



**Land Conservation Committee (LCC)
Supervisors Handbook**

Spring 2018

**WI Land•Water Area Associations of
Land Conservation Committees and
Departments**



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2016-2018 Board of Directors

(Please note that a new board will be elected summer 2018)

Area 1: Lake Michigan

Chuck Wagner, Executive Committee
Kewaunee County LWCC

Ken Dolata
Oconto County LCD

Area 2: Lake Winnebago

Patrick J. Laughrin, Executive Committee
Calumet County LWCC

Greg Baneck, Vice Chair, President of
Executive Committee, Outagamie Co. LCD

Area 3: Southeastern

Monte Osterman
Racine County LCC

Alan Barrows, Treasurer, Executive
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Area 4: Southern

Dale Hood
Grant County LWCC

Kurt Calkins, Secretary, Executive
Committee, Columbia County LWCD

Area 5: Western

Kathy Zeglin
Trempealeau County ELUCC

Ben Wojahn
Vernon County LWCD

Area 6: West Central

Russell Rindsig
Barron County LCC

Chase Cummings
Pepin County LCD

Area 7: Northwestern

George Mika
Ashland County LCC

Tom Fratt
Ashland County LCD

Area 8: North Central

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Welcome to the field of soil and water conservation.

Under Wisconsin's system of county government, some of you find yourselves appointed to the Land Conservation Committee or its statutory equivalent. Whatever your committee is called, we assure you that the functions of the Land Conservation Committee are very important to the citizens of your county and the State of Wisconsin.

As an LCC member, you are a key player in the natural resource protection arena. You provide vital input into the task of identifying resource needs and developing programs to address those needs. With your help, Wisconsin will continue to be recognized as a leader in protecting its environment.

It is also important for a Land Conservation Committee member to be knowledgeable about the work and workings of the Land Conservation Department (LCD). This knowledge can be put to good use both in your committee and in your contacts with the public.

With that in mind, this handbook has been developed to assist you in understanding your leadership role as an LCC supervisor. We trust that you will find it useful in the challenges that lie ahead.

Best wishes for a successful and satisfying term,

*The Wisconsin Land+Water
Conservation Association*

Land and Water Conservation in Wisconsin

What we do matters

Wisconsin is its land, its waters, and its people. The health of all three depends on one another. How Wisconsin citizens conserve and maintain the state's limited land base and soil productivity, as well as its lakes, streams, and groundwater will determine the future of our economy and quality of life. It is the mission of county Land Conservation Committees and Departments to help landowners and users meet their objectives while protecting our common economic and environmental infrastructure - land and water resources.

Who are we?

The Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water), a 501(c)3 nonprofit, is a membership organization that supports the efforts of around 450 LCC supervisors and nearly 400 conservation staff in 72 county LCD offices through training, conservation standards development, youth education, grants, partnership building, and advocacy. In 2012, WI Land+Water merged its LCC membership with the LCD staff organization, the Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees (WALCE). The merged organization retained the name Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association. It is a unique association nationally.

Land Conservation – Wisconsin's proud heritage

Government and farmers came together back in the 1930s to address the field-wrecking soil erosion of the Dust Bowl era through direct local assistance. The nation's first watershed project devoted to soil conservation was established in Coon Valley, Wisconsin. Farmers healed their lands with field practices like contour strip cropping that exist to this day. These initial efforts were led by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service, which continues today as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). It wasn't long before state and county efforts to promote land conservation also commenced.

The Advent and Evolution of County Land Conservation

In 1933, Wisconsin established the Soil Conservation Committee, a state entity that exists currently as the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) to help

direct state efforts to combat soil erosion. By 1953, Soil Conservation Districts were formed in every county in the state, and a statewide association was formed (now WI Land+Water), primarily to support USDA soil conservation efforts. The 1972 federal Clean Water Act focused more attention to water quality concerns. Conservation Districts across the nation were asked to address polluted runoff from farms and urbanizing areas (nonpoint pollution). In Wisconsin, this led to the creation of new state programs that relied on counties to implement. But the Conservation District model, led by federal (USDA) employees, was not designed to directly empower counties and hold them responsible for implementing state land and water conservation programs.

