



Thursday Note

An Update on Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Issues

Volume 16, Issue 2

Thursday, March 21, 2013

WLWCA Holds 60th Annual Conference “United In Conservation”

What a success this year’s WLWCA Annual Conference turned out to be! The conference held in the Wisconsin Dells on March 11-13, 2013 served as a capstone in WLWCA history, marking its 60th anniversary as well as the first annual conference for the newly merged association of county land conservation supervisors and department staff. Despite Mother Nature’s best attempt to detour folks with blinding snows across the central belt of Wisconsin, it was not enough to hinder a packed house with a total attendance of 339 including a wide variety of speakers. Supervisors and staff joined forces to discuss forthcoming financial challenges in the face of budget restrictions and state rule revisions, to network, and to gain insight on emerging conservation issues and management.

The event kicked off with Senator Dale Schultz addressing some of the politics woven through conservation. Presentations ranged from the political dynamics of working with legislators to the simple idea of engaging youth, and from basic skills in land conservation to advanced programming in nutrient management compliance and adaptive management. Several excellent county presentations captured ongoing research and programs across the state including quantitative water quality data in programming, waterborne pathogens, shoreline management incentives, conservation decision-making tools, and public swimming beach safety. John Larson, CEO for National Association of Conservation Districts, addressed the crowd on day two with passion and wisdom engrained in his words, reminding us that we are a strong and unique association here in Wisconsin, structured unlike any other state in the nation. Additional presentations during the conference included an update on Wisconsin’s bat population, groundwater well testing, climate change and conservation planning, and innovations in aquatic invasive species control. Tuesday’s dinner banquet provided the opportunity to listen to 2012’s award-winning youth conservation awareness speeches and give recognition to 2013’s conservation award winners, which was inspiring and rejuvenating. Witnessing the gratitude of staff acknowledging their peers, colleagues, and landowner’s hard work and dedication is always something to appreciate.

To wrap up the conference, Jim VandenBrook, Perry Lindquist, Bill Schuster, Marcy West, and Adam Payne provided an excellent history of the past 60 years of WLWCA and the beginning of a new legacy for the association. A special thank you once again to the Professional Improvement Committee (PIC): Patty Benedict, Al Brandt, Lisa Burns, Greg Cleereman, Rod Engh, Dale Konkol, Kelly Maginnis, Carla Masten, George Mika, Kirsten Moore, Dan O’Connell, Joe Piechowski, Geoff Schramm, Chris Schlutt, Amy Callis, John Exo, and Pat Murphy for coordinating the programs and speakers, keeping the raffle ALIVE with 892 tickets sold and generating \$2234, and assisting with all of the ins and outs of conference planning. Your efforts have been greatly appreciated! Dennis Presser also served on this committee and will be greatly missed. And a very special thank you to Penny Pohle, the “Auction Crew,” and all the auction donors for organizing this year’s Silent Auction which generated \$3605 in funding for WLWCA’s Youth Education Programs!

~MaryJo Gingras, Professional Improvement/Conference Committee Chair

2013-15 Biennial Budget Update

The Governor’s budget for the upcoming biennium was released just two weeks ago. The proposed reduction in funding for county conservation staff was identical to DATCP’s earlier agency request. The base budget available for staff funding is down by approximately \$1.3 million annually to about \$8 million. The Governor’s budget also reduces the amount of funding available to support nutrient management cost-sharing and related activities from \$5.3 million annually to \$2.5 million.

The effects of state budget cuts on local governments are especially severe now that the effects of levy limits are phasing in. Ironically, these cuts come at a time when DATCP expects greater efforts on the part of county land conservation departments to implement state conservation priorities. While county staffs are dedicated entirely to conservation and public service, the prolonged effect of state budget lapses, which will now be made permanent, have

forced many counties, especially rural agricultural counties, to reduce staff dramatically. Some counties no longer have county conservationists. It is not surprising that these staffing reductions coincide with increasing rates of cropland soil erosion and more streams and lakes being added to the impaired waters list than those being removed from it.

