

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.

For our conservation community.

EVENTS CALENDAR

- Dec. 10 Southeast Area Association meeting
- Dec. 11 County Conservation meeting (Day 2 of 3)
Legislative/Administrative Committee meeting
- Dec. 17 Board of Directors meeting
Technical Committee meeting
- Dec. 18 County Conservation meeting (Final day)

- Jan. 8 Lake Michigan Area Association meeting
- Jan. 22 Lake Winnebago Area Association meeting
- Feb. 9 West Central Area Association meeting
- Mar. 2-5 WI Land+Water Annual Conference

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.



Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association
131 W. Wilson Street, #601
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 441-2677

Follow us



Membership Directory



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

MESSAGE FROM MATT



The holiday season, now fully upon us, is a natural time for reflection on the year gone by—and what a year 2020 was. The history books will remember 2020 darkly, as the global coronavirus pandemic prematurely took over a million and a half people (as of this writing) from their loved ones. A bruising presidential election and social unrest bitterly divided our country, and cast doubt about our collective ability to come together, for the good of the nation. More locally, we had within our grasp the largest influx of county conservation funding that we've seen in years; only to have that effort come up short. Many will be happy to put 2020 behind us.

In spite of the shadows cast over 2020, there were rays of light, even still. Support for WI Land+Water among our county members was greater than ever—literally!—as we hit 100% membership for all 72 Wisconsin counties, for the first time. Your faith and confidence in us inspires, and is something we hold close as we work in service of our mission.

Virtual formats in 2020 provided “new” members a chance to connect with WI Land+Water via meetings and trainings (though rural broadband remains a real challenge). Attendance at both has been up throughout the year, and we are engaging with members who we previously haven't. As a statewide organization (particularly one dealing in conservation), there are some real advantages to, when possible, minimizing the time and energy spent driving to and from meetings.

The week after our Annual Conference in March, WI Land+Water (and seemingly the rest of the world) went “virtual” with our events, meetings, and office. You'll see on the next page that our staff, though challenged by the uncertainty of the pandemic and the social isolation of working remotely, didn't have to look too hard to find some silver linings over the past year.

And though we didn't get our funding bill across the finish line in the capitol, we engaged a broad coalition of our members, conservation-minded citizens, and agricultural and conservation groups in voicing support for conservation. As we look forward to 2021, I am optimistic that we will be able to leverage this support into tangible results for locally led conservation.

As we reflect on and celebrate the silver linings of 2020, here's to brighter days in 2021, and a safe and happy holiday season for you and yours.



Matt Krueger
Executive Director

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.

SILVER LININGS OF 2020

This was a year of unprecedented challenges. From a burgeoning global pandemic, to racial reckoning in America, to seemingly constant political chaos. As we bring the year to a close, WI Land + Water staff looked back on the year that changed it all and reflected back on the silver linings of a most unusual year.



My family and I spent as much time outside as possible, exploring local hiking trails and waterways, and being reminded of the bounty of publicly-accessible natural areas in southern Wisconsin. My daughter caught her first trout, which was very exciting. And when we weren't around outdoors, we had lots of inside time...which our spoiled pit bull Jack was very happy about. - Matt Krueger

I've enjoyed lots of hiking in 2020. While this photo is not my neighborhood, during our nightly local walks we've noticed wildlife and other details new to us after 20 years of living in Madison. Our dog Pumkin thinks 2020 is the best year ever! I've also enjoyed what stayed the same: a productive year of canning and continuing to volunteer at Heartland Farm Sanctuary every Friday to help care for my animal friends. - Chris Schlutt



I spent the year improving my cooking and baking skills with lots of help from my 2 boys. I also had extra time to go running and work off the extra food I was eating! - Kate Brunner

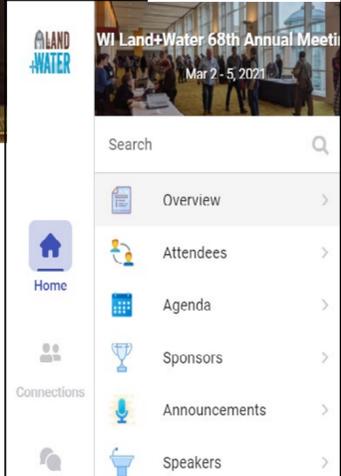
My husband and I were blessed to have our first grandson born this year! We are looking forward to our next grandchild that is expected to arrive in June 2021! We enjoyed spending a lot of our free time biking and disc golfing - Penny Pohle



We've spent our time splashing in the river, perfecting cocktail hour, and converting our van into a real adventure mobile. - Christina Anderson

The highlight of 2020 was adding Louis the Corgi to our family. When Louis is not busy pouncing on Archie the cat, (who is learning to tolerate his new brother) he enjoys playing fetch and eating veggies from our garden. Our family has also spent a lot of time exploring our county and state parks and finding new places to hike and fish. - Kim Warkentin

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

What a GREAT conference we had this past March. Just WAIT until you see what we have planned for 2021!