In 1982, Wisconsin became the first in the nation to abolish Conservation Districts and create the county Land Conservation Committee structure in every county. Primarily comprised of county board members, LCCs were authorized to implement important state supported conservation programs through county Land Conservation Departments. These programs included the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) Farmland Preservation and soil erosion control programs, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution control program. County staffing and technical capability increased dramatically.

Partnerships and Success

In the 1980s and '90s, together with the state agencies and their programs listed above, and in partnership with USDA-NRCS and their soil conservation programs, county Land Conservation Departments helped farmers reduce soil erosion and nonpoint pollution statewide. In DNR's NPS program, many barnyards were cleaned up and manure storage systems built to reduce runoff pollution from manure. Stream habitat was restored and fisheries recovered; but, some questioned the cost-effectiveness of the programs and the targeted watershed funding strategy.

State Program Reorganization

From 1997-2001 a contentious process of redrafting state nonpoint program rules ensued, resulting in a renewed focus on program implementation at the county level through county Land & Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plans (see

page 13). Statewide nonpoint pollution performance standards were adopted to apply to all parts of the state – urban and rural. Existing farms were required to comply only if adequate cost sharing was provided; however, compliance was required from new farms, without providing cost sharing. Funding for both rural conservation practices and county land conservation staff was no longer targeted by watersheds and declined ever since. State funding for county staff is now about 40 percent of the 1997 level.

Resource Degradation and Increasing Threats

Since the height of soil conservation efforts in the mid-1990s, we have literally lost ground. Soil erosion rates on croplands are now 20 percent higher than they were in 1997. Through fertilization, average phosphorus levels in agricultural soils have built up to almost twice the optimal rate for crop production, making it more difficult to keep algae-producing phosphorus out of lakes and streams. Now, more water bodies are added to Wisconsin’s list of impaired waters than are removed from it.

Land conservation offices deal with more than agricultural runoff. Polluted stormwater runoff from urban and suburban areas affects lakes and streams. Siting of homes in rural areas, without proper groundwater/runoff investigation, results in flooded basements. The demand for “frac sand” has led to local conflicts over mine reclamation plans. Wisconsin is also under increasing threat from terrestrial and aquatic invasive species that threaten agriculture, forestry, lakes, shorelines, tourism, and businesses. On top of this, Wisconsin is experiencing extremes of temperature and precipitation that are affecting our natural and managed resources.

Wisconsin is reacting to global demands that put pressure on the land for more food, feed, fiber, and fuel (ethanol/frac sand). That means more marginal land in crop production. About half (350,000 acres) of highly erodible acres under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are now back in production. Record plantings of corn and soybean acres mean less crop residue is left on fields to slow runoff, and less soil-conserving hay is planted as diets for high-producing dairy cows have changed. Our global commerce brings non-native species to our land and waters. Even our changing climate is tied to global influences.

Moving Forward by Sticking Together

While the list of resource challenges seems daunting, we do have proven solutions for most of our problems if we have the will and local staff in place to implement them. The state commitment to local staffing has declined for the last 15 years. It is time to halt that erosion too. State funding for county staff and cost sharing is presently at about 40% of 1997 level funding. Restoring this relatively small amount means a lot, especially in many rural counties where local budgets are more than strained. It is also a great investment for Wisconsin citizens. Here are some of the direct benefits local land conservation staff bring:

- For every dollar of state spending for local staff, five dollars are leveraged locally for landowners to implement conservation practices, nearing \$50 million statewide in recent years.
- Farmers that work with LCDs have very low rates of severe runoff or other environmental problems.
- Farmers who engage LCDs, even when they do have runoff problems, get problems fixed quickly, and almost always avoid fines and the need for a point source discharge permit.
- As Wisconsin pursues its goal to increase milk production, farmers will need the financial and technical assistance of LCDs to handle increased manure production in an environmentally appropriate way.
- Through partnerships with DATCP, DNR, NRCS, UW-Extension specialists, UW researchers, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and importantly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), county staff acquire grants and expertise to tackle our most pressing resource concerns.
- LCDs are uniquely positioned to help implement Wisconsin's phosphorus rules, which will require unprecedented cooperation between municipalities and the agricultural community.
- No other single agency can coordinate the wide range of technical expertise needed to deal on-site with the diverse and constantly changing natural resource needs of Wisconsin's citizens.

Together we can manage our land and water resources to make Wisconsin a better place, economically and environmentally.

