



# Thursday Note

An Update on Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Issues

Volume 14, Issue 5

Thursday, June 30, 2011

## Great Day for Conservation Observance Day

On June 11 the weather fully cooperated as folks celebrated with John and Dorothy Priske of Fountain Prairie Farms in Columbia County. As the 2010 Conservation Farmer of the Year, Fountain Prairie Farms showcased their organic, pasture-raised Scottish Highland beef cattle and provided tours of their farm. A delicious lunch which focused on local foods was provided. Speakers congratulated the Priskes on their accomplishments and commitment to protecting our natural resources as the audience reveled in the pastures behind them. Speakers included Ben Brancel and Kathy Pielsticker from DATCP, David Williams from UW-Extension, WLWCA's Julian Zelazny, Pat Leavenworth from NRCS, Ed Blume from Renew Wisconsin, Colleene Thomas from Senator Herb Kohl's office, and USDA Rural Development Director Stan Gruzynski. Columbia County LWCD and Fountain Prairie Farms' hard work and planning made for a wonderful and relaxing day for attendees. A special thank you to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection for providing financial assistance which helped make this event possible.

To find out how to enter a farm from your county to become the 2011 Conservation Farmer of the Year, visit [www.wlwca.org/consawards.html](http://www.wlwca.org/consawards.html). The winning county gets their 2012 WLWCA membership dues waived.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator

## WLWCA Update

As the weather turns warm and the corn starts to catch up after a cold spring it's time to report on all that has happened at WLWCA lately. It's been an active and sometimes tumultuous time with plenty of happenings both inside the organization and elsewhere. Even as county budgets are straining and the budget future looks uncertain, WLWCA is maintaining strong member participation. Currently 66 counties are paid members of WLWCA. That is down one from last year's 67, but considering the economic times, I believe that it is an indication that members still see the value of having WLWCA provide services, run programs and represent county conservation in Madison. We're very grateful for members' support and we will continue to work hard to justify your faith in us. Naturally, membership dues are an important part of the WLWCA annual budget, and I'm pleased to say that it looks like we will have a balanced budget in 2011. Another important revenue source is our annual conference and meeting. We will be returning to the Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells this December. This year's conference promises to be a very interesting one with the possibility that a vote will be needed on the proposed merger of WLWCA and WALCE. More information on the conference and proposed merger are in this issue.

For the sake of county budgeting, our dues notices for 2012 will be going out soon, possibly by the time you get this issue of the *Thursday Note*. Since there has been no dues increase your dues will not be much different than what it was in 2011. Thank you, again, for your support. Please contact me at the WLWCA office or [julian@wlwca.org](mailto:julian@wlwca.org) if you have any questions, comments or suggestions.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director

## 2011 WLWCA Annual Conference Planning Underway, Seeking Volunteers

The WLWCA staff is currently seeking volunteers for the 2011 WLWCA Annual Conference. Volunteers for the planning committee and other roles available during the conference are eligible to receive discounted registration to the December 8-9 event at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. An electronic copy of the volunteer application was sent to the LCD and WALCE list serves last week, again with this week's Email edition of *Thursday Note*, and hard copies were mailed to US Mail *Thursday Note* subscribers. You will also be able to find the form at [www.wlwca.org](http://www.wlwca.org) in the near future.

Volunteer positions are limited, so please sign up today! If you are interested in signing up for the planning committee, conference call meetings will be beginning very soon. Contact [Kirsten@wlwca.org](mailto:Kirsten@wlwca.org) to let WLWCA know your meeting availability right away!

Registration for the 2011 WLWCA Annual Conference will begin in September. We look forward to seeing you December 8-9 in Wisconsin Dells!

