



# Thursday Note

An Update on Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Issues

Volume 16, Issue 1

Thursday, February 7, 2013

## **WLWCA's Conference is Right Around the Corner!**

Plan to join us at our 60th annual conference and first as a merged association March 11-13, 2013 at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Over 30 excellent sessions are scheduled that will be informative and valuable to all county staff and supervisors. Session topics include groundwater, adaptive management, climate change, forestry programs, LCC orientation, landowner relationships, Wisconsin Retirement System, technical and performance standards, county presentations and MUCH MORE! Session descriptions and registration can be found on our website. Please note that early bird registration ends **Friday, February 8**. Please visit our website or contact the WLWCA office for additional information.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator

## **Brooks Farms Wins Conservation Farmer of the Year**

We are pleased to announce that Ron and Terri Brooks of Brooks Farms in Waupaca County have won the Conservation Farmer of the Year award. Brooks Farms is a fifth generation farm that cares for more than 400 head of high producing Holstein cattle. The Brooks have worked closely with local, state and federal agencies to design and implement conservation practices on their farm, including no-till planting and conservation tillage, buffer strips, integrated pest management, oak savannah/tall grass prairie restoration, and wildlife corridors. County LWCD staff designed manure and milk house waste storage facilities. The manure storage is a total containment system that includes all sources of wastewater and polluted wash water on the farm. In 2010 Brooks Farms was chosen as one of the first 16 recipients for DATCP's Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) program. Their community involvement is centered on themes that introduce youth to agriculture, hunting and the outdoors. Congratulations Brooks Farms! The Brooks will be recognized during our awards banquet at our annual conference. We hope you will join us, as winners of our other conservation awards will also be announced and recognized at the banquet.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator

## **Wisconsin Envirothon Seeking Volunteers, Sponsors**

The 2013 Wisconsin Envirothon: Sustainable Management of Grazing Lands is scheduled for April 12 at the Wisconsin Lions Camp in Rosholt. Planning is underway for this annual middle-school and high-school environmental education competition. Please contact [kirsten@wlwca.org](mailto:kirsten@wlwca.org) if you are interested in volunteering for or sponsoring this event. Special thanks to Florence, Green Lake, Iron and Waupaca County for being some of the first counties to pay additional dues to support this valuable educational opportunity. For more information about the event, please visit [www.envirothonwi.org](http://www.envirothonwi.org).

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager & Youth Education Coordinator

## **ATCP 50 – Soil and Water Resource Management Program, Rule Revisions**

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, DATCP released the first draft of revisions to ATCP 50. At this time comments can be submitted to DATCP only on the economic impacts of proposed changes. The Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will determine whether the proposed revisions should be taken to public hearings at its February 19<sup>th</sup> meeting at DATCP. The rules include changes to the staff allocation, cost-share limits for certain practices, and incorporate the new performance standards adopted under NR 151, among other changes. Public hearings as well as the deadline to submit written comments regarding economic impacts are listed on our Events Calendar at [www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html](http://www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html) and details about the revisions as well as the public hearings can be found at [datcp.wi.gov/Public\\_Notices/Economic\\_Impact\\_of\\_Proposed\\_Rules/index.aspx](http://datcp.wi.gov/Public_Notices/Economic_Impact_of_Proposed_Rules/index.aspx).

~Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

## **Support for Restoration of Land Conservation Staffing Grants**

The WLWCA Executive Director and member representatives met with the Governor's Office staff and Wisconsin's legislative leaders to encourage the restoration of staffing funds to \$9.3 million annually. These meetings were a positive step for championing this resolution, as Board member Peter Sorce from Washington County, Green Lake County Conservationist Jim Hebbe, Marathon County Conservation Program Manager Paul Daigle, Jon Hochkammer and Dan Bahr from Wisconsin Counties Association, and Chris Kunkle with Cullen Weston Pines and Bach helped make strong presentations in support of county funding. Senators Schultz, Darling, Moulton, and Vinehout, as well as Representatives Suder, Nygren, and Nerison were all visited and were

provided detailed information to support county funding. WLWCA representatives also held an initial meeting with Secretary Brancel and Deputy Secretary Lyon to discuss the role of land conservation and DATCP's support and received agreement to schedule follow-up meetings.

Local Farm Bureau Chapter "Policy Development Meetings" were well attended by land conservation staff in September and October to address the value of local land conservation. Without exception, the participation of LCD staff yielded good dialogue and engagement, and many resulted in resolutions of support for local land conservation. Ultimately, the State Farm Bureau meeting yielded a positive resolution calling for base level staff funding to support local conservation needs.

Wisconsin Farmers Union adopted a resolution at its annual meeting in support of the restoration of LCD staffing funds to \$9.3 million annually.

Wisconsin Counties Association has included restoration of LCD staffing funds in its own legislative budget initiative.

~Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

### **DNR's Nutrient Reduction Framework**

Jim VandenBrook, Kurt Calkins, Greg Leonard, and Steve Bradley represented WLWCA on three workgroups (Targeting, Tracking, and Monitoring) to help coordinate the various nutrient reduction activities that Wisconsin is pursuing.

~Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

### **Adaptive Management Guidance Issued**

Companion guidance documents have been developed by DNR and Clean Wisconsin to assist Clean Water Act permit holders, county LCDs, and the agricultural community in understanding the watershed management process envisioned by the Adaptive Management Option (AMO). Clean Wisconsin's handbook explains the AMO and the process of creating a phosphorus reduction plan. DNR's provides a technical handbook that focuses on the regulatory requirements for the AMO.

For Clean Wisconsin's guide see [www.cleanwisconsin.org/amoguide](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org/amoguide).

For DNR's guide see [dnr.wi.gov/topic/SurfaceWater/AdaptiveManagement.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/SurfaceWater/AdaptiveManagement.html).

~Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

### **National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting "Conservation: Proud Past, Positive Future"**

NACD held its 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in San Antonio, TX January 27 to 30, 2013, which focused on our roots as local conservation entities as well as looked ahead to the future of conservation in America. Tom Rudolph, WLWCA Executive Committee member and NACD delegate; Chuck Wagner, WLWCA Board Chair and NACD alternate; Greg Baneck, WLWCA Board Vice-Chair; and Jim VandenBrook represented WLWCA. Jimmy Bramblett, Wisconsin's new USDA-NRCS State Conservationist was also in attendance at this meeting where leaders from federal conservation partner agencies including NRCS, USFS, AFF, and EPA addressed resource management challenges such as drought, wildfire, extreme weather, and water quality and quantity. WLWCA attendees agreed that the most valuable part of attending the NACD Annual Meeting is the ability to network with other attendees to gain insight and glean ideas that can be brought back to Wisconsin. This year was no exception. Here are some of the initiatives highlighted at the meeting:

- Oklahoma has recently completed a valuation study that directly places a value on the work that districts accomplish and then places a dollar amount on how every dollar spent on conservation is multiplied throughout the community. It's a great tool to help sell the value of their programs with legislators, grantors, and the general public. Hopefully we can tap the basis of this study and replicate it for use here.
- Source Water Collaborative: This voluntary approach to engage partners in source (drinking) water protection is endorsed by 24 national organizations. Several states have implemented the program. See [www.SourceWaterCollaborative.org/swp-usda](http://www.SourceWaterCollaborative.org/swp-usda).
- Agricultural Certainty programs: Wisconsin's Bill Berry provided an overview of states (Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, Louisiana, and others) that have implemented programs certifying farmer compliance with conservation standards in exchange for an agreement that these standards will not be changed for that operation for a period ranging from 10 to 30 years. Expect to see this type of program under consideration in Wisconsin soon.
- 4R Nutrient Stewardship: The Fertilizer Institute is promoting nutrient management principles by establishing 4Rs as a recognizable strategy for economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Compatibility of this program with the Wisconsin 590 nutrient management standard will need to be determined. See [www.nutrientstewardship.com/](http://www.nutrientstewardship.com/).

- Soil Health Initiative: NRCS is promoting the conservation benefits derived from soil that is biologically healthy. This topic is featured at the WLWCA March 2013 Conference.
- EPA initiatives: EPA will continue its efforts to fund non-point source programs including: \$165 million nationally for 319 programming; TMDL development; and reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus to waters through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and Mississippi River Basin Initiative.

The one resolution from Wisconsin concerning the NRCS Directive on "Separation of Duties" was considered in a hearing before the District Operations and Member Services Committee. After learning that the Chair of the Committee had received a memo in response to our resolution from NRCS in which they state that: "Each State Conservationist will work closely with conservation districts to address any concerns about 'separation of duties' implementation while adhering to its criteria and intent," Wisconsin withdrew the resolution. Both Greg Baneck, the initial proposer of the resolution, and Tom Rudolph agreed that we had achieved our purpose.

Overall it was a worthwhile event, and the 20 degree above average temps for San Antonio for the week helped to make it an even more enjoyable. WLWCA members appreciated the privilege to represent Wisconsin at the NACD Annual Meeting.