Conservation at the County Level:
Land Conservation Committees and Land Conservation Departments

1. What is a Land Conservation Committee?

Land Conservation Committees were created through state law. Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin State Statutes (Chapter 92) required all counties create an LCC to carry out their responsibilities for conserving soil, water, and related natural resources. LCCs oversee the administration and implementation of conservation programs that meet local priorities and the needs of land users. These programs might be local programs or state programs that are implemented at the local level. Locally implemented conservation programs across the state address a variety of resource issues, including but not limited to:

- Controlling soil erosion
- Managing manure and nutrient applications
- Planning for future land use
- Protecting important land areas
- Managing and protecting groundwater
- Controlling construction site erosion and urban stormwater runoff
- Managing lakes, rivers and shoreline areas
- Protecting and restoring wetlands
- Managing forest resources
- Controlling invasive species

Unless skillfully implemented, even the best conservation programs can do little to assist local residents and protect valuable resources. Effective coordination and implementation of conservation programs at the local level is the primary role and the major challenge for LCCs.

Who serves on the Land Conservation Committee?

Chapter 92 specifies LCC makeup as:

- At least 2 persons serving on the county's Agriculture and Extension Committee;
- One representative of the county USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Committee;
- Any number of county board members; and

- Up to 2 members that are not on the county board.

How long do members serve?

LCC members serve two-year terms or until a successor is appointed. Surveys indicate that approximately one-third of members are replaced every two years following county board elections and committee reorganization.

Who advises the Land Conservation Committee?

The county board appoints advisors to the LCC. Each county committee that deals with natural resources including county zoning, land use, forestry, parks and solid waste committees, must be represented. Additionally, the LCC may invite a representative from the agencies and organizations with which it has a Memorandum of Understanding, such as the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The public also acts in an advisory capacity to LCCs by participating in LCC-sponsored public meetings.

2. What is a Land Conservation Department?

The Land Conservation Department is made up of employees of the county. According to a key provision in Wis. Stats. Chapter 92.09, LCD staff may exercise the powers granted to the LCC and serve as the vehicle by which LCC policies are carried out. Therefore, the LCD serves as its committee's right arm. Most LCCs have a direct role in hiring LCD staff to implement their programs. Because of differing county administrative structures, some LCCs are not directly involved with hiring staff but do supervise the direction of the county program.

What is the relationship between the LCCs and LCDs?

We have just described the LCCs' statutory responsibility to conserve local soil, water, and related natural resources. The LCDs provide the assistance to the committee that helps them meet this responsibility. In this way, the county LCC and LCD function together with a common purpose of conserving the county's natural resources. The LCC is often responsible for a particular project or task but they generally rely on LCD staff for advice and project implementation. For example, participation in a given state program may require the LCC to submit a grant application and detailed work plan to carry out the project. The LCD will

generally prepare the needed materials, while the LCC approves the grant application.

Each county in the state is required to have a Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan approved by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. LWRM Plans are approved for ten years, with a review by the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) in year five. The LWCB must provide a recommendation to DATCP regarding the approval of every LWRM Plan. The LWCB uses guidance and a checklist to determine if the plans have appropriate performance benchmarks, include priority farm strategies, and meet other criteria for plan approval. To learn more visit:

https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/LWCPlanning.aspx

It is often the case that LCCs influence, contribute to, and support the LCDs' work. Other examples of shared effort include:

- Establishing priorities for addressing resource challenges;
- Deciding what types of conservation assistance will best serve the needs of county land users; and
- Coordinating cooperation from agencies and other departments of county government to accomplish goals and tasks.

In summary, the LCC provides leadership, support, advice and constructive criticism to its LCD. The LCD carries out LCC policy on a daily basis. Although the LCD is indispensable to the success of any county's conservation effort, the LCC is ultimately responsible for the conservation of the county's natural resources.

