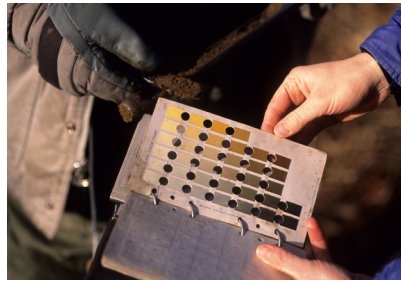




Land Conservation Committee Handbook

2022-2024



wisconsinlandwater.org



Welcome to Locally Led Conservation!

Under Wisconsin's system of county government, some of you find yourselves appointed to the Land Conservation Committee (LCC) or its statutory equivalent. Whatever your committee is called, the functions of the LCC 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 and policies to address those needs. Supported by your contributions, Wisconsin will continue to be recognized as a leader in protecting its environment.

It is also important for LCC members to be knowledgeable about the work and workings of the Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD). 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 member by the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water). We hope that you will find it useful in the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Best wishes for a successful and satisfying term,

Matt Krueger
WI Land+Water Executive Director



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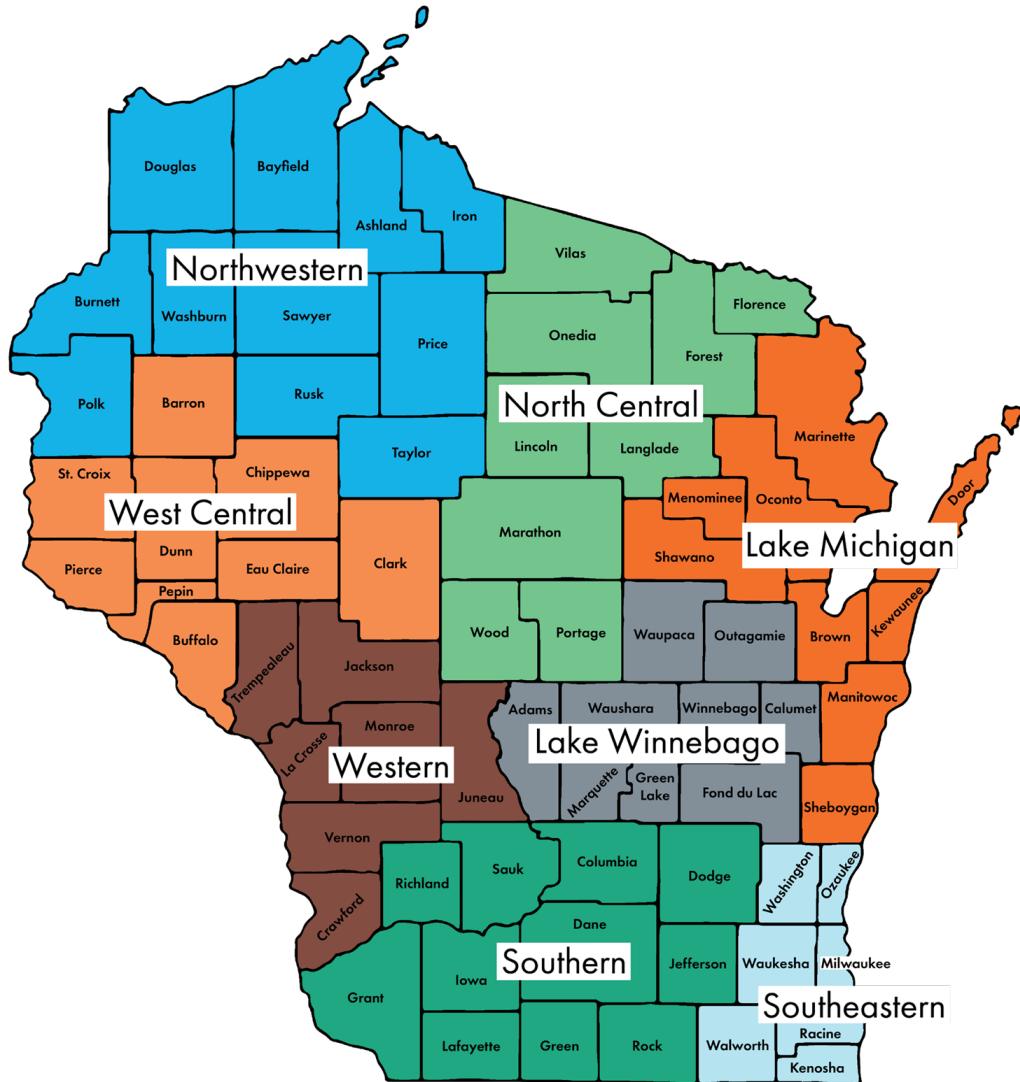
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WI Land+Water Area Associations

