelberg](#) or [Karyn Eckert](#) if you have additional ideas or suggestions. Thanks for your ongoing support for our Youth Education programs.

### 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Poster & Speaking Contest

The Youth Education Committee is working on more details about the annual poster and speaking contest, as well as many of the other 2021 Youth Education programs.

[Please see the Youth Education section for more details.](#)

**LEARN** the latest conservation practices and programs!

**NETWORK** with your colleagues from across the state!

**ENGAGE** with passionate conservation professionals!

### 2020 Conservation Award Winners

Plan to recognize a conservation champion who has gone above and beyond!

This year's award categories include:

- Outstanding Conservation Employee (three categories)
- Outstanding Supervisor
- Conservation Steward
- Special Recognition/Friend of Conservation.
- Brad Matson Outstanding Youth Educator Award

[Details and nomination materials can be found on our website.](#) Nominations are due by **December 31, 2020.**

We will not be offering the Farm Family of the Year award in 2021. The winning family typically hosts Conservation Observance Day that summer, and due to COVID-19 virus concerns, the 2020 winners Kevin and Carolyn Parr of Harmony Hills farm, plan to host this event in Vernon County at a date to be announced in 2021.

We're pleased to announce that WI Land+Water will once again offer the Brad Matson Youth Education Award/ Outstanding Youth Educator. This award is in honor of Brad Matson, Iron County LCC, and his work involving youth education.

Consider nominating a colleague from another county you have collaborated with. The nomination process is simple, so please take time to recognize someone who has demonstrated leadership and commitment to help conserve Wisconsin's natural resources.

## ADVOCACY

### Improving the effectiveness of resolutions

Upon the direction of the WI Land+Water Board of Directors, a subcommittee of the Legislative-Administrative Committee is working on an improved policy development procedure, including revising the resolution process.

One of the proposed improvements is to include the Leg-Admin Committee in the resolution process by requesting that WI Land+Water members bring their legislative or policy issues (that would otherwise be incorporated into a resolution) directly to the Committee, and then participating in a discussion of the issue at a subsequent meeting.

By involving the Committee in the resolution process, this will help integrate local issues in the state advocacy efforts shaped by the Committee, allow for more robust discussion with a diverse set of members, and allow issues to be brought forth throughout

the year (rather than only once a year at the annual Business Meeting).

Given the new challenges and opportunities related to converting the Annual Conference and Business Meeting to a virtual format, we are rolling out the Committee involvement in the resolution process this year to provide a better platform to discuss issues and determine best route forward.

Representatives from the Leg-Admin Committee will be joining your Area Association meetings to discuss how the committee can best support local legislative and policy issues and provide a more effective way to work on topics important in advancing our shared conservation priorities.

WI Land+Water members will receive more information about this important topic in the coming weeks.

## VIRTUALLY LEARNING TOGETHER

### Embracing virtual learning format expands training attendance

During this evolving coronavirus crisis, we understand the complex and difficult challenges so many have struggled through. Yet, this interruption of normalcy has created a silver lining – the opportunity for us to devote time towards learning something new.

At the beginning of the pandemic, WI Land+Water's Membership Training Program reassessed many aspects to how we host trainings, with the most important consideration being the health and safety of our presenters and attendees. Fortunately, we were able to shift some of our in-person programs to a virtual format which actually worked better for some of our members. Additionally, we drastically expanded training webinars.

This time last year, WI Land+Water had hosted, or offered through partnerships, 12 in-person trainings, including the Annual Conference, and six training webinars. Currently, we have already hosted 29 training webinars this year, as well as provided 3 in-person trainings, including the Annual Conference!

In addition to the 29 live webinars, we have helped create 13 prerecorded webinars this year, in partnership with DATCP, DNR, the state Land and Water Conservation Board, and our members. These short videos provide an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of local conservation programs in Wisconsin.

We are happy to provide online webinars to everyone, but especially to the county staff, committee members, and agency staff that are unable to travel to a training or spend a day or longer at an out-of-town training. Our webinars are typically recorded and posted on our website, to allow you to watch and re-watch them at your convenience. In the future, some of our trainings that were previously in-person may stay in a virtual format to reach a larger audience, but we also look forward to resuming our in-person trainings and networking opportunities with the conclusion of the pandemic. Until then, stay safe and well, and be sure to tune in to one of our coming training webinars.

Both the live webinars and the prerecorded webinars can be found on our [media website](#). Please let [Penny Pohle](#) know if you have any training needs.