Here are examples of the division of responsibilities found in most counties:

LCC	LCD
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sets policy and program goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administers the LCC policy and programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advises and informs the LCC
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approves the LCD budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepares the LCD budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approves the LCD work plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepares the work plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the LCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides technical assistance and distributes cost sharing to landowners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advises the county board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administers grants and regulations

Roles and Responsibilities of LCCs

Land Conservation Committees and Chapter 92

Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin Statutes, which creates LCCs, is the state's soil and water conservation law. The statute ". . . declares it to be the policy of the state to halt and reverse the depletion of the state's soil resources and pollution of its waters." To carry out this policy, the legislature enacted Chapter 92 to:

- Establish goals and standards for conservation of soil and water resources;
- Provide cost sharing, technical assistance, educational programs, and other programs to conserve soil and water resources;
- Encourage coordinated soil and water conservation planning and program implementation; and
- Enable the regulation of harmful land use and land management practices by county ordinance where necessary.

The statute explains why the state and county are involved in natural resource conservation. It lays out the basic organizational framework for implementing the state's conservation policy and identifies the conservation work to be done and who is responsible for completing this work. LCCs are a key component of this law. Under Chapter 92, LCCs must meet defined statutory responsibilities. The law also authorizes committees to carry out state and federal programs, and grants them powers to address local resource concerns through the adoption of strong local conservation programs. As a member of your county's LCC, you have a responsibility to understand Chapter 92 and the powers that you are granted to meet your statutory responsibilities and address local conservation concerns.

View the entire statute at <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/92>

What are the statutory responsibilities of LCCs?

Chapter 92 requires certain activities of LCCs. Under Chapter 92, LCCs shall:

- Prepare and implement a Land and Water Resource Management Plan;
- Actively solicit public participation in planning and evaluating their soil and water conservation programs;

- Follow the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection procedures and requirements in order to receive funding through DATCP's Soil and Water Resource Management (SWRM) Program.

To meet these statutory responsibilities, LCCs work closely with LCDs, as well as with state and federal agencies.

What other powers may be exercised by LCCs?

By statute, LCCs also have the following *permissive* powers. These powers *may*, rather than *shall*, be exercised by Land Conservation Committees. Generally, LCCs are empowered to:

- Develop and adopt conservation standards for their county;
- Distribute and allocate federal, state, and county funds for conservation activities;
- Encourage information and education programs;
- Carry out preventative projects for water conservation;
- Provide technical, planning, or other assistance;
- Obtain property;
- Make equipment and supplies available to land users;
- Construct conservation structures;
- Adopt and administer conservation projects or programs;
- Make and execute contracts;
- Require payment for services;
- Enter lands of private owners;
- Employ staff; and
- Administer and enforce select ordinances.

LCCs rely on their partnership with the LCD to carry out these permissive powers to implement their local land and water conservation programs.

Do LCCs have the power to regulate?

No, not by themselves; however, the state does grant LCCs the power to propose adoption of county ordinances to promote soil and water conservation or nonpoint source water pollution control. Once passed and adopted by the county board, such ordinances allow county regulation of land use, land management,

and pollution management practices. (Note: some proposed ordinances must pass a public referendum before being passed by county board – see Chapter 92, Wis. Stats. for details.)

Assistance and Funding for LCCs and LCDs: **Partner Agencies and Organizations**

Local government and the conservation movement have long enjoyed a close association in Wisconsin. With the 1982 revision of Chapter 92, land conservation moved into the mainstream of county government. As a result of this change, there is the opportunity for more effective coordination of county natural resource responsibilities and greater financial support of local conservation efforts.

Currently, many LCCs have a close and productive relationship with other natural resource related departments of county government, such as planning, zoning, forestry, and parks and recreation. Many LCCs work closely with local municipalities (such as cities, towns, and villages) on conservation efforts.

As a function of county government, LCCs are responsible for developing the county's soil and water conservation programs. In this capacity, they are also the primary means by which the state implements its conservation programs at the local level. The job of the LCC is to incorporate the applicable state programs into its county program. Several of the county's conservation needs can be met through state and federal programs, and LCCs and LCDs work closely with state and federal governmental as well as non-governmental agencies and organizations to carry out conservation programs at the county level. Through these partnerships, LCCs and LCDs can obtain funding and other assistance from these agencies and organizations. In cases where local needs are not met, the LCC takes the lead to develop their own local programs to complement the state and federal programs. In this way, LCCs can have substantial influence on state and federal legislation. This influence may be expressed by a single LCC at the county level, by a regional grouping of LCCs at the area level, or as part of a concerted effort through a representative organization at the state or federal level.