WLWCA lobbying efforts will now be focused on the restoration of those budget cuts during deliberations of the Joint Committee on Finance, which we anticipate will be holding statewide hearings sometime in April. Significant support for the maintenance of funding for local land conservation has been building. Both the Wisconsin Farm Bureau and Wisconsin Farmers Union adopted resolutions of support for county land conservation at their recent statewide conferences. And of course, counties have also submitted letters and resolutions in support of funding restoration to their state legislators. WLWCA thanks you and welcomes your support as well.

~Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

ATCP 50 Happenings

DATCP has proposed revisions to ATCP 50, the rules for the Soil and Water Resource Management Program. The rules adopt new performance standards on farms which include the application of soil erosion control and nutrient management practices to pastures, tillage setbacks from streambanks, process wastewater controls, as well as significant changes to DATCP's funding allocation process to county land conservation departments. Here are rule-making events, past and future:

- **Economic Impacts:** DATCP received comments on the economic impacts of the proposed revisions to ATCP 50, the rules for the Soil and Water Resource Management Program until February 25th. Eleven comments, ten from land conservation departments and one from WLWCA were received by the deadline. DATCP will not revise its analysis based on the comments received.
- **Public hearings:** You can attend a public hearing to comment orally, turn in written comments, or simply to learn about the proposal. Written comments will be received by DATCP until April 30th. The WLWCA Administrative/Legislative Committee will draft comments for WLWCA members to consider prior to public hearings. Here is the hearing schedule:
 - **Tuesday, March 26, 2013 – Eau Claire** 2:30-4:30 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Town of Washington Town Hall, 5750 Old Town Hall Road
 - **Wednesday, March 27, 2013 – Appleton** 2:30-4:30 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Outagamie County Highway Department, Conference Room, 1313 Holland Road
 - **Thursday, March 28, 2013 – Tomahawk** 2:30-4:30 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Rodeway Inn & Suites, 1738 Comfort Drive
 - **Wednesday, April 3, 2013 – Platteville** 2:30-4:30 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Bjarne Ullsvik Hall South, 1 University Plaza (Corner of S Hickory Street and Main Street)
 - **Thursday, April 4, 2013 – Madison** 2:30-4:30 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. DATCP, Board Room, 2811 Agriculture Drive.

~Jim VandenBrook, Executive Director

Wisconsin Envirothon Just 22 Days Away

The 2013 Wisconsin Envirothon: Sustainable Management of Grazing Lands is scheduled for April 12 at Wisconsin Lions Camp in Rosholt. Fourteen middle and high school teams from Adams, Barron, Clark, Dane, Iron, Kewaunee, Marquette and Outagamie County will compete in four field exams pertaining to aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, and wildlife, and then give ten-minute presentations based on a pre-determined natural resources scenario to a panel of four grazing experts. Middle schools and high schools will take the same exams and use the same scenario for their presentations. The winning high school team will advance to the North American Envirothon: the continent's largest environmental education competition, for a chance to win college scholarships. This year's North American Envirothon will be held at Montana State University-Bozeman August 4-9.

The team presentation scenario will be available online for public viewing and for students to prepare on Friday, March 22. Go to www.envirothonwi.org to be directed to the EE in Wisconsin profile for Wisconsin Envirothon and view the scenario teams will work with for their presentations.

Special thanks to John DuPlissis of the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources Forestry Department, Matthew Jacobson of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Leah McSherry of the Student Wildlife Society at UW-Stevens Point, and Brian Pillsbury and Shaunna Repking of USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for drafting our field exams and team presentation scenario. Thanks also to Barron, Florence, Green Lake, Iron, Kewaunee and Waupaca County for providing Envirothon with financial support!

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

Sand Lake Conservation Camp Registration Now Open

Registration is available for the 8th annual Sand Lake Conservation Camp, to be held at Camp Bird Youth Camp near Crivitz on June 20-22, 2013. Camp is designed for Wisconsin and Upper Michigan youth attending grades 6-8 this fall. Sand Lake Conservation Camp provides youth with positive educational outdoor experiences, helps them better appreciate and understand nature, and introduces a variety of opportunities in natural resources and conservation careers. Campers engage in fun hands-on activities, learn about the outdoors and its inhabitants, make new friends, talk with natural resource professionals, learn new skills, and enjoy the beauty of Camp Bird.