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

### **WLWCA-WALCE Potential Merger Update**

The WLWCA-WALCE Ad-Hoc Merger Committee presented their recommendations to the WALCE and WLWCA Boards of Directors earlier this spring and received a thumbs up to continue deliberations on merging the two associations. Since then, the committee has been involved in a number of outreach efforts to gather member input on the proposed merger. This includes speaking at Area Association meetings and conducting three WALCE webinars on the subject. Feedback has been supportive of the merger, with members offering specific comments along the way that have proven very helpful. Keep them coming folks! In June, the committee reviewed the first draft of merged bylaws, based on earlier recommendations. They plan to finish drafting a set of bylaws and meet with both Boards of Directors at the same time in August, if schedules allow. After both Boards have approved a draft set of bylaws, another round of outreach efforts will be conducted this fall, hopefully in time for fall Area Association meetings.

Minutes of Merger Committee meetings and other materials may be viewed on [www.wlwca.org](http://www.wlwca.org). Any questions or comments should be sent to the Ad-hoc Committee Co-Chairs, or other members of the Merger Committee. A call-in number is also available for each meeting, which is listed on the notices sent to every county LCD office. Stay tuned for future updates.

~Perry Lindquist & Charles Wagner, WLWCA-WALCE Ad Hoc Merger Committee Co-Chairs

### **Legislative Update**

Governor Walker signed the state budget into law last Sunday in Green Bay after one of the most contested and controversial budget processes in the history of Wisconsin, making national and international headlines. When the dust settled, we found that county conservation suffered some losses and enjoyed some modest gains, but we were spared the dramatic changes that occurred in other parts of the budget.

The statewide staffing allocation grant suffered a loss of approximately 5%. This was because the General Purpose Revenue (GPR) expenditures in the budget were cut by 10% across the board. Since our staffing allocation grant is about half GPR, we saw a 5% reduction in that grant. Working with our lobbyist, we attempted to get the legislature to change that cut to a lapse. In doing so the cut would not be permanent, and it could be returned in subsequent budgets if revenues were to rebound. Unfortunately we were unable to find a sponsor in the majority party willing to champion our cause for us and we were not successful. Increases to the state staffing allocation grant remain a good target for our lobbying efforts in future budgets.

One of the proposed changes in the budget bill took everyone by surprise. The Joint Committee on Finance passed a measure that would repeal all of NR 151, the state's nonpoint pollution control rules. This surprise decision got the attention of all our partners and it was not long before we mobilized a group of conservation and environmental interests, along with farm groups, and heavily petitioned the Finance Committee, Assembly Agriculture Committee and others to change that decision. In this case we were successful in getting a change, and while the agriculture-related portions of NR 151 were left intact, some of the urban provisions were repealed. The requirement for municipalities to control total suspended solids was the target of this effort because municipalities were facing very costly control technology installation.

The Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements program (PACE), part of the Working Lands Initiative that was passed late in the Doyle administration, was altered but not eliminated. The governor's original proposal was to repeal it, but a coalition of groups worked to save the program. While PACE remains on the books, the only funding that was saved was for those contracts that had already been approved (including a contract for our Conservation Farmer of the Year recipients). Further complicating PACE's future was the provision that passed eliminating the conversion fee for landowners who leave the Farmland Preservation Program. Under the Working Land Initiative those conversion fees were intended to fund PACE.

Now that the budget process has finished the legislature will turn its attention to policy legislation. We will be following that carefully and will alert our membership when we need to take action in support of or opposition to new legislation.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director

**Four More Weeks Until Middleton High School Heads to New Brunswick for Canon Envirothon!**

Middleton High School will represent Wisconsin July 24-29 at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. The team will apply the field knowledge they learned preparing for Wisconsin Envirothon to another region's environmental circumstances and continue to broaden their understanding of salt and fresh water estuary issues. Scholarships and Canon products are awarded to the top 15 teams. We look forward to their week in Sackville!