1. State and National Organizations Representing the Interests of LCCs and LCDs

LCCs and LCDs play a critical role in setting conservation policy and shaping state programs. There are a number of organizations which work in the interest of counties as well as LCCs and LCDs at the state and national level, including WI Land+Water, the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA), and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association

The Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association is a nonprofit membership organization representing the state's county Land Conservation Committees and Departments. In 2012, the organization merged both the state organization of Land Conservation employees with the parent organization of Land Conservation Committee supervisors. This merger reflects the close working relationship of Land Conservation supervisors and staff and their common needs for representation.

WI Land+Water is divided into eight area associations consisting of member Land Conservation Committees and Departments (see page 2). Area Associations meet several times each year to conduct business of interest to counties within the area, to adopt and forward resolutions, to share experiences, to coordinate with agency and NGO partners, discuss emerging natural resource issues, solutions, and policy. WI Land+Water is governed by the Board of Directors made up of one LCC and one LCD representative from each area association. WI Land+Water is funded mainly through county membership dues and grants.

On behalf of the LCCs, WI Land+Water staff work with elected officials and government agencies to secure financial and program support for local conservation activities. Staff also continuously informs LCCs and LCDs on state and national projects and issues. WI Land+Water sponsors conservation education and recognition programs, supports public and private actions to advance resource conservation, hosts an annual conference, and provides training for LCC members.

WI Land+Water has eight committees that work on various priorities of the organization:

- **The Executive Committee** has the authority to fulfill the obligations and conduct the business of the Board between Board meetings, and to minimize the need to spend full Board meeting time on routine matters the Board has authorized the Executive Committee to manage. The Executive Committee shall also oversee the Association's finances and its Executive Director, and report about its activities at each BOD meeting. The Executive Committee is comprised of six officers: three LCC supervisors, and three LCD staff.
- **The Legislative/Administrative Committee** shall review and take action as deemed necessary by the committee on any proposed legislation, administrative rule, or other policy and procedure that may significantly impact the administration of conservation programs. The committee is also charged with initiating action that may be needed to improve the administration of conservation programs and coordinating statewide information exchange among all county Land Conservation Department administrators.
- **The Public Outreach Committee** is charged with developing and implementing an outreach plan to promote county land and water conservation programs and services. Their goal is to increase public awareness and support for county land and water conservation efforts.
- **The Professional Improvement Committee** is charged with developing and implementing an annual conference. This includes selecting the site, developing agendas, scheduling presenters, and all other activities associated with carrying out a successful conference. The PIC also coordinates a Member Scholarship Program. Training scholarships are designed to help cover the expenses of WI Land+Water members who would otherwise be unable to afford a particular professional improvement or leadership training program.
- **The Technical Committee** is charged with addressing issues relating to land conservation technical activities including, but not limited to: conservation

planning, inventory and evaluation tools, technical certification, and conservation practice and design implementation. The committee may also serve to coordinate county review comments on draft technical standards produced by other agencies and organizations.

- **The Youth Education Committee** is focused on developing and maintaining programs that educate and inspire Wisconsin's youth. Wisconsin's unique eco-diversity makes it the perfect classroom, and our many programs work to ensure that future generations continue to care for our beautiful state. The committee works to promote, coordinate, and increase conservation awareness through our youth programs.
- **The Great Lakes Committee** was formerly a stand-alone organization known as the Great Lakes Non-point Action Coalition. Its goals were to promote the control of nonpoint source pollution to the Great Lakes and it was comprised of county LCC and LCD staff, as well as representatives from other organizations with related concerns. In 2014, the Coalition was merged into WI Land+Water to strengthen efforts to improve water quality in the Great Lakes.
- **The Mississippi River Basin Committee** is the newest committee and is in the process of preparing guiding principles and goals.

All committees welcome new LCC and LCD members.

WI Land+Water's Annual Conference and business meeting is held in early to mid-March and provides information on current conservation issues. The annual business meeting is held on the last day of the conference. It is during this meeting that resolutions, and sometimes bylaws amendments, are voted upon to help guide the organization in the upcoming year. Elections to appoint three representatives to the state's Land and Water Conservation Board occur at the conference during even-numbered years. As members of the LWCB, these representatives provide recommendations that advise policy for some state conservation programs.