WI Land+Water’s eight area associations organize and streamline the common interests of county LCCs and LWCDs for each region. Area associations meet several times each year to conduct business of interest to counties within the area, to share experiences, to coordinate with agency and nonprofit partners, and to discuss emerging natural resource issues, solutions, and policy. Each area association elects two representatives to the WI Land+Water Board of Directors.



Area Coordinators

Lake Michigan

Ken Dolata, Oconto Co.

Lake Winnebago

Chad Casper & Mary Koch, Winnebago Co.

North Central

Steve Kircher, Forest Co.

Northwestern

Heather Palmquist, Iron Co.

Southeastern

Stephanie Egner, Washington Co.

Southern

Todd Jenson, Green Co.

West Central

Rod Webb, Pierce Co.

Western

Gaylord Olson II, Jackson Co.

2020-2022 Board of Directors

Please note: 2022-24 board will be elected
summer 2022

Lake Michigan

Ken Dolata, Oconto Co.
Ken Fisher, Door Co.

Lake Winnebago

Brian Haase, Waupaca Co.
Mike Hofberger, Calumet Co.

North Central

Carolyn Scholl, Vilas Co., *Secretary*
Bob Mott, Oneida Co.

Northwestern

Ben Dufford, Bayfield Co.
Craig Conroy, Burnett Co.

Southeastern

Alan Barrows, Waukesha Co., *Treasurer*
Monte Osterman, Racine Co., *Chair*

Southern

Amy Piaget, Dane Co.
Melissa Luck, Richland Co.

West Central

Chase Cummings, Dunn Co.
Russell Rindsig, Barron Co.

Western

Bob Micheel, Monroe Co., *President*
Tom Clark, Jackson Co.



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Land and Water Conservation in Wisconsin

What We Do Matters

In Wisconsin, locally led conservation is key to healthy soils, resilient farms, clean water, and vibrant communities. Conserving and maintaining Wisconsin'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. County Land Conservation Committees (LCCs) and Land and Water Conservation Departments (LWCDs) help landowners and users meet their objectives while protecting our common economic and environmental infrastructure — land and water resources.

Who is WI Land+Water?

Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is a membership organization that supports the efforts of around 450 LCC members and 370 conservation staff in 72 county LWCD offices through training, conservation standards development, youth education, grants, partnership building, and advocacy.

In 2012, WI Land+Water merged its LCC membership with the LWCD staff organization, the Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees (WALCE). The merged organization retained the formal name Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, abbreviated as WI Land+Water. It is a unique association nationally.

Land Conservation - Wisconsin's Proud Heritage

Government and farmers came together in the 1930s to address the unprecedented soil

erosion of the Dust Bowl era through direct local assistance for conservation. 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). Shortly thereafter, 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 state Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) to help direct state efforts to combat soil erosion. By 1953, Soil Conservation Districts (a precursor to County LWCDs) were formed in every county in Wisconsin, and a statewide association was formed (currently known as 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 were implemented by counties. But the conservation district model, led by the USDA, 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, via statute, the LCC structure in every county. LCCs were authorized to implement important state-supported conservation programs through county LWCDs. These programs included the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP's) 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 LWCDs 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 Nonpoint Program Reorganization

From 1997-2001, a redrafting state nonpoint program rules took place, resulting in a renewed focus on program implementation at the county level through county Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plans (see page 10). 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 LWCD staff is now about 15 percent less than it was in 1997.