Special thanks to our supporters: Conserve School, Canon USA, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, UW Extension, Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, UW-Madison Biocore, Plum Creek Marketing and more. A complete list of 2011 sponsors can be found at [www.wlwca.org/envirothon.html](http://www.wlwca.org/envirothon.html)

Wisconsin Envirothon is a member program of Canon Envirothon: North America's largest high school environmental education competition. Find out about Middleton High School's trip to New Brunswick on [Wisconsin Envirothon's](#) Facebook page and on [Canon Envirothon's](#) Facebook page. Find details about Wisconsin Envirothon and how to start a team at the new [www.envirothonwi.org](http://www.envirothonwi.org). Stay tuned for developments and details on the 2012 event focusing on nonpoint source pollution and low impact development. If you are interested in serving on a committee to plan the 2012 event, volunteer, or if you wish to be kept in the loop regarding new ideas for the program, contact [kirsten@wlwca.org](mailto:kirsten@wlwca.org) or sign up for our Envirothon list serve at [www.envirothonwi.org](http://www.envirothonwi.org).

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

**Conservation Camp**

The WLWCA Conservation Camp in Rusk County was held last week amidst rain and wind. But while the weather was difficult, it did not succeed in dampening the spirits of the campers. Rusk County Conservationist Paula Carow kept her campers happy with well structured activities and instruction. The seventeen attendees, all high school aged, participated in many activities including canoe trips, a voyageur re-enactment, building bat houses and even racing ticks. Thank you to all the county staff people who gave their time to help our young people learn in a very fun environment.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director

**Standards Oversight Council Updates**

The draft NRCS standard 313, Waste Storage Facility, is now available for broad review. Public comments concerning proposed changes to the technical design criteria for manure storage structures are being accepted until June 30. We encourage engineers, designers, regulators, farmers and others familiar with the design, construction and operation of manure storage facilities to read the draft and submit comments. After public comments are considered by the SOC Team, NRCS will finalize the standard. To obtain a copy of the draft 313 standard, a summary of the proposed changes to the standard, and to submit review comments, contact Mike Murray, DATCP 608-288-8753 or [michael.murray@wi.gov](mailto:michael.murray@wi.gov).

A revised draft NRCS 629 was distributed on June 3 for initial review, to get feedback from a limited number of agency conservation staff and private consultants (selected by the NRCS 629 team). The initial review is intended to determine if the revisions proposed by the team thus far are generally acceptable and catch any inconsistencies or fatal flaws the team may have overlooked. Initial review comments are to be submitted to Mary King by June 24. The team was charged with determining whether the VTA sizing under the current NRCS 629 is appropriate and developing alternate criteria to provide a greater level of environmental protection (where desired or legally required), including zero discharge to navigable water required for livestock operations subject to a CAFO permit. The most significant change proposed is to route the more dilute runoff around the vegetated treatment area (VTA). This would reduce the needed VTA size, and the team believes it will improve VTA performance because it will prevent inundation of the VTA. The revised draft also more closely specifies how much the VTA size may be reduced based on first flush collected, eliminating the broad range of acceptable VTA size reduction specified in the current NRCS 629.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator



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## Calendar of Events

<b>CNMP Training Course, Hancock</b>	<b>Jul 12</b>
<b>NACD Legislative Conference, Washington DC</b>	<b>Jul 17-19</b>
<b>SOC Meeting, Madison</b>	<b>Jul 21</b>
<b>Canon Envirothon, Sackville, NB, Canada</b>	<b>Jul 24-29</b>
<b>LWLWCA Summer Tour, Chilton</b>	<b>Jul 29</b>
<b>SAA Summer Tour, Beloit</b>	<b>Aug 3</b>
<b>CNMP/SNAP Plus/Phosphorus Training, Athens &amp; Juneau</b>	<b>Aug 11-17</b>
<b>NCLWCA Summer Tour, Stevens Point</b>	<b>Aug 12</b>
<b>WCLWCA Meeting, Menomonie</b>	<b>Aug 25</b>

*For more information, visit [www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html](http://www.wlwca.org/eventscalendar.html)*

### WLWCA Board

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Conserve by Subscribing to *Thursday Note* on line! Email [kirsten@wlwca.org](mailto:kirsten@wlwca.org) for details.