Make plans to be part of our 68th annual conference, which will be held virtually **March 2-5, 2021**.

We're excited to hold our first virtual conference and it will include all of the excellent content you've come to expect. It will be so much more than just Zoom meetings and webinars! Our conference software will

allow attendees to network throughout the conference and learn about pertinent, timely topics during general sessions, concurrent breakout sessions, and technical roundtables, many offering Continuing Education Units and Engineering Professional Development Hours. We are offering over 25 sessions and are certain there will be something for everyone! [Watch our website for session updates.](#)

Yes! There will be many of our usual fun events: the silent auction, socials, poster contest, visiting exhibitors and sponsors, award winner recognitions, polls and games, as well as our annual business meeting and pre-recorded webinars to view at your convenience.

Don't miss this great opportunity to connect and learn about the latest conservation topics, issues, and solutions, connect with your colleagues, and support WI Land+Water!

Featuring Keynote Speaker Jimmy Emmons!



Farmer, rancher, planner, leader
- Jimmy Emmons will share his experiences improving soil health.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

On Friday, March 5 (the final day of the Annual Conference) we will hold the annual business meeting. The Board of Directors determined that also holding the business meeting in a virtual format was in the best safety and interest of our membership. We think a virtual format will work great for the meeting, but it will introduce some housekeeping measures not typically taken in the business meeting. WI Land+Water members will hear more about this in the coming months, but one measure we will take following the typical roll call will be to conduct a membership vote to suspend the bylaws, allowing us to meet virtually. (Bylaws stipulate the business meeting must be in person.)

There will also be changes to the business meeting resolution process; in short, we are requesting that any would-be 2021 business meeting resolutions be channeled through the Executive Director, who will direct them to the appropriate WI Land+Water committee for review, vetting, and action. This decision is part of larger organizational deliberations (underway prior to the decision to go virtual) about how we can improve the resolution process to transparently address and act on grassroots policy and legislative priorities of importance to our membership, in a manner most appropriate for the issue.

As an example, the Legislative-Administrative Committee is empowered to provide guidance and strategic direction on legislative and policy issues. In some cases, the most appropriate manner to deal with a specific issue could actually be a resolution, or it could be a different approach entirely, such as developing a white paper, creating a budget or policy priority, or requesting a meeting with the appropriate audience, such as legislators, agency partners, or advocacy groups.

NEW RATES FOR VIRTUAL FORMAT

You may have noticed that "going virtual" allowed us to cut our conference registration fees in half, as we eliminated some of the costs that come with an in-person conference. However, though we will be virtual, rest assured that our conference will be the professional, interactive, and informative event you have come to expect. Our hope is that in offering a reduced registration fee, we are able to welcome twice as many participants into our conference! We rely on conference registration income to support our operating budget, and it is our biggest event fundraiser of the year. We appreciate your trust that we will continue to put on a top-notch conference, and we look forward to (virtually) seeing you--and maybe a friend--there!

Our conference schedule and sessions descriptions can be found here. [Register NOW!](#)

Register by February 12 to receive an early-bird discount!

The upshot is we have more tools in our policy and advocacy toolbox than just resolutions alone, and being strategic about which tool we use for which issue will benefit us all. We have been actively discussing this at Area Association meetings over the past several months, and are working to develop the foundation for improved communication between areas and the Legislative-Administrative Committee around policy and legislative issues. These proposed changes will eventually require bylaws amendments, but in the meantime and **for the purposes of the 2021 business meeting, we are requesting that members "pilot" this proposed new process of directing would-be resolutions to Executive Director Matt Krueger for transfer to the appropriate WI Land+Water Committee for discussion and action.** Authors of would-be resolutions will be invited to participate in the committee-level discussion that follows.



2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



SILENT AUCTION

The WI Land+Water Youth Education Committee is excited to announce that we will be hosting an online Silent Auction using the online platform 32auctions.com. All money raised for the Silent Auction will go to support our Youth Education programs. We are asking counties to think outside of the box in soliciting small items like gift certificates, outdoor adventures, passes and certificates to local businesses or items. You will submit a photo of your item online and mail it to the winning bidder. More information will be posted on our website. Bidding will begin February 1 and last through the last day of the virtual conference.

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

NOMINATE A CONSERVATION CHAMPION

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, and due to COVID 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, a former Iron County LCC Supervisor, 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.



64TH ANNUAL POSTER & SPEAKING CONTEST

Submit Posters

To virtually submit posters to the state poster contest, counties must send WI Land+Water photographs of each winning entry. To ensure that all poster submission have the same image quality, please follow the helpful tips found on our [website](#).