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 higher now 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.

Global demands for more food, feed, fiber, and fuel are putting pressure on Wisconsin's land and water. Many highly erodible acres of agricultural land formerly 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, as well. Even our changing climate is tied to global influences.

Acting as trusted technical advisors to farmers and landowners, LWCD are asked for help with an increasing number of resource concerns. These concerns range from: agricultural runoff and stormwater runoff (from both urban and suburban areas) that pollute lakes and streams; catastrophic flooding events that threaten communities and private property; private well contamination that puts at risk clean drinking water supply; terrestrial and aquatic invasive species that threaten agriculture and recreation. These natural resource challenges are further compounded by extreme temperature and precipitation events in Wisconsin associated with climate change.



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 necessary support to implement them. A willingness to address resource concerns, combined with adequate funding and staffing resources are key to achieving resource goals. Though we made gains in funding in the last biennial budget, the state commitment to local staffing remains \$2 million short of 1997 levels. This state support for conservation is critical, especially in 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:

- Whether supporting producer-led watershed groups, assisting waterfront property owners, helping farmers develop nutrient management plans, or responding to natural disasters like floods, LWCDs are relied upon to meet the needs of their local communities.
- The return on investment for county conservation departments is high—not only do they provide valuable, cost-effective services for their local communities, but they also multiply the impact of state funding several times over, by leveraging federal and private grant dollars. This puts more conservation on the land, and brings dollars into local economies at the same time.

- Farmers and landowners who work with LWCDs have very low rates of severe runoff or other environmental problems. When runoff problems exist, farmers and landowners who work with LWCDs can fix the problem quickly.
- As the average dairy farm size increases in Wisconsin, some farms rely upon the financial and technical assistance of LWCDs to handle increased manure production in an environmentally appropriate way.
- Through partnerships with DATCP, DNR, NRCS, UW-Madison Division of 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.
- LWCDs are uniquely positioned to help implement state programs such as farmland preservation, conservation reserve enhancement, and phosphorus compliance programs, all of which require significant cooperation with the agricultural community, and in some cases, municipalities.
- No other single entity 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.



Land Conservation Committees and Land and Water Conservation Departments

What is a Land Conservation Committee?

Land Conservation Committees (LCCs) were created through Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, which 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 LCC?

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.

**A 2021 FSA determination stated that Chapter 92 cannot be enforced on USDA employees, including FSA county committee members, and that FSA county committee member participation in their local LCC is voluntary and must be done as a citizen/producer.*

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 LCC?

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.

What is a Land Conservation Department?

The Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) is made up of employees of the county. According to a key provision in Wis. Stats. Chapter 92.09, LWCD staff may exercise the powers granted to the LCC and serve as the vehicle by which LCC policies are carried out. Therefore, the LWCD serves as its committee's right arm. Most LCCs have a direct role in hiring LWCD 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 LWCDs?

LCCs are statutorily responsible for conserving local soil, water, and related natural resources. The LWCDs provide the assistance to the committee that helps them meet this responsibility. In this way, the county LCC and LWCD function together with a common purpose of conserving the county's natural resources — and this relationship is of critical importance. The LCC is often responsible for a particular project or task but they generally rely on LWCD 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 LWCD will generally prepare the needed materials, while the LCC approves the grant application. See Table 1 (next page) for examples of the division of responsibilities found in most counties.

Each county in the state is required to have a Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan approved by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). LWRM Plans are approved for ten years, with a review by the state 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 datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/LWCPlanning.aspx

It is often the case that LCCs influence, contribute to, and support the LWCDs' 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 LWCD. The LWCD carries out LCC policy on a daily basis. Although the LWCD 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.

