



Thursday Note

An Update on Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Issues

Volume 12, Issue 4

Thursday, July 2, 2009

Success on the State Budget

The budget battle is over and our two budget priorities prevailed. On June 29, Governor Doyle signed the 2009-2011 budget with the county staffing grant and the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) intact. WLWCA and WALCE have teamed up with the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters (WLCV) and a substantial number of allied organizations to speak with one voice, as a conservation community, in favor of a few joint budget priorities including the county staffing allocation.

WALCE president Kurt Calkins and I convinced our conservation partners that the most effective way to protect surface water from polluted runoff is through continued funding of the county land and water conservation departments. Since a new funding source in the current economy is unlikely, WALCE and WLWCA recommended a transfer of funding from the nutrient management planning cost share account into the staffing allocation grant. This one-time transfer would save the staffing grant while reducing the nutrient management planning cost share to about \$5 million - more than enough to keep staff working on conservation when combined with other conservation funds from state and federal government. Once the "stop polluted runoff" issue became a WLCV budget priority, we gained thousands of additional voices in our advocacy effort. When the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) toured the state, the people came out in force supporting funding for county staff. Thanks to public support, the JFC amended the budget in the manner that we suggested. Senator Julie Lassa was instrumental in encouraging colleagues to vote in favor of the motion and deserves our thanks. Alas, a final motion in JFC made another big cut in the budget that included another significant reduction in the staffing allocation grant.

The budget moved to the assembly, where new efforts were made to back fill the cuts with nutrient management planning funds. Again, with the help of our conservation colleagues and rapid response from the county conservation interests, an amendment was passed to correct that cut. Rep. Hilgenberg, with vital input from Reps. Mason and Dexter, authored the amendment and they should be commended for their vision.

The senate decided to start with the JFC version, rather than the assembly version, and so the cut to the staffing grant was still intact. We discussed our concerns with senate leadership, and they assured us that the final budget bill will not include the cuts to the staffing allocation grant. When the Senate and Assembly versions of the same bill are not exactly the same, the legislature convenes a "committee of conference" with representatives from both chambers. During the negotiations in the committee of conference the assembly portion of the budget related to the staffing allocation grant was included. Thanks to the rapid response from the counties, Governor Doyle signed the budget into law with the staffing grant allocation intact.

The governor's original budget also included language disbanding the LWCB and replacing it with a council. The council would have had advisory-only authority, would have been made up of agency heads and governor's appointees, and would have had only one county representative (not necessarily from a conservation background). As this issue had virtually no fiscal impact, we did not attempt to get WLCV priority status for this issue, but the lack of fiscal impact made it easier to pass in the legislature. Again, representatives from the counties spoke in favor of keeping the LWCB at the public hearings, and the JFC heard our voices. In the end, the governor signed a budget that retains the LWCB and requires them to work with DATCP and DNR to determine new responsibilities and authorities for the LWCB to deliver to the legislature in January.

Our twin victories in the budget were made possible by many people who made their voices heard. We were also aided by the efforts of our lobbyists at Cullen, Weston, Pines & Bach. Noah Seligman and Curt Pawlisch kept tabs on the entire process and made key lobbying visits at the appropriate times. This was teamwork at its very best. It took a tremendous amount of work and in the end, we saved a valuable forum for public input on land and water issues, and we saved each county tens of thousands of dollars. We should all be proud.

~Julian Zelazny, Executive Director

WLWCA Conservation Camp in Rusk County Soars to Record Attendance

Rusk County Conservationist Paula Carow hosted the annual WLWCA Conservation Camp for eighth-twelfth graders June 16-19 at Trails End Camp in Bruce, WI. A record 44 campers attended this year's camp to learn how to compare water quality between undeveloped and developed lakes, before and after trout stream restoration, and on the Chippewa River. Campers made these comparisons in hands on activities including canoeing, collecting and comparing aquatic creatures in various water bodies, taking scientific measurements of clarity, pH, DO and other parameters, building barriers to create deeper trout habitats, and more.