The Standards Oversight Council (SOC) is a collaboration of conservation agencies that oversees a team approach in developing and maintaining technical standards for soil and water conservation practices in Wisconsin. Many federal, state, and local agencies rely on the same technical or practice standards to implement

numerous conservation programs. However, this diverse group must deal with different mandates, goals, policies, deadlines, and political pressures. SOC is charged with working through these inherent challenges and overseeing the process for developing effective technical standards that protect Wisconsin's natural resources. Through an interagency work planning process, SOC helps focus limited public resources where they are needed most.

The SOC governing body, or Council, consists of representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; University of Wisconsin-Extension; Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT); and WI Land+Water. The SOC collaboration and their work is funded by a consortium of partners that may include NRCS, WDNR, DATCP, and WisDOT, with contributions of staff time, expertise, and non-monetary resources from UW-Extension, WI Land+Water, county Land Conservation Department staff, and private sector technicians. Many county conservation departments also provide an annual donation. SOC is a successful example of collaborating agencies and integrating resources to effectively address critical issues that protect our state's resources.

The Council and the WI Land+Water Executive Director oversee the SOC Program Manager, who provides programmatic leadership, coordinates the standard work teams, and manages outreach and communication efforts. The current work plan (socwisconsin.org/current-work/work-plan) contains the more specific practice standard projects scheduled for the upcoming years.

For more information, visit socwisconsin.org

The Statewide Interagency Training Committee (SITCOM) consists of representatives from WI Land+Water; the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Department of Natural Resources; UW-Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; and the private sector. Their mission is to build a statewide team of well-trained conservation professionals that ensure best management practice installation for soil and water conservation. WI Land+Water staff coordinate SITCOM meetings and help implement their directives.

Youth Education Program. The Youth Education Committee currently focuses on the following programs:

- Conservation Awareness Poster and Speaking Contest is open to kindergarten through twelfth grade students. Students compete at county and area competitions with the winning posters moving on to compete at the State Competition in March at the Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association's Annual Conference. The first place posters from the state competition represent Wisconsin at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting.

The Conservation Speech contest is open to Grades 5-6 (Elementary Division), Grades 7-8 (Junior Division), Grades 9-12 (Senior Division). This contest aims to promote the conservation of natural resources and the protection or enhancement of environmental quality. Emphasis is placed on the subject as it relates to the locality or to Wisconsin. Students compete at county and area competitions with the winners moving on to the State Competition in March at the Wisconsin Land+Water Conservation Association's Annual Conference. The first place winners in each category share their speeches at the opening conference luncheon.

- Wisconsin's Annual Envirothon is Wisconsin's ultimate middle and high school environmental science challenge where teams of four or five high school or middle school students participate in the hands-on field challenges designed by natural resources professionals and educators. The exams are based on Forestry, Soils/Land Use, Aquatic Ecology, and Wildlife. The teams also participate in creating a team presentation based on a current issue. The team presentations provide students an opportunity to articulate today's critical environmental concerns and to develop the skills to communicate the conservation ethic in whatever scholastic, career, or civic choices lie ahead and provides them with tools to provide leadership for a more sustainable and environmentally aware community. Winners advance to the North American Envirothon to compete for scholarships and prizes.
- Youth Conservation Camps provide positive educational outdoor experiences, foster an appreciation for nature, and introduce a variety of careers in natural resources and conservation. Professionals from various

agencies present programs on topics like wildlife, habitat, water quality, fisheries, forestry, orienteering, and canoeing. These professionals, as well as adult volunteers, serve as overnight staff and group leaders for the duration of camp. Campers can make new friends, participate in hands-on activities, practice social and leadership skills, enjoy the outdoors and just have fun!

The two summer youth camps that this committee helps coordinate are:

- *WI Land+Water Youth Conservation Camp* for Grades 9-12 at North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters, WI. For more information contact Kim Warkentin at kim@wisconsinlandwater.org or (608) 441-2677.
- *Sand Lake Conservation Camp* for Grades 6-8 at Camp Bird in Crivitz, WI. For more information contact Anne Bartels at (715) 732-7784.

For more information about our Youth programs visit wisconsinlandwater.org or eeinwisconsin.org.

Wisconsin Counties Association

The Wisconsin Counties Association is a voluntary membership organization that was created by Wisconsin State Statute (59.52(22)) for the furtherance of better county government and the protection of county interests. WCA's direction is determined by its members and its Board of Directors consistent with the parameters set forth by the WCA Constitution.