### SITCOM delivers the knowledge you depend on

Do you know what SITCOM is? Believe it or not, it is so much more than just an e-newsletter that you receive twice a month from Penny Pohle.

SITCOM is Wisconsin's Statewide Interagency Training Committee. Formed in the 1990s, the committee is comprised of partner members that include DATCP, NRCS, DNR, UW-Madison Division of Extension, North Central Region Water Network, committee representatives from WI Land+Water, and UW-Madison.

SITCOM is a critical resource for our members and conservation partners across Wisconsin. SITCOM identifies relevant training needs and coordinates training efforts. Training needs across the state are often broad and cover a wide range of topics for conservation professionals. This year, SITCOM recognized that conservation staff had not recently been assessed of their individual training needs. Through the partnership, a training needs survey was developed and sent to conservation professionals in county land conservation departments, and at DATCP, DNR, and NRCS. Roughly 56% of all LCD staff completed the survey. Using the informative survey results, SITCOM is currently identifying and prioritizing the highest reported training needs.

Through the coordinated partnership, SITCOM promotes collaboration and advises on efforts to meet statewide training needs. Many training needs are met through the initiative of SITCOM partners and other entities including the WI Land+Water Professional Improvement Committee and the WI Land+Water Technical Committee.

Throughout 2020, Mindy Habecker, Dane County Division of Extension Natural Resources/Community Development Educator, is helping facilitate a process to build the organizational capacity of SITCOM and develop a stronger statewide training program. This project will build lasting strategies across the state to identify and meet the diverse training needs of all conservation professionals.

SITCOM and its partners are committed to building a statewide team of well-trained conservation professionals that carry on Wisconsin's rich history of conserving soil and water resources. More information about SITCOM can be found on [our website](#).

### YOUR ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED!

If you have an interest in serving on the Professional Improvement Committee, SITCOM, or one of the five Area Training Committees to help develop trainings and resources, please contact Penny Pohle.





# IRON COUNTY STUDENTS PIONEER LOON RESEARCH IN LOCAL LAKES

By Zach Wilson, Iron County Conservation Specialist

In the Northwoods of Wisconsin, the **Common Loon**, *Gavia immer*, has captured the fascination of researchers from across the country for over 20 years. As a result of decades of work, we have learned an incredible amount about loons and their relationship with our lakes in Wisconsin. What some may not know, however, is that some of this knowledge can be contributed to the efforts of high school students who started studying loon lake habitats in Iron County 20 years ago.

In 1999, the Wisconsin DNR approached the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department with the idea of piloting a citizen-monitoring program for the placement of artificial loon nesting platforms. The concept for the Practicum in Loon and Lake Ecology came out of this discussion, with students from Hurley and Mercer School Districts involved in the pilot project during the spring and summer of 2000.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the “Loon Project,” which helps improve Iron County’s loon habitats and helps educate the public on the importance of healthy lakes and ecosystems.

Students select lakes to monitor based on water quality and habitat features. They construct nesting platforms according to the WDNR recommendations, and place them on the lakes in the spring of each year. Over the next few months, the students visit each site and record data on whether the platforms are being used, how many eggs were laid, if chicks have hatched, and how many.

As a result of the findings that loons are sensitive to water quality conditions by the WDNR Integrated Science Services, students also monitor water quality on each of the lakes in the study. The water quality measurements include dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, water clarity and inventory aquatic insects. Recorded results are shared with resource managers and lake residents. The students learn how to conduct each of these tests and how they relate to loon habitats.

Shoreland health, also important to loon productivity, is assessed at each lake. This is taught over the course of three visits to the lake. During the first visit, students learn about watersheds and the negative impacts of poorly planned development can have on a watershed. The students use maps, aerial photography, and the Wisconsin lake book to determine lake type, percent of developed land, location of the lake, and lake characteristics.

During the second visit, students look at the shoreland buffer, learning about the importance and function of natural buffers, invasive species, and erosion/sedimentation. Students observe the percent of ground cover, shrub layer and canopy cover along the lake shore.

During the final visit, students learn about littoral zone health (an area within the waterbody nearest to shore) and how native aquatic plant life can add to shoreline stabilization. The students look at the percent coverage of aquatic plants, learn how to identify native and invasive aquatic species, and how that can affect the aquatic ecosystem, including loons.

Through the Loon Project, students from Hurley and Mercer have been positively contributing to the lakes in their backyards while learning and having fun.

To date, the Loon Project has been monitoring lake health and loon chick production for 20 years, resulting in 82 successfully hatched loon chicks off the artificial platforms that the students themselves built and placed in Iron County.

