



Thursday Note

An Update on Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Issues

Volume 15, Issue 2

Thursday, March 8, 2012

WALCE Gathers for 33rd Annual Conference, Votes to Merge with WLWCA

A fine time for winter to decide to appear; however, not rain, nor sleet, nor two feet of snow kept most WALCE members from attending the Annual Professional Improvement Conference February 29 through March 2 at the Plaza Hotel in Eau Claire. Informative sessions were presented by quality speakers on a variety of land and water conservation topics. As anyone knows who has been to a WALCE Conference, the networking opportunities are equally as valuable as knowledge gained in the sessions. Thank you to everyone who helped organize the conference and to those who attended.

A key part of this conference was the membership vote to dissolve the WALCE organization and merge with WLWCA. Because of weather forecasts, WALCE President Kurt Calkins extended the time period for voting, which was to take place during the Business Meeting on Wednesday, to noon on Thursday, allowing the majority of the members registered for the conference an opportunity to cast their ballot. After the ballots were tallied, by a simple majority the membership voted 138:24 to dissolve WALCE and merge with WLWCA. The next months will see the Boards of Directors for WALCE and WLWCA blending the two organizations and moving forward as a united association.

With WLWCA's county membership having voted 52:2 in favor of the merge at their 2011 business meeting last December, the next months will see the current Boards of Directors for WALCE and WLWCA blending the two organizations and moving forward as a united association. The current board will serve in the interim until the county boards of supervisors re-organize their committees following the statewide spring primary elections, and a new board can be appointed by the area associations. The interim WLWCA board has scheduled an organizing meeting from 10:00am-2:00pm on Monday, March 19 in Stevens Point. At this meeting, WLWCA will discuss many transitional topics, including potential dates to hold the first merged conference and the status of WLWCA's executive director hire.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the transition, the executive director hire, or the merged conference that you would like the interim Board of Directors to consider, please contact Kirsten at the WLWCA office, kirsten@wlwca.org as soon as possible so that your input can be provided to the board for review. A complete list of the interim board members is located on the outside cover of this newsletter.

A chapter closes, the book continues....

~Patty Benedict, WALCE Professional Improvement Committee Chair, Portage County LCD & Kirsten Moore, Interim Operations Director

WLWCA Executive Director Hiring Process Continues

The WLWCA board of directors has been conducting an executive director search with input from WALCE since the beginning of this year. The application period was open between January 17 and February 15. A hiring committee with six board members from the now merged association met on Wednesday, February 22 to review a good sized group of resumes, and narrowed down the candidate pool for interviews scheduled the week of Monday, March 12. The hiring committee's goal is for a new executive director to start work in April 2012, contingent upon board consent, date of offer, and the transitional needs of the selected candidate.

~Kirsten Moore, Interim Operations Director

Legislative Update

Representative John Nygren's office requested comments from Wisconsin Counties Association and WLWCA in order to introduce a bill to amend Statute 88 shifting the authority to appoint drainage district boards from the circuit courts to the land conservation committees (LCCs). WLWCA has not taken an official position on the draft legislation, but we appreciate that Representative Nygren asked for the counties' opinions, as well as the helpful feedback county LCCs and LCDs provided. The assembly held a hearing on February 22 regarding the amendments and testimony was given both in favor of and against the recommendations. The bill is currently stalled with the Senate. We will keep you posted should other information become available. It is possible that further amendments to Statute 88 may come up in the future, and if so, the newly merged WLWCA will work with both WCA and DATCP to offer county LCCs and LCDs opportunities to learn about the changes, discuss potential impacts, and determine a position for our organization.

We are also keeping an eye on AB 627 pertaining to discharging water pollutants and the trading of water pollution credits. WLWCA is currently reviewing the bill which was introduced on Friday, February 24. We will provide more information as it becomes available.

Please direct any inquiries or comments to Kirsten Moore at WLWCA (kirsten@wlwca.org), who has been working closely with Chuck Wagner and Kurt Calkins of the newly merged board of directors on all legislative issues since the executive director's position has been vacated.