WCA works diligently to provide services to its members that allow them to serve their constituents in the most effective manner possible. These services include a legislative team that serves as the voice of county officials at the state and federal level, public relations services that include the publication of a monthly magazine and a web site, ongoing training and educational opportunities through seminars, legislative exchanges, and an annual conference. For more information, visit their web site at <http://www.wicounties.org>

National Association of Conservation Districts

Organized in 1946, the National Association of Conservation Districts serves as the national voice for the conservation district movement. NACD pools the experience

of over 3,000 districts (or LCCs, as they are called in Wisconsin) in developing national conservation policies on a continuing basis. Operational funds are provided by dues from member LCCs in Wisconsin, Wisconsin Land+Water, individuals, and member conservation districts nationwide. For more information, visit their web site at <http://www.nacdnet.org>

2. State Agencies and Boards

The Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Board

Chapter 92 also describes the roles and responsibilities of the LWCB. The LWCB consists of state agency administrators, WI Land+Water elected representatives, and governor-appointed representatives. The LWCB is an advisory body to the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Department of Natural Resources, and does not have rule-making authority.

The LWCB reviews and recommends approval of county LWRM plans, recommends priorities for allocation of program funds and recommends funding program changes that will improve efficiency and effectiveness. To learn more about the LWCB visit:

datcp.wi.gov/Environment/Land_and_Water_Conservation/Land_and_Water_Conservation_Board

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Chapter 92 names DATCP as the lead agency for setting and implementing the state's soil and water conservation policies. DATCP achieves its statutory obligations largely through county LCCs and LCDs.

DATCP is responsible for assisting LCCs in developing, coordinating, and approving their DATCP-related conservation plans and programs. DATCP administers state cost-sharing funds for a variety of LCC operations, including staff and support for LCD employees and cost sharing to install conservation practices. Through its field service staff, DATCP provides engineering assistance and certification for local, state, and federal programs. This service is provided to LCD technicians and other persons who design, review, and approve agricultural engineering practices. Visit <http://datcp.wi.gov/> for more information.

Department of Natural Resources

The Department of Natural Resources is charged with managing and protecting nearly all state-owned lands and protecting all waters of the state. DNR administers programs to regulate, guide, and assist individual land users in managing land, water, fish, and wildlife. Technical assistance and/or cost sharing is provided to county LCCs and LCDs through several DNR programs. Visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/> for more information.

University of Wisconsin-Extension

The University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEX) supports lifelong learning by bringing the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to people wherever they live and work. UWEX teams up county Extension faculty with regional and statewide specialists throughout the UW System to provide educational programming across the state. UWEX supports county land conservation activities through numerous programs, centers, and educators addressing agriculture, natural resources, and community development. Visit <http://www.uwex.edu/about/cooperative.html> for more information.

Wisconsin Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&Ds)

Wisconsin's RC&Ds offer a unique way for private individuals and groups to work with each other and learn to utilize local, state, and federal agencies to benefit communities. The RC&D program helps bring together a wide variety of volunteers such as land managers, community leaders, economists, and environmentalists. These groups work to identify problems and opportunities, gather necessary background information, plan for desired future conditions, develop strategies and secure necessary funding and implement projects for the good of the area. The projects implemented help enhance our natural resources while improving the standard of living in the State of Wisconsin. Visit <http://wisrcd.weebly.com/> to learn more.

3. Federal Agencies

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, formerly the Soil Conservation Service, has long cooperated with and assisted LCCs. LCCs work closely with NRCS to conserve land and water resources. NRCS is linked to many LCCs through mutual and local operating agreements. The

agreements spell out the cooperative relationship between USDA and the LCC.

NRCS' primary role is to provide technical assistance for conservation planning, practice design and installation on private lands. NRCS is the lead federal agency for conservation on private lands. Since 1985 the federal Farm Bills have included conservation provisions such as the ones described below, to reduce soil erosion on highly erodible farmland, protect water quality and wetlands, and to encourage wildlife habitat. Visit

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/wi/home/> for more information.

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency is also part of the USDA and administers a variety of agricultural assistance programs including production controls, price supports, and conservation. Each LCC has an FSA representative as one of its members. The FSA conservation programs are administered with NRCS technical assistance. For additional information on FSA, please visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> and click on "State Offices."