WLWCA Conservation Camp is made possible by the cooperative efforts of a variety of counties and organizations. Volunteers hail from Barron, Bayfield, Clark, Crawford, Iron, Price, Rusk, Taylor and Vilas County LCDs and WLWCA. Most sessions are taught by LCD staff; however, campers also enjoyed listening to guest experts from the DNR, USDA, University of Minnesota-Duluth, and the Rusk County Historical Society. Scholarships were awarded to 35 campers from Bayfield, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Jackson, Oneida, Sauk, Vilas, Washburn, and Waupaca County Land Conservation Committees and Departments; Rusk County Wildlife Restoration Association; Pepin Sportsmen's Club; Whitetails Unlimited; Durand Sportsmen Club; and Arkansas Sports Club.

What are campers saying about Conservation Camp? Jaromir Zelazny really enjoyed his time at camp. "My favorite part was when we shot a bow and arrow, threw a spear, and tossed a tomahawk. I also enjoyed canoeing down the river, and when we got to see a bear. Every day was fun, and we all got to cool down with games and a campfire. Mornings were a little tough getting up around 7:00am, but I was nicely surprised because we got time to eat and get ready for a new day of adventure. The kids were friendly, and with saying that, I made some new friends. I felt I learned a lot from camp, and I hope to return next year."

Help grow Wisconsin's next generation of conservation stewards by volunteering or sending campers to Rusk County! The 2010 WLWCA Conservation Camp will be held June 15-18. Visit our Web site at www.wlwca.org to view pictures from this year's camp, or for future updates regarding the 2010 camp. Find out how you can get involved by contacting Paula Carow at 715-532-2162.

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

Looking for a Way to Unload Your County, Agency or Organization's Swag? Donate to Wisconsin Envirothon!

Do you have old promotional items taking up space in your office? Did you order too many pens and pencils, or perhaps too many decks of cards, t-shirts, tote bags or hats with your logo? WLWCA will take those items off your hands! The Canon Envirothon hosts a trading session for the teams competing at the North American environmental competition. High school students from over 55 states and provinces trade all sorts of conservation and environmental promotional items to tout their state's conservation efforts and network with future conservation-minded colleagues and cohorts. This is not only a great opportunity for you to use your outdated promo items to advertise nationwide, but also a great opportunity to show your support for Middleton High School's efforts at the Canon Envirothon August 2-8 in Ashville, North Carolina. Please ship your items to the WLWCA office by July 17 to be used this year, and remember: Canon Envirothon hosts a trading session every year, and so WLWCA will always find a home for your swag.

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

Seeking Items for the 2009 WLWCA Youth Education Raffle

WLWCA is currently seeking items for the 2009 WLWCA Youth Education Raffle. The annual State Conservation Awareness Poster and Speaking Contest is funded in full by your supporting the annual silent auction, live auction, and raffle. Raffle items are typically valued at \$200 or more. Previous raffle items included an Aussie stainless steel gas grill, Milwaukee cordless tools, a custom fishing rod by Gregg Stangl, and a weekend in Madison on the capitol square.

Do you know a vendor who might donate a high value raffle item? We need your help! Please share your youth education raffle ideas by contacting Kirsten at the WLWCA office or by Emailing kirsten@wlwca.org. The State Conservation Awareness Poster and Speaking Contest deserves your support, and WLWCA appreciates your efforts!

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager

Conservation Celebration in Douglas County

A beautiful sunny day was the backdrop for Conservation Observance Day on Friday, June 26. County conservationist Christine Ostern welcomed the crowd to Mark and Cora Liebaert's grazing farm, and on cue the Black Angus cattle came

down to greet the crowd. Speakers congratulating the 2008 Conservation Farmers of the Year included Julian Zelazny, NRCS State Conservationist Pat Leavenworth, Farmers Union President Sue Beitlich, representative Nick Milroy, DATCP Deputy Secretary Randy Romanski, and representatives from Governor Doyle's, Senator Kohl's and Senator Feingold's offices. Jennifer Liebaert shared the story of the farm's history, and LCC chair Kay McKenzie unveiled a driveway sign as a gift from the county. The Liebaert farm was then honored as a Century Farm. A lunch made from local ingredients was a treat for all. Along with many exhibits to view, guests were able to take a hay wagon tour of the farm and hear from a grazing specialist. To learn how you can nominate a deserving farm for the 2009 Conservation Farmer of the Year award and have your county's 2010 dues waived, visit our Web site under WLWCA programs or contact Chris at the office or by Emailing chrisschlutt@wlwca.org.