Don't take it from us, though...

There is no teacher like experience, and WI Land+Water's 800 members have an abundance of it. Below is shared wisdom about strategies for being an effective LCC member, collectively shared by our members at past trainings and events specifically with new LCC members in mind.

Engage with LWCD staff

- "Talk to your staff – you cannot only come to meetings once a month and expect to be effective. You need to talk to people ahead of time to better understand."
- "Spend time with staff to understand their day-to-day operations (consider going out in the field with them), but recognize that your presence may cause some staff to be intimidated. Respect professional boundaries, but also get to know their strengths and things they are interested in."
- "Stop in to visit staff ahead of LCC meetings. Get to know their names."
- "Trust your staff."
- "Be a champion for your LWCD."

Do Your Homework

- "Understand your role: LCCs have policy-setting and fiscal responsibility; LWCDs have operational responsibility, and are the professional implementers of programs. Chapter 92 spells this out, and is essential reading for an LCC member."
- "Know your LWCD's programs and Land and Water Resource Management Plan. (If you have done your homework and still don't know, ask! –it's your job to know these things!)"
- "Understand your county's governance structure (executive, administrator, administrative coordinator) and related implications on decision-making authority/chain of command, channels of communication, rules of engagement."
- "Know your limitations: statutory, budgetary, and personal capacity (1-2 committees is a sizable commitment)."

Build Relationships

- "Get to know your fellow LCC members. Attend other committee meetings, if possible. Be the LCC's 'ambassador' to other committees, connecting the 'silos' that exist across different county departments and committees."

- “Listen to understand, not to reply.”
- “Have an open mind, and recognize that even if you have come on the LCC with a clear position on a particular issue, it may not be as simple as you think.”

Engage with WI Land+Water!

- “Attend the Annual Conference in March.”
- “Attend area association meetings.”
- “Participate on committees.”
- “Attend area association summer tours.”

Table 1: Examples of Division of Responsibilities

Land Conservation Committee (LCC)	Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD)
Sets policy and program goals	Administers the LCC policy and programs
Provides leadership	Advises and informs the LCC
Approves the LWCD budget	Prepares the LWCD budget
Approves the LWCD work plans	Prepares the work plans
Supports the LWCD	Provides technical assistance and distributes cost-sharing to landowners
Advises the county board	Administers grants and regulations



Roles & Responsibilities of Land Conservation Committees

LCCs and Chapter 92

Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin Statutes 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: 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 LWCDs, 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 LCCs. 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 LWCD 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).

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. This resulted in the opportunity for more effective coordination of county efforts to manage natural resources and to provide greater financial support for these local 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 LWCDs work closely with state and federal governmental as well as non-governmental agencies and organizations to carry out conservation programs at the county level.

At the local level, many LCCs have a close and productive relationship with other natural resource-related departments of county government, such as planning, zoning, sanitation, forestry, and parks and recreation. About half of LCCs are merged with another department beyond the LWCD. Many LCCs work closely with local municipalities (such as cities, towns, and villages) on conservation efforts.

Through these partnerships, LCCs and LWCDs 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, either independently or cooperating regionally, can model innovative local approaches to conservation issues, which could wield influence on a broader statewide or even national scale.

1. Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association



The Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit membership organization representing the state's county LCCs and LWCDs. The organization has been in existence since 1953 in various forms. Most recently, in 2012, the organization merged the state organizations of Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees and Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (at that time, the organization representing land conservation committee members) to form the organization we now know as WI Land+Water. This merger reflects the close working relationship of LCC members and LWCD staff and their common needs for representation.

WI Land+Water is divided into eight area associations consisting of member LCCs and LWCDs (see page 4). Area associations meet several times each year to conduct business of interest to counties within the area, to share experiences, to coordinate with agency and nonprofit partners, and to discuss emerging natural resource issues, solutions, and policy. WI Land+Water is governed by a Board of Directors made up of one LCC and one LWCD representative elected from each area association. WI Land+Water is funded mainly through governmental and private grants and county membership dues.