~Kirsten Moore, Interim Operations Director

2012 NACD Annual Conference Wrap-Up

WLWCA Interim Board Members Chuck Wagner, Kurt Calkins, Tom Rudolph, Greg Baneck and Kay McKenzie attended the National Association of Conservation District's (NACD's) 66th Annual Conference held January 29-February 1, 2012 at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Rudolph is Wisconsin's delegate to NACD and McKenzie is the alternate delegate who also represented the Great Lakes region in the Coastal Resources Policy Group, who met January 29 to discuss topics that could be used to unify all states on all coasts. More than 800 people gathered in the spirit of conservation to focus on the theme "Conservation: We're All In." The meeting showcased a variety of partners in conservation and projects on the ground, demonstrating that we can do more for conservation when we all work together.

General session speakers included Washington, DC media veteran Patrick Haggerty who spoke on the importance of grassroots engagement; Jon Radtke of Coca-Cola North American, noting his company's activities in water stewardship, including work with local districts; Jay Grimes from Louisiana, speaking about the impacts of weather events on conservation practices; and leaders from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

On January 31, NACD held their annual awards ceremony. Congratulations to Outagamie County Land Conservation Department (LCD), who received the Excellence in Conservation Equipment and Technology Use Award from the Association of Equipment Manufacturers and NACD for using equipment with GIS technology to help accurately track landowner compliance with agricultural performance standards. The system saves hundreds of hours annually while increasing efficiency and accuracy, creating an easily accessible centralized electronic inventory. Baneck accepted the award on behalf of the LCD. Find out more about the award at www.aem.org/News/Newsroom/Releases/?R=865#.T1UARoem-II

The Farm Bill was cited as a primary reason for WLWCA to send delegates to the national conference, as NACD is the leading force promoting Farm Bill lobbying efforts. "What does that mean for Wisconsin? Just ask your local farmer," said Wagner. McKenzie noted that NACD anticipates a much leaner Farm Bill by Memorial Day, or a continuation unlike what's been done with other bills.

On other legislative fronts, the NACD board of directors considered 36 resolutions from state conservation associations. Wisconsin had three resolutions brought forth by WLWCA and then forwarded by the NACD North Central Region for consideration at the NACD meeting. Rudolph and McKenzie testified at the Natural Resources Policy Resolutions Committee Hearings where Wisconsin resolutions were being considered. NACD adopted the Resolution to Prevent Asian Carp from Invading US Waters after having been amended to include all US waters rather than being limited to Lake Michigan and the Mississippi Watershed; as well as the resolution on Climate Change Modeling asking for assistance in providing resources to adequately address impacts of climate for increased human resources and changes to design and performance standards based on climatological data. The third resolution to Prevent Phosphorous Loading to Green Bay and Lake Michigan failed. "Western states [raised the objection] that this was not a problem in their states and therefore not a national problem," stated Rudolph.

A first time attendee, Wagner attended to learn about national conservation issues and their relevance in Wisconsin. "It was a terrific conference, and I would attend again if given the opportunity to bring some of the ideas I learned there [back] to keep us moving forward in the fight for better conservation." Emphasis on local and statewide involvement in and activism for conservation was at the core of the event, featuring many opportunities to learn ways and means of developing programs at the local level to help push agendas and ethics that produce better conservation on the land. One of the sessions Wagner attended was Districts Leading the Way in Outdoor Education. "I've always felt that teaching our youth is very important if we want to change any cultural ways of doing things in the field of conservation. This session had a lot of ideas of ways for [doing] that," stated Wagner. Wagner also learned fresh, new ways to use light detection and ranging (LiDAR) photography to help agro-producers with decisions regarding conservation practices; best practices for developing projects; and raising funds from non-traditional sources.

NACD hosts an annual auction, and this year, the auction raised a whopping \$50,097. Wagner expressed an interest in finding ways to bring more money to statewide conservation through our auction and raffle events.

WLWCA secured two national scholarships from NACD for Calkins and Wagner to attend the event, as well as an additional scholarship from NACD's North Central Region for Wagner's attendance. Thank you to all the attendees for making Wisconsin a presence in national conservation efforts. We will work with NACD to coordinate our representation for 2013 in light of the WLWCA merger. Find out more about the 2012 NACD Annual Meeting by visiting www.nacdnet.org/events/annualmeeting/news/.