Not only does the program provide students with a broader knowledge of Wisconsin’s bountiful natural resources, but it has gone beyond all original expectations, training the next generations of foresters, land and water conservationists, limnologist, biologists, and (perhaps most importantly) well-informed citizens.

Thanks to the wonderful support of the Land and Water Conservation Department, our local community is stronger and smarter when understanding the complexity of our natural resources.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## Updates from the Youth Education Program regarding 2021 COVID-19 precautions and plans

The Youth Education Committee, along with its subcommittees have met several times to figure out logistics for our core programs for 2020-21. We have an amazingly talented and creative committee brainstorming all kinds of innovative ways to proceed with the upcoming poster contest, speaking contest, and Wisconsin Envirothon.

Regardless of whether these events are in-person or virtual, the Youth Education Committee is determined to maintain our core programming that educates and inspires Wisconsin’s youth about the sustainable use and conservation of our natural resources. If you have questions, concerns, or need ideas for your contests, please reach out to your area’s Youth Education Committee Area Representative, as well as [Stephanie Egner](#) (Committee Vice-Chair, Washington County), [Tracy Arnold](#) (Committee Chair, Portage County), or [Kim Warkentin](#) (WI Land+Water).

Please check [the Youth Education section on our website](#) and/or event [Facebook pages](#) for updates as it relates to our programs. As always, thank you for your ongoing support of our Youth Education programs.

## SOURCE WATER PROTECTION



### Wisconsin Rural Water Association spotlight

Wisconsin has just under 600 drinking water utilities working to provide communities clean, safe drinking water. As with each community they serve, utilities are diverse in their number of staff, resources, and the water source they tap. In small rural communities of less than 10,000 households, resources are limited, which can make maintaining drinking and wastewater water systems a challenge.

Recognizing the need for local technical support and training, Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) was established as a part of their national association. With a mission to assist, educate and represent members in the wise use of water resources, WRWA has provided support through a variety of programs. Starting with the Circuit Rider Program in 1987, WRWA field staff help systems solve problems, maintain their water and waste water infrastructure, and comply with regulations. With support from USDA – FSA, EPA, and DNR, they serve as community drinking water and waste water experts that support utilities in their area.

WRWA is a vital partner in WI Land+Water's Source Water Protection program. Andrew Aslesen and his colleagues have been helping communities connect over shared water

quality goals by providing technical assistance and modeling local water levels and capture zones. Andrew has provided these maps to include in watershed scale 9KE plans, and to support small-scale rehabilitation efforts by identifying land contributing to the well. With land use identified, conservationists work with land owners to install necessary land use changes needed to maintain drinking water standards.

By partnering with WRWA and their members, Wisconsin's small communities can work together in finding cost-effective alternatives to maintain quality drinking water. To learn more about WRWA and connect with your local utility directors, contact Andrew Aslesen, WRWA Source Water Specialist.

*Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) is the leading water and wastewater industry trade association providing technical assistance and training to water and wastewater utilities in the State of Wisconsin. Since establishment in 1987, have grown to represent over 85% of the water and wastewater utilities in Wisconsin who serve populations fewer than 10,000. WRWA is the state affiliate of the National Rural Water Association (NRWA). NRWA was formed in 1976 in response to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 and is the largest water and wastewater utility member organization in the United States, representing more than 31,000 utility members in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.*



### Stay in the loop.

See the latest research and tools for all your local source water needs.

## STANDARDS OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

The Standards Oversight Council (SOC) facilitates collaboration of teams of stakeholders to create and revise technical standards. These teams traditionally meet in person for monthly full-day meetings at locations around the state. With the State of Wisconsin and Dane County (our headquarters) Safer at Home orders, effective last March, the SOC teams pivoted to remote meetings for numerous technical standards. As remote meeting skills are honed, teams have also identified new ways to collaborate.

Two sets of teams are currently meeting regularly online to make progress with:

- [NRCS standards related to stream restoration](#) (CPS 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management, CPS 580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection, CPS 582 Open Channel, and CPS 584 Channel Bed Stabilization); and
- [DNR 1072 Horizontal Directional Drilling](#).

In addition, public comments are being addressed and the



final publication is expected soon for the DATCP Technical Standard 01 Verification of Depth to Bedrock.

In addition, [DNR Technical Standard 1010 Proprietary Storm Water Filtration Devices](#) was published in early September and is now available on [the DNR website](#).

Watch our listserv for a webinar training coming soon!

For more information about the Standards Oversight Council, visit our website.

To stay informed about SOC, including notices of the public review processes, sign up for the SOC urban or agricultural listservs.