



Thursday Note

An Update on Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Issues

Volume 14, Issue 2

Thursday, March 10, 2011

Budget Wrap

The new executive budget has been unveiled and, as promised, the governor has made significant cuts in a wide array of programs. Fortunately, for county conservation interests, the impact on the statewide staffing grant and cost share dollars was not severe. Our staffing grant was reduced by about 5%, meaning that the average loss to a county would be about \$5000-\$6000. While this is not good news, things certainly could have been a lot worse. We were probably spared because of our past efforts voicing our support for the staffing grant. Many of you spoke to your legislators and to DATCP about the importance of maintaining a strong county conservation delivery infrastructure, and professional conservation staff are part of that infrastructure.

Surprisingly, the cost share allocation for soft practices and nutrient management planning was increased by about \$350,000. Currently that account stands at about \$5.5 million, but there will almost certainly be lapses to it. The bond authorizations that fund hard practice cost share remained the same, with \$7 million going to TRM and \$6 million going to Urban Runoff Management.

Other programs of interest to county conservation got much worse news than the Soil and Water Resource Management program. The Working Lands Initiative suffered some severe blows. One proposal in the executive budget is the elimination of the conversion fee for landowners who take their land out of the farmland preservation program. The implications of such a move are not entirely clear, but it seems likely that enrollment in the program will increase, as will the number of landowners dropping out of the program in order to sell their land.

The PACE program also faces elimination and a re-writing of the Stewardship Program will forbid a willing landowner from selling off their development rights in order to preserve the property. The Stewardship Program will now be required to buy the property outright.

There are a great many things in the executive budget that will have an indirect effect on the work of conservation departments, and many of them are not yet known. Stay tuned and keep an eye and on the list serves as new information comes to light.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director

7th Annual Wisconsin League Of Conservation Voters Conservation Lobby Day Scheduled March 16, Register Today!

On Conservation Lobby Day, hundreds of citizens from across Wisconsin descend on the Capitol to share their conservation values with their legislators. Conservation Lobby Day is a unique opportunity to share your conservation stories and experiences with legislators and have a huge impact on conservation policies affecting all of Wisconsin. This Conservation Lobby Day, you can help to:

1. **[Defend the Good Conservation Laws Already on the Books.](#)** In these tough fiscal times, legislators are being forced to make difficult decisions. Conservation Lobby Day is your opportunity to remind them that Wisconsin's economy is driven by healthy and plentiful natural resources. For more information on the Governor's budget proposal, visit <http://www.conservationvoters.org/PublicFiles/Custom/Final2011CLDBudgetTalkingPoints.pdf>.
2. **[Re-Establish the Wisconsin Conservation Corps.](#)** The Wisconsin Conservation Corps would provide practical job training to benefit the conservation programs that make Wisconsin a draw to tourists and residents alike.
3. **[Create a "Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights."](#)** The Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights will demonstrate legislative support and guidance for the programs and activities that encourage children and families to play, explore, and learn in Wisconsin's outdoors.

Conservation Lobby Day is free to the public. Attendees will register at 9:00am and should expect to be in downtown Madison until 5:00pm. Attendees are asked to pre-register online. Visit <http://www.conservationvoters.org> to pre-register and find out how to make a donation to the cause.

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

Merger Talks Continue

The ad hoc committee on a potential merger of WALCE and WLWCA continues to hold talks. Two meetings have been held in Stevens Point to discuss the pros and cons of a merged association, and preliminary discussions have begun regarding what a new organization would look like. Documents related to those meetings are available on the WLWCA website. This remains an open process and the ad hoc committee urges anyone who is interested in the process to provide input to their representative, and to observe or dial-in to the meetings. If the merger is to go forward, now is your opportunity to shape your association so that it will best serve you.

The activities of the ad hoc committee and a potential merger sparked lively discussion at the recent 2011 WALCE Professional Improvement Conference. WLWCA President Chuck Wagner was in attendance and addressed the assembled WALCE members about the process to date.

Meetings are scheduled for March 11 and April 5. Check <http://www.wlwca.org> or call WLWCA for details.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director

WLWCA Vice President Tom Rudolph and Treasurer Kay McKenzie attend NACD Annual Meeting

Tom Rudolph and Kay McKenzie joined more than 700 conservation leaders from across the nation in Nashville, Tennessee on January 29-February 2, 2011 for the 65th annual meeting of the National Association Districts (NACD). The meeting centered on the theme "From the Roots Up," and challenged attendees to identify and strengthen their commitments to conservation. Meeting participants networked, took part in workshops, and heard from key partners, agency heads and leaders from the host state.

In addition to NACD leaders, key speakers at the conference included partners from agencies and organizations such as the National Turkey Federation, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Wildlaw, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), US Army Corps of Engineers and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

During the meeting, members elected a new officer team and approved a set of guiding principles for the 2012 Farm Bill. Gene Schmidt of Hanna, Indiana and our North Central Region was officially sworn in as NACD's new president. The new NACD officer team also included Earl Garber, (Louisiana), 1st Vice President; Jack Majeres (South Dakota), 2nd Vice President; and Steve Miller, (Indiana), Secretary/Treasurer.

