Wisconsin is at a conservation crossroads—a united partnership will help lead the way.

Water issues—from contaminated drinking water and the “Dead Zone” in Green Bay, to the fight over groundwater rights in the central sands—dominated conservation discussions in Wisconsin this year. Polluted runoff and water quality are also defining political topics in our neighboring states, with high officials losing their jobs and communities suing farmers. Now in Wisconsin, we’ve come to the crossroads on whether we can address these issues without resorting to court action. This is certainly the goal of WI Land+Water as we continue building infrastructure to strengthen relationships with agriculture, municipalities, and industry to resolve our water quality and quantity challenges. A statewide effort can make a difference and bypass a litigious future, so let’s work together now in the best interests of all.

NEW INITIATIVES

- We are partnering with DNR to tackle rising nitrate levels in municipal water supplies. This applied-science project will identify practices that reduce nitrogen loading to the groundwater that feeds municipal wells.
- Working with Discover Media, we produced a four-segment video that shows the connections between land management and water quality that aired on “Into the Outdoors” in December.
- In March of 2015, we worked with members of the Board of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to develop a resolution of support for adequate funding of the important work done by county land conservation offices.

RESOLUTIONS

- Calling for the formation of a statewide task force to research and implement alternative on-farm liquid manure management systems on Wisconsin livestock farms
- The future direction of staffing and support funding to Wisconsin counties as proposed by DATCP
- Support for a complete and thorough strategic analysis of industrial frac sand mining
- Review of high capacity well permit requirements in order to protect surface and groundwater resources and ensure citizen access to these shared public water resources
- Oppose any attempt to limit local control or authority

At left from top to bottom: Peter Sorce • Chair | Greg Baneck • Vice-Chair
We advocate for locally led conservation and champion the policies that allow county-based conservation work to get done in Wisconsin.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- **Conservation Staff Funding Restored**
  The 2015-2017 Biennial Budget posed many defunding challenges to conservation programs and organizations, including a reduction in funding of $1,630,000 over the biennium for local county conservation staffing in the Governor’s Budget. We are very pleased to have legislative support for the restoration of $1,350,000 of that amount. This victory for conservation could not have been achieved without local county contacts to legislators and the help of our many friends from Farmers Union and Farm Bureau to the many conservation groups including River Alliance of Wisconsin, Clean Wisconsin, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, and many others. Also a big thank you to the lobbying efforts of Dan Bahr, Wisconsin Counties Association, and the work of our contract lobbyist Shawn Pfaff. It was a real conservation team effort.

- **Positions on Bills Affecting Land and Water Resources and Local Control**
  Numerous bills were introduced in 2015 that impacted conservation issues and local control, such as several “frac sand” bills. These bills were heavily debated, largely rejected by towns and counties, and ultimately did not resurface in the opening legislative session in 2016. We opposed these bills and also testified in opposition to bills that would have eliminated the consideration of the “cumulative impact” of high capacity wells. Our positions on these bills are directly related to the adopted Association resolutions.

**STATE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD**

We elect three members to the State Land and Water Conservation Board that help to connect local and state governments on conservation and farmland preservation issues.

*Members vote on resolutions at the business meeting held during the Annual Conference.*

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*Minnesota Senator Richard Cohen attended the County Conservationist meeting in December to share lessons learned from the successful passage of the Minnesota Legacy Amendment.*
We help build and share diverse expertise of our members through the Technical Committee, Standards Oversight Council (SOC), and other networking opportunities.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 34 conservation staff members attended the Technical Committee’s annual Fall Tour. This year’s tour showcased dairy farms and best management practices in Fond du Lac County.
- 19 conservation practices were revised by the Standards Oversight Council and its team members. This included the completion of the NRCS 590 Nutrient Management standard, which underwent a two-year long revision process.
- 42 individuals commented on standard revisions during their broad review process, and all comments were carefully considered by members of standards review teams.
- 4x more people participated in the Technical Standards Survey than the previous 2013 survey. Surveys are completed by people familiar with Wisconsin’s technical standards, and results are used to inform future standard revisions and priorities.
- 1st SOC outreach video was created, which offers an overview of SOC and the standard revision process through the eyes of staff from local, state, and federal government and the private sector. This video can be found on the SOC website, www.socwisconsin.org, and YouTube.
CONSERVATION TRAINING

Enhancing Conservation Professionalism Statewide

Through the State Interagency Training Committee (SITCOM), we coordinate an efficient approach for building a statewide team of well-trained conservation professionals that deliver best management practices for soil and water conservation.

ACHIEVEMENTS
- 340 people attended the 2015 Annual Conference
- 12 sessions provided continuing education and professional development credits
- 10 SITCOM e-Newsletters promoting training opportunities were sent to the over 650 subscribers
- Over 60 combined conservation professionals attended Farming 101 and two New Conservation Employee trainings
- Over 300 people have attended one of the six webinars launched in 2015
- 17 SITCOM members from 7 agencies or organizations helped to develop and promote free or low-cost trainings for conservation professionals
- Over 180 people celebrated Conservation Farmers of the Year on the Petersheim’s farm in Vernon County on Conservation Observance Day
- 1st annual Great Lakes Conference was held in Ashland County highlighting conservation efforts in the Lake Superior Basin
- 2 County Conservationist meetings were held to discuss statewide issues such as state and federal program and policy changes, local successes and challenges, and new initiatives

As a part of the Great Lakes Annual Conference in Ashland, members of the Bad River Tribe provided a tour of the internationally recognized Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Each March, we hold an annual conference to provide networking opportunities and forums for discussing programs, practices, and new ideas. Breakout sessions also allow attendees to build technical knowledge and become inspired by other’s passion for conservation across the state. Our Professional Improvement Committee provides leadership in developing the conference agenda with support from the Technical Committee and SITCOM.