~Greg Baneck, Board of Directors Vice Chair; Tom Rudolph, Board of Directors and NACD delegate; and Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

### Conservation Training Summit Held

Culminating from the discussions of a multi-agency committee, a conservation professionals training summit was held on January 31 in Madison. Over 30 participants from agencies, counties and the private sector attended the all-day event. Facilitators worked with participants to develop an ideal training system for Wisconsin's conservation professionals, focusing on four breakout groups: Resources/Finances, Infrastructure/Delivery Options, Model Training Plan, and Evaluation/Implementation. Using the criteria and ideas generated from all the groups in the morning, these breakout groups reconvened in the afternoon to create visual representations of a coordinated, effective, sustainable approach for training. The multi-agency committee plans to utilize this information to work towards building a statewide plan for conservation training and professional improvement in Wisconsin.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator

### 2013 Spring and Fall County Conservationist Meetings Scheduled

Executive Committee President Greg Baneck has scheduled the Spring and Fall County Conservationist Meetings for May 9-10 and October 3-4 at Hotel Mead in Wisconsin Rapids. Both meetings will be opportunities for county conservationists and any other interested parties to get updates on the activities of the WLWCA committees and participate in a series of panel and round-table discussions pertaining to current county land conservation issues. A WLWCA board meeting has been scheduled at the end of the second day of both events. Registration will be posted on our website later this year, and you can view the tentative agenda format and details about Hotel Mead at [www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html](http://www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html).

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

### Standards Oversight Council Update

Our biggest news is that SOC launched a brand new website, [www.socwisconsin.org](http://www.socwisconsin.org) which we hope is more user friendly, visually appealing and enhances user participation in our process. All comments on draft standards are posted online as an archive and resource, as well as to enhance transparency amongst all technical standard users. We have trialed this new system multiple times already as we have encouraged comments on 15 NRCS draft standards in December and January. You can view the archive under [Get Involved/Comment on Standards in Development](#).

SOC is leading two teams through the standard development or revision process. DNR's Permeable Pavement team has been meeting regularly and is tackling the difficult task of reviewing the limited literature available on permeable pavement systems that is relevant to the Midwestern climate and water quality impacts. Even with these challenges the team is progressing with draft language for the standard and plans on an initial review target of early 2014.

Additionally, the revision of NRCS's 590 Nutrient Management standard is underway. The Council selected a diverse group of team members to lead the charge of comparing the national NRCS standard to the Wisconsin NRCS standard. The team had its first meeting on February 1st. Each of these SOC teams has a dedicated webpage to report their progress. More detailed information, including team members, meeting dates, and notes, will be posted to the website.

Please send any suggestions or comments regarding our new website, [www.socwisconsin.org](http://www.socwisconsin.org) to [gini@wlwca.org](mailto:gini@wlwca.org).

~Gini Knight, SOC Coordinator



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**The 60<sup>th</sup> WLWCA Annual Conference  
March 11-13, 2013**

Chula Vista Resort ~ Wisconsin Dells  
Early Registration Deadline Feb. 8  
Visit [www.wlwca.org](http://www.wlwca.org) to register!

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**Calendar of Events**

<b>WLWCA Annual Conference Early Registration Deadline</b>	<b>Feb. 8</b>
<b>WLWCA Board Meeting, Stevens Point</b>	<b>Feb. 12</b>
<b>WI Wetlands Assn. Conference, Sheboygan</b>	<b>Feb. 12-14</b>
<b>West Central Area Assn. Meeting, Menomonie</b>	<b>Feb. 14</b>
<b>Lake Superior Binational Forum Webinar</b>	<b>Feb. 15</b>
<b>Superior Days, Madison</b>	<b>Feb. 19-20</b>
<b>Soil &amp; Water Conservation Society Annual Mtg., Stevens Point</b>	<b>Feb. 21</b>
<b>Lake Superior Binational Forum Webinar</b>	<b>Feb. 21</b>
<b>MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse</b>	<b>Feb. 21-23</b>
<b>Upper Midwest Stream Restoration Symposium, La Crosse</b>	<b>Feb. 24-27</b>
<b>ATCP 50 Economic Impact Comments Deadline</b>	<b>Feb. 25</b>
<b>UWEX Midwest Manure Summit, Green Bay</b>	<b>Feb. 26-27</b>
<b>SOC Meeting, Madison</b>	<b>Mar. 5</b>
<b>WLWCA Annual Conference, Wisconsin Dells</b>	<b>Mar. 11-13</b>
<b>WLWCA Board Meeting, Wisconsin Dells</b>	<b>Mar. 11</b>
<b>WLWCA Area Meetings, Wisconsin Dells</b>	<b>Mar. 11</b>
<b>WLWCA Business Meeting, Wisconsin Dells</b>	<b>Mar. 13</b>
<b>WSTC Meeting, Madison</b>	<b>Mar. 21</b>

*For more information about our events and partner organization events, visit [www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html](http://www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html)*

**WLWCA Board of Directors**

<b>Chuck Wagner, Chair</b> Kewaunee County LWCC	<b>Greg Baneck, Vice Chair</b> Outagamie County LCD
<b>Perry Lindquist, Sec'y</b> Waukesha County LRD	<b>Bill Schuster, Treasurer</b> Door County SWCD
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<b>Tom Fratt</b> Ashland County LCD	

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