President Schmidt's priorities in the coming year include a renewed push on conservation awareness. Schmidt said, "As districts, we need to do a better job educating the public about conservation districts and the benefits we provide to local landowners, communities and the nation". He indicated that this education needs to happen at home, in our local communities, and in Washington, DC, especially as we head into the next Farm Bill with lots of new faces in Congress. As part of NACD's educational outreach on Capitol Hill, the board set priorities for legislation, policy and appropriations for the coming year, as well as a set of ten guiding principles for NACD's advocacy efforts in advance of the 2012 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill principles support:

- Resource-driven and locally-led conservation programs
- Full funding for technical assistance needs
- Conservation program funding
- Easily accessible conservation program delivery system
- Education and outreach
- Commitment to working lands
- Sustainable and renewable energy from agriculture and forestry
- The unique complexities of forestry on non-industrial, private forest land
- Development of new approaches to conservation delivery
- New conservation technologies

Rudolph and McKenzie participated in all general sessions and in the many meetings of the NACD Board of Directors which, unfortunately, precluded attending the numerous breakout sessions. They also participated in the meetings of

the District Operations and Membership Committee (Rudolph) and the Natural Resources Policy Committee (McKenzie). Meetings focused on district officials' training, informing counties about what NACD does to bring federal dollars to the counties, and the need for counties in Wisconsin to pay their NACD dues. For example, for each \$1 in dues, more than \$13 is returned to the county in federal dollars.

Rudolph served on the District Operations and Member Services Resolutions Hearing Committee but attended the Natural Resources Policy Resolutions Hearing Committee along with McKenzie where we testified in support of WLWCA's 2010 resolution requesting elimination of the potential for Asian Carp to spread throughout the Great Lakes and surrounding watersheds. With some advance "lobbying" of Hearing Committee members, and much discussion during our testimony, the resolution was slightly amended and then passed unanimously by the committee. The resolution as amended states: " NACD urges the continued effort of the Administration and Congress to take any and all actions necessary to prevent Asian Carp from establishing populations in the Great Lakes. Such actions should not include closure of the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal." We are pleased that this resolution, which was presented by Wisconsin, has now been adopted at the regional and national level.

A very proud moment for Wisconsin at the meeting was when the 2010 NACD Poster Contest winners were announced and it was revealed that Cael Steinmetz of Oneida County was the first place winner in the Grade K-12 level. The theme for the poster contest was "Conservation Habits=Healthy Habitats."

The NACD Annual Meeting equipped us with new resources, fresh ideas, and a renewed commitment and dedication to meeting the natural resource conservation needs in our Wisconsin counties.

~Tom Rudolph, Vice President

2011 Wisconsin Envirothon Coming Up On April 21

The 2011 Wisconsin Envirothon will be held April 21 at Wisconsin Lions Camp in Rosholt. High school teams from all over Wisconsin will test their knowledge of natural resources field studies and give oral presentations regarding the 2011 current issue "Salt and Freshwater Estuaries." Three teams have already registered and the deadline to register is March 22.

This year, in addition to the competition, Trees for Tomorrow has announced a workshop for Envirothon team members April 1-3 in Eagle River. The workshop will be an intense study of the learning objectives covered in the Wisconsin Envirothon Advisor Handbook and is limited to 30 students. Full teams do not have to register for the workshop, individual students may apply. All students must be registered for Wisconsin Envirothon to participate. Contact Joe Panci at Trees for Tomorrow at joe@treesfortomorrow.com or 715-479-6456 x223 to find out how students can register for this great study opportunity.

We are still looking for one more volunteer to judge the oral presentations on our 2011 current issue. The 2011 Wisconsin Envirothon has been made possible, so far, by Conserve School, Plum Creek Marketing, Kikkoman Foods and Midwest Environmental Advocates, with volunteer efforts coming from the Central Wisconsin Resiliency Project, Christine Mechenich, Trees for Tomorrow, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Wisconsin Biocore, University of Wisconsin Freshwater Estuary Initiative, WALCE, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Thank you for your support!

To volunteer as an oral presentation judge or sponsor the event, please visit www.wlwca.org to find out more, and contact Kirsten Moore at kirsten@wlwca.org. We look forward to seeing you in Rosholt!

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

SOC Update

The Standards Oversight Council program has seen some changes in recent weeks. SOC Coordinator Kevin Hogan has left WLWCA leaving that position vacant. In the interim the current work teams are being staffed by others. Chris Schlutt has stepped in to act as coordinator, therefore any inquiries should be directed to her at chrisschlutt@wlwca.org or you can call her at the WLWCA office. A new SOC coordinator will be hired after the Council has re-evaluated the position and written a new position description.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director



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Calendar of Events

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| WLCV Conservation Lobby Day, Madison | Mar 16 |
| WSTC Meeting, Madison | Mar 17 |
| SOC Meeting, Madison | Mar 21 |
| NWLWCA Meeting, Hayward | Mar 25 |
| LWCB Forum, Wausau | Apr 4 |
| WLWCA-WALCE Ad Hoc Committee Meeting, Stevens Point | Apr 5 |
| LWLWCA Meeting, Winnebago County | Apr 15 |
| Wisconsin Envirothon, Rosholt | Apr 21 |
| WLWCA Board Meeting, Stevens Point | Apr 26 |

*For more information, visit www.wlwca.org and click on
"What's Going On?"*

WLWCA Board

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