~ Kirsten Moore, Interim Operations Director

Wisconsin Envirothon Scheduled April 20

The 2012 Wisconsin Envirothon: Going Green-Utilizing Low Impact Development Technology to Reduce Nonpoint Source Pollution will be held April 20 at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station in Amherst Junction. Enrollment will be limited to 20 teams, and we started online registration allowing five middle school teams and 15 high school teams to enroll. In addition, Trees for Tomorrow is hosting their third annual Envirothon Workshop March 30-April 1, where up to 30 students have the opportunity to spend the weekend getting hands on assistance in preparing for the competition. Currently, the 2012 Wisconsin Envirothon is sponsored by Conserve School, the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, Econoprint, Northland College and the Wisconsin Department of Instruction. We are still seeking donors, sponsors, and volunteers for the event. **In particular, we are seeking a Wildlife Station Captain right away.** Visit www.envirothonwi.org for more details, to be updated soon. Contact Kirsten Moore (kirsten@wlwca.org) if you have any questions or know someone who might serve as a Wildlife Station Captain.

~Kirsten Moore, Interim Operations Director

State Conservation Awareness Poster and Speaking Contest To Be Held, Details Coming Soon

With all the changes at WLWCA and less than 50% staff, we appreciate the patience membership has provided given all that there is to do at the office these days. WLWCA still intends to host a state conservation awareness poster and speaking contest, and we are currently finalizing plans. Stay tuned to the WLWCA website for the registration forms to become available this month. If you are looking to get a head start on your poster contest, you can at the very least expect our statewide submission deadlines to come around the end of October as in recent years, and you can find out information and download educational materials regarding the NACD Poster Contest theme "Soil To Spoon" by visiting www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/poster/. Thank you for your continued support.

~Kirsten Moore, Interim Operations Director

Standards Oversight Council (SOC) Update

The SOC Council is pleased to announce that Gini Knight has accepted the position of SOC Coordinator. Knight brings a strong background with her academic training, natural resource management and conservation biology research, writing skills and successful team management. At her most recent position she helped envision and implement creative approaches to education and outreach programs to communicate environmental, health and economic benefits of community supported agriculture. She has also held positions as a public policy intern and ecological research assistant. In addition to her policy and outreach work, Gini is the farmer/owner of Sweet Magnolia Farm, a certified organic vegetable farm. Please join us in welcoming Gini, who will begin as SOC Coordinator on April 2.

The Waste Storage Facility NRCS standard 313 is near completion. The team's last meeting is scheduled for March 8. NRCS plans to finalize the standard, update the supporting companion documents, and publish the standard and companion documents by the end of April 2012. The Waste Storage NRCS standard 634 is expected to be released around the same time.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator

Don't forget! Please pay WLWCA membership dues by May 31, 2012. Contact kirsten@wlwca.org if you need a duplicate copy of your county invoice. Thank you for your support!



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Calendar of Events

USDA Interagency Conference, Wausau	Mar 14
Waukesha Co Stormwater Workshop, Pewaukee	Mar 14
WLWCA Interim BOD Meeting, Stevens Point	Mar 19
Red Cedar Watershed Conf, Menomonie	Mar 22
SOC Meeting, Madison	Mar 23
Road/Stream Crossings Workshop, Green Bay	Mar 27-29
Spring Primary Elections	Apr 3
LWCB Meeting, Madison	Apr 3
Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance Conf, Kimberly	Apr 17-18
Wis Green Schools Youth Summit, Amherst Junction	Apr 19
Wisconsin Envirothon, Amherst Junction	Apr 20

For more information, visit www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html

WLWCA Board of Directors

Charles Wagner Kewaunee County LCC	Dorothy Burwell Walworth County LCC
Kurt Calkins Columbia County LCD	Chris Arnold Columbia County LCD
Thomas Rudolph Oneida County LCC	David Hammer Lafayette County LCC
Greg Baneck Outagamie County LCD	Paul Backhaus Washington County LCD
Kay McKenzie Douglas County LCC	Herbert Cornell Vernon County LCC
Derek Kavanaugh Green Lake County LCD	Mary Jo Gingras Iron County LCD
Joe Piechowski Waushara County LCC	Tami Schraufnagel Eau Claire County LCC
Carla Masten Outagamie County LCD	Ben Wojahn Vernon County LCD

WLWCA Staff

Kirsten Moore
Interim Operations Director
Chris Schlutt
Program Coordinator

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