~Chris Schlutt, Program Coordinator

Glacierland Resource Conservation & Development Hosts Renewable Energy Demonstration July 31

Glacierland RC&D invites the public to their full council meeting in Eden, demonstrating gasification, an innovative form of renewable energy utilizing many forms of biomass (such as wood, industrial waste, ag waste, municipal and solid waste, landfill materials, etc.) as its feedstock. The meeting includes a tour of a gasification plant and features Robert Dvorak, founder and president of the leading developer of this technology: Fuel of Makers, LLC. Anyone interested in gasification is encouraged to attend on July 31 from 9:30 a.m. to noon (lunch included). Preregistration is required, and the deadline is Monday, July 27. Contact the Glacierland RC&D at 920-465-3006 or Email office@glacierlandrcd.org to register or find out more. Visit the WLWCA Web site www.wlwca.org to view the brochure.

~Greg Hines, Coordinator, Glacierland RC&D

SOC Update

In early June, SOC solicited comments on proposed revisions to the 1004 Bioretention for Infiltration technical standard. The standard originally was finalized in 2004 by a SOC work team for the DNR. The proposed revisions pertain to the standard's criteria for the engineered soil mixture. Current language in the technical standard allows use of a mixture of 40% sand, 30%-40% compost, and 20%-30% topsoil. However, field evidence of bioretention device failures indicates this engineered soil mixture may be the cause of improper infiltration rates in some failure cases. As a result, DNR proposed to revise the composition criteria for the engineered soil mixture to 50% sand and 50% compost. In response, SOC received 12 sets of comments on the proposed changes. Currently, DNR staff are reviewing the comments and will be working with SOC to address the comments and finalize the changes to the standard.

Also, SOC has been working with the Wis. Dept. of Commerce to finalize a new technical standard on the installation of erosion control products used for perimeter control and slope interruption. These products are designed to detain the flow of sediment-laden sheet flow runoff from small areas of disturbed soil. The draft standard was prepared by an informal work team within Commerce and reviewed by SOC. A new SOC process, described in an upcoming revised edition of the SOC Technical Standards Process Handbook, is being employed to help streamline standard development. In mid-June, SOC solicited comments on the draft standard from stormwater experts and conservation professionals. SOC and members of Commerce's work team will review all comments received and decide how to proceed with finalizing the draft standard.

In other news, the finalized Milking Center Wastewater Treatment companion document will soon be posted on the Wisconsin NRCS website, and a limited number of hard copies will be printed for distribution later this summer.

~Kevin Hogan, SOC Coordinator

Changes to Bulk Mailing Services Affect *Thursday Note* Costs

As of April 6, 2009, the United States Postal Service made changes to bulk mailing services that affect the way *Thursday Note* is distributed. Whenever WLWCA mails the *Thursday Note* to an undeliverable address, charges will be applied. The longer the address is out of date, the more expensive the charges become. WLWCA is a nonprofit organization, and *Thursday Note* is provided to subscribers at no cost to you. You can keep the cost of publishing down by notifying us of address changes ahead of time or by subscribing to Thursday Note on line only (free for you and free for WLWCA). Please notify us of changes to your address or your subscription status by contacting Kirsten at the WLWCA office or by Emailing kirsten@wlwca.org. Thank you for keeping up with Wisconsin's land and water conservation issues! We appreciate your support!

~Kirsten Moore, Office Manager



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Calendar of Events

UWEX Soil Quality Professional In-service, Marshfield	July 7-8
WLWCA Conference Planning Committee Mtg., Sparta	July 8
WI SARE Managed Grazing Training, Wausau	July 14-15
WALCE Board Meeting, Stevens Point	July 15
UWEX Intro to Organic Systems Training, Seymour	July 15
WSTC Meeting, Madison	July 16
LMLWCA Summer Tour, Sheboygan	July 17
NACD Board Meeting & Legislative Conf., Washington DC	July 18-22
LWLWCA Summer Tour, Westfield	July 31
Canon Envirothon, Asheville, NC	Aug 2-8
LWCB Meeting, Madison	Aug 4
NRCS Conservation Activity Plan Training, Wausau	Aug 6
UWEX Crop Diagnostic Troubleshooting, Arlington	Aug 18
WLWCA BOD Conference Call	Aug 24
UWEX Agronomy/Soils Field Day, Arlington	Aug 27
NWLWCA Meeting, Hayward	Aug 28
UWEX Crop & Pest Management Training, Arlington	Aug 28

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

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