Go to www.wlwca.org and select "Programs/Youth Camps and Contests" to be directed to WLWCA's EE in Wisconsin profile. Link there to Sand Lake Conservation Camp (under "Events") to find out more and download the camp brochure and camper registration packet. The registration fee of \$60 (postmarked on or before May 30; \$75 if postmarked after May 30) covers food, lodging, and instruction. Registrations will not be accepted after June 5 and space is limited. Feel free to forward this information to schools, teachers, outdoor clubs, conservation organizations, 4-H groups, scout troops, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other potentially interested groups in your area.

If you have questions or need more information about Sand Lake Conservation Camp, please contact Anne Bartels at 715-732-7784 or abartels@marinettecounty.com.

~Anne Bartels, Marinette County Land and Water Conservation Division

NACD's 2012 "Soil to Spoon" Poster Contest Winners Announced

The National Association of Conservation Districts held their poster contest during their 2013 Annual Meeting in San Antonio this past February. Students from Barron, Grant, Sawyer and Washington County represented Wisconsin at the national event, and WLWCA is pleased to announce that Laliphat Tantiphipop from Barron County received an Honorable Mention in the Grade 10-12 category.

NACD is in the process of returning posters to state conservation association offices. With five posters to return to almost every state, this is no small task. WLWCA will notify counties and re-distribute the national qualifying posters as soon as posters are returned. For a complete listing of all the posters that placed at the national level visit www.nacdnet.org/education/contests/poster/2012/2012-winners. Congratulations to all the poster contest participants and to Laliphat Tantiphipop for her success!

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

Standard Oversight Council Update

The Standards Oversight Council released its 2012 Accomplishment Report at the WLWCA Annual Conference last week. The report highlights last year's major achievements, compiles all standards that were updated in 2012, describes team participation, and touches on the focus of our work in the future. You can view the report here: http://socwisconsin.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2012SOC_AccomplishmentReport1.pdf

One of SOC's goals for the future is to improve participation in our process. SOC's new website is the beginning of our efforts in achieving this goal. A few of the changes we will be implementing to make it easier for technical standard users to give us feedback are 1) To provide summaries of revisions to draft standards and mark-up copies for viewers to more easily locate changes, 2) To update the Technical Standards Needs Survey to an online, more concise format, and 3) To reach out to technical standard user groups to receive in-person feedback on our future work plans and standard revisions.

Seventeen NRCS practice standards have been revised and published this year to date, many with minor revisions. Summaries of the revisions are noted in these announcements [FOTG WI-60](#) and [FOTG WI-61](#).

~Gini Knight, Standards Oversight Council Coordinator



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Calendar of Events

WLWCA Outreach & Education Committee, Stevens Point	Mar 22
WLWCA Technical Committee, Stevens Point	Mar 22
ATCP 50 Public Hearings, Eau Claire	Mar 26
ATCP 50 Public Hearings, Appleton	Mar 27
ATCP 50 Public Hearings, Tomahawk	Mar 28
WI River Water Quality Improvement Symposium, Stevens Point	Mar 28
LWCB Meeting, Madison	Apr 2
ATCP 50 Public Hearings, Platteville	Apr 3
ATCP 50 Public Hearings, Madison	Apr 4
WLWCA Executive Committee, Appleton	Apr 4
Protecting the St. Croix Conference, River Falls	Apr 8
Stormwater Workshop, Pewaukee	Apr 10
Lake Winnebago Area Meeting, Appleton	Apr 12
Wisconsin Envirothon, Rosholt	Apr 12
2014 Joint DATCP/DNR SWRM Grant Application Deadline	Apr 15
GLNAC Annual Meeting, Milwaukee	Apr 18
WLWCA Administrative/Legislative Committee, Stevens Point	May 1
SOC Meeting, Madison	May 7

For more information about our events and partner organization events, visit www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html

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