Conservation Speakers

To virtually submit a conservation speech to the state speaking contest, students will have to film themselves giving the speech. To make sure each student has an equally competitive speech, we encourage you to follow the helpful tips found on our [website](#).



WE NEED YOU TO ADVOCATE FOR LOCALLY LED CONSERVATION!

The 2021-23 State Biennial Budget is already in development, and we are hoping to build off the widespread support shown for county conservation during legislative and budget deliberations over the past two years.

Though there will be several opportunities to advocate for county conservation funding throughout the budget process, the first step is to ensure this investment is put into the Governor’s budget. You can contact the Governor’s office now to provide your input by submitting comments [here](#). When you do, along with including

the budget request, make sure you share a story about the importance of county conservation staffing in your home county. Share concrete examples of why this is such an important priority for us!

WI Land+Water and our Legislative-Administrative Committee will keep you apprised of additional opportunities to advocate for conservation funding in the coming months.

ADVOCATING FOR THESE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Our top budget priority:

From the DATCP Soil and Water Resources Management (SWRM) Program budget, provide \$13 million for county conservation staffing and support, building technical capacity to meet the state’s growing resource needs, and fulfilling the state’s statutory funding goal.

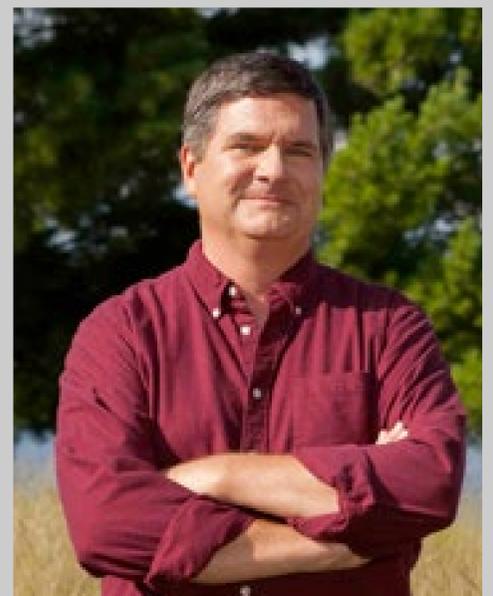
This is a baseline state investment in county conservation department professional staff that increases our ability to meet conservation standards and improve water quality, while supporting private landowner management goals at the same time.

Additional priorities we support:

- Increase annual DATCP SWRM Program bond revenue for cost-share grants from \$3.5 million to \$5 million.
- Support increases to Farmland Preservation Program participant tax credits as proposed in 2020 SB 575/AB 637.
- Support provisions introduced by the Water Quality Task Force to improve water quality, including SB 715/AB 795, SB 722/AB 800, and SB 718/AB 796.

LEARN TO BECOME AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE

To learn more about how to be an effective advocate for conservation, attend the December 11 County Conservation Session “Advocating for Conservation.” This is the first advocacy training we’ve done in years (if ever), and we think participants will get a lot from it. This session was developed with LCC members in mind particularly, though all are welcome.



Special guest, former Senator Pat Kreitlow will share important advocacy tips at the December 11 County Conservation Meeting.

Highlights include:

- First-hand perspectives from a former legislator on what to do (and what NOT to do) to communicate your issue effectively.
- A post-election lay-of-the-land of Wisconsin politics.
- WI Land+Water’s priorities for the upcoming state biennial budget.
- An opportunity to role play a legislative visit, in an interactive, small-group setting among your peers.

The session is free, but registration is required. [Register here](#).



LIVE LONG AND PROSPER, ELLIOT

Elliot Meyer, WI Land+Water’s former communications and media coordinator, blasted off for graduate school at George Mason University

in August, and finished his run as our longest-tenured communications professional in early November. He is pursuing a degree in public policy, so while he isn’t working on Wisconsin conservation issues anymore, he is at least in the same universe as we are.

Many WI Land+Water members had the pleasure of working directly with Elliot over his two and a half years with us. Others who may not have worked directly with Elliot certainly benefited from his great work telling the story of county conservation, whether through our quarterly newsletters, annual reports, press releases, Conservation Success Stories, “This Week in Conservation” weekly news updates, and more.

Though we are sad Elliot has departed, the communications flag he planted with us still flies, and he leaves footprints that will be easy to trace, but hard to fill. His former colleagues are heartened by the thought that his time spent with us will perhaps in some small way contribute to the good public policy work that he will inevitably do in the future. And we are confident that our orbits will intersect yet, somewhere in the great unknown.

Readers may have noticed the (intended) bad puns, which would be the only fitting way to send Elliot off.