2015 CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS

Conservation Steward Award: Patrick Sutter
Outstanding Conservation Employee: Kerrie Wheeler, Juneau County (Administrative Assistant), Kirk Langfoss, Marathon County (Project Manager)
Conservation Farmer of the Year: Ralph and Sheila Petersheim from Vernon County
Special Recognition: Curt Pawlisch

CONFERENCE SPONSORS

Sand County Foundation • The Nature Conservancy • Keith Johnson • Wisconsin Counties Association

Melanie Boone from Fond du Lac County attending the first Farming 101 course held in conjunction with UW - Platteville and Southern Area Technical School.
We work through our Youth Education Committee to develop and maintain programs that educate and inspire Wisconsin’s youth. The Committee directs annual events and contests to help pass on Wisconsin’s rich conservation history to future generations.

ACHIEVEMENTS
- 25 high school and 88 middle school campers enjoyed one of two conservation camps held in 2015
- A total of 1,987 posters were presented at contests statewide
- First place winning speeches were presented to a crowd of over 350 conservation professionals
- Over 103 students and 22 teams competed at Envirothon with the generosity of 50 sponsors and over 30 volunteers
- A new partnership with FFA increased the number of schools participating in the Wisconsin Envirothon
- Water Pollution & Solutions was televised to over 6 million households highlighting conservation challenges and successes

THANK YOU TO ENVIROTHON SPONSORS
Canadian National • Plum Creek • Conserve School • NFC-Envirothon • Natural Resources Foundation • Walmart • WI Dept. of Natural Resources • Trout Unlimited • Advanced Disposal • Star Prairie Fish & Game • For a full list of our sponsors, visit: wisconsinlandwater.org/events/envirothon

Envirothon coordinators at the 2015 competition at Lions Camp in Rosholt.

Water Pollution & Solutions featured county conservationists Davina Bonness, Kewaunee (below); Dale Konkol, Door; and Curt Diehl, Dane
**FISCAL SUMMARY**

**REVENUE**

- Federal Grants
- Contributions
- County Dues (Membership and Program Specific)
- Events
- Other Grants
- State Grants

**EXPENDITURES**

- Youth Education
- Administrative
- Policy & Advocacy*
- Conservation Training
- Nitrates Initiative
- Technical Standards

*2% direct lobbying expense

**WHO WE ARE**

*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 LCCs and LCDs to help landowners and users meet their objectives while protecting our common economic and environmental infrastructure — land and water resources.

*Eau Claire County Conservationist Kelly Jacobs provides her insights on how an unfortunate event in her county opened the door to discussions with the Hmong populations in her area. Watch the video about the story at facebook.com/wisconsinlandwater.*
We are a 501 (c) 3 non-profit membership organization that supports the efforts of Land Conservation Committee (LCC) supervisors and conservation staff in 72 county Land Conservation Department (LCD) offices through training, conservation standards development, youth education, grants, partnership building, and advocacy.

**STAFF**

Seven local staff members in Madison ORGANIZE WI Land+Water.

Christina Anderson – Training and Outreach Program Specialist

Scott Hennelly – Communications Specialist

Penny Pohle – Membership Services Coordinator

Chris Schlutt – Training and Outreach Program Coordinator

Jennifer Thieme – Standards Oversight Council Program Manager

Jim VandenBrook – Executive Director

Kim Warkentin – Operations Manager/Youth Education Director

**MEMBERS**

Over 800 supervisors and staff members WORK to protect and improve the state’s natural resources.

**Land Conservation Committees**

Comprised of publicly-elected county board and appointed members, LCCs take a leading role in local land and water resource protection. They set the course for conservation in their counties.

**Area Associations**

The 8 Area Associations SUPPORT the geographic-specific interests of the association’s members.

- **Northwestern Area**
  - Area Coordinator: Christine Ostern, Douglas County

- **Lake Michigan Area**
  - Area Coordinator: Ken Dolata, Oconto County

- **Western Area**
  - Area Coordinator: Gaylord Olson, Jackson County

**West Central Area**

Area Coordinator: Pat Poeschel, Pepin County

**Southern Area**

Area Coordinator: Kelly Maginnis, Columbia County

**Lake Winnebago Area**

Area Coordinator: Brian Haase, Waupaca County

**Southeastern Area**

Area Coordinator: Gary Korb, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

**North Central Area**

Area Coordinator: Marie Graupner, Langlade County

**COMMITTEES**

The 8 Committees SUPPORT WI Land+Water.

- **Executive**
  - Peter Sorce, Washington County, Chair

- **Great Lakes**
  - Stevan Keith, Milwaukee County, Chair

- **Legislative/Administrative**
  - Kurt Calkins, Columbia County, Chair

- **Mississippi River Basin**
  - Not yet appointed

- **Public Outreach**
  - Paul Backhaus, Washington County, Chair

- **Professional Improvement**
  - Dale Konkol, Door County, Chair

- **Technical**
  - Paul Sebo, Washington County, Chair

- **Youth Education**
  - Tracy Arnold, Wood County, Chair

**ADVISORS**

Agency Partners ADVISE the association on carrying out agency rules and programs.

- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- University Wisconsin – Extension
- Wisconsin Counties Association

**Contact Information**

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