TRAINING



PRERECORDED INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS

Have you checked out the prerecorded webinar series developed by WI Land+Water and our partners? There are 19 prerecorded webinars that are mostly ten minutes or less in length. Visit our [website](#) today!

- Advice from County Conservationists for LCC Members (video)
- Advice from County Conservationists for Staff (video)
- Advice from LCC Members for LCC Members (video)
- Advice from LCC Members for Staff (video)
- Chapter 92
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Grant Funding for Agricultural Runoff Pollution Abatement
- How Did We Get Here? A Historical Review of Conservation Programs
- How to Get Involved with WI Land+Water
- Introduction to DATCP's Nutrient Management Program
- Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plans
- Multi-Discharger Phosphorus Variance
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement Program
- Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) Grants
- Who is WI Land+Water?
- WDNR Nonpoint Program Stepped Enforcement
- WI State Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) Basics
- Wisconsin TMDLs
- Youth Education County Guide to Poster & Speaking Contests

REGISTER TODAY!

We are pleased to offer a free virtual Conservation Partnership Training during the mornings of January 26-28. Join us to learn about WI Land+Water, DATCP, WDNR, NRCS, Standards Oversight Council (SOC), Pheasants Forever, Trout Unlimited, and the Conservation Professional Training Program.

Presenters will provide information about programs and topics integral to successful conservation programs.

The agenda, registration information, and training resources are posted on our [website](#). These resources provide additional information on the programs included in this training along with other programs.

If you have any questions, contact Conservation Training and Membership Services Manager Penny Pohle at Penny@wisconsinlandwater.org.

YOUTH EDUCATION



WI ENVIROTHON

We are excited to announce that after having to cancel the WI Envirothon last year due to COVID we will be hosting a virtual WI Envirothon April 14-16, 2021. The Youth Education committee is in the early planning stages and will be sharing more information in the next couple of months. In the past we have been limited with the number of schools participating but with a virtual platform this will be a great opportunity for schools who haven't been able to participate in the past to form a team and try out this one-of-a-kind competition. We are working to make this virtual competition as interactive as we can. Stay tuned for exciting updates.



CONSERVATION CAMPS

After cancelling Sand Lake and WI Land+Water Conservation Camps last summer due to COVID, our committees are in the beginning stages of planning. We hope to have more information after the beginning of the year on the status of both camps.

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.



STANDARDS OVERSIGHT COUNCIL

UPDATES ON STANDARDS

Throughout 2020 we have seen great adaptation and creativity by the teams of stakeholders that meet for standard updates through the Standards Oversight Council (SOC) process. Since many of us are not in the office regularly due to COVID restrictions, our team members have been able to attend remote meetings not only from home, but also from their cars or out on construction sites. We've shortened meetings from when we met in-person, and have instead made progress between meetings by smaller group work. With flexibility, these teams have been able to continue moving forward.

We currently have two active SOC teams, for the following standards:

- [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
- [WDNR 1072 Horizontal Directional Drilling](#).

Over the past year, a team worked through the SOC process for creation of the first DATCP technical standard DATCP 01 Verification of Depth to Bedrock. Publication of this standard is expected very soon and outreach has begun!



For more information about the Standards Oversight Council, visit our [website](#). To stay informed about SOC, including notices of the public review process, sign up for the SOC urban or agricultural [listservs](#).



SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

GROUNDWATER AND NITROGEN FERTILIZER DECISION SUPPORT TOOLS

Nitrate causes more wells throughout the state to exceed the health-based drinking water standard than any other groundwater contaminant. The Drinking Water and Groundwater program at the WDNR has been exploring options to reduce nitrate levels in wells by collaborating with numerous partners, including WI Land+Water and its members, who have worked with landowners and agricultural producers located in wellhead protection areas to reduce nitrate levels.

A fundamental and recurring challenge associated with these efforts is the lack of data available to understand which agricultural management practices will be effective in bringing groundwater nitrate levels down while simultaneously maintaining farm profitability. To address this problem, the Drinking Water and Groundwater program has begun work with the University of Wisconsin and the USGS on a multi-year project to develop a series of tools that will enable communities and agricultural producer collaborators to

incorporate source water protection into nutrient management planning. The goal is to introduce simple planning tools over the next couple of years and to enlist the help and an "ownership stake" of the project from all state drinking water stakeholders. In order to address data limitations, research challenges and barriers to adoption, the project seeks more extensive collaborative partnerships, especially with the agricultural community.

The project seeks to spur innovation in practice development in order to simultaneously reduce losses of nitrate to groundwater, maintain farm productivity, and protect the health of those who rely on groundwater, our state's primary source of drinking water.

For more information, contact [Brian Austin at WDNR \(Brian.Austin@wisconsin.gov\)](#).