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 inform LCCs and LWCDs 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 also oversees the Association's finances and its Executive Director, and reports about its activities at each Board meeting. The Executive Committee is comprised of six officers: three LCC members, and three LWCD staff.
- The Legislative/Administrative Committee reviews and takes 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 LWCD 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 mission is to increase WI Land+Water capacity and public support for county land and water conservation efforts.
- The Professional Improvement Committee (PIC) is charged with developing and implementing an annual conference. This includes selecting the site, developing agendas (with as assistance from the Technical Committee), and other activities associated with carrying out a successful conference. The PIC also coordinates a Member Training 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. Additionally, the PIC promotes and judges the WI Land+Water Conservation Awards. Award winners are recognized at WI Land+Water's annual conference.
- The Technical Committee is charged with addressing issues relating to technical aspects of land conservation including, but not

limited to: conservation planning, inventory and evaluation tools; technical certification; and conservation practice and design implementation support. The committee may also serve to coordinate county review on draft technical standards or other technical guidance documents produced by partner agencies.

- 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 the committee works to ensure that future generations continue to care for the beautiful state of Wisconsin. The committee works to promote, coordinate, and increase conservation awareness through WI Land+Water's youth programs.
- The Great Lakes Committee was formerly a stand-alone organization known as the Great Lakes Nonpoint 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 LWCD 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 works to support, promote, and develop WI Land+Water and county land and water programming to protect, conserve, and enhance resources in the Mississippi River Basin.

All committees welcome and encourage new LCC and LWCD members to consider joining.

Annual Conference and Business Meeting

WI Land+Water's Annual Conference and business meeting is held in early to mid-March and provides information and training on current conservation issues, as well as networking opportunities. The annual business meeting is held on the last day of the conference. During this meeting important topics (such as the annual budget) are discussed, and periodically bylaws amendments are voted on. 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

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 DATCP, DNR, NRCS, UW-Madison Division of Extension, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), and WI Land+Water. SOC activities are funded by grants from NRCS, DATCP and DNR, and by voluntary annual dues from counties, with all funds administered by WI Land+Water, which hosts the SOC Program Manager position. The SOC process relies on contributions of staff time, expertise, and non-monetary resources from federal or state agency technicians, UW-Madison Division of Extension or other university researchers, and private sector industry professionals. 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 SOC website (socwisconsin.org/standards-in-development) contains information on work in-progress and the work plan listing specific practice standards scheduled for update in the near future.

For more information, visit socwisconsin.org

The State Interagency Training Committee

The State Interagency Training Committee (SITCOM) consists of representatives from WI Land+Water, Area Interagency Training Committees (AITCOMs), DATCP, DNR, Professional

Improvement Committee, Technical Committee, UW-Madison College of Ag and Life Sciences, UW-Madison Division of Extension, NRCS, and a member at large-engineering practitioner. SITCOM's mission is to maintain and strengthen a statewide team of well-trained conservation professionals that carry on Wisconsin's rich history of conserving soil and water resources through a coordinated and efficient partnership. WI Land+Water staff coordinate SITCOM meetings and help implement its directives.

Youth Education Program

The Youth Education Committee currently focuses on the following programs:

- The Conservation Awareness Poster 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 WI Land+Water's annual conference. The first place posters from the state competition represent Wisconsin at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting.
- The Conservation Speaking Contest is open to 5th-6th grades (Elementary Division), 7th-8th grades (Junior Division), and 9th-12th grades (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 WI Land+Water's annual conference. The first place winners in each category share their speeches at the opening conference luncheon.
- Wisconsin's 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 NCF-Envirothon to compete for scholarships and prizes.

- **Youth Conservation Summer 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 High School Youth Conservation Camp for 9th-12th grades at North Lakeland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters.
 - ◇ WI Land+Water Middle School Conservation Camp for 6th-8th grades at Upham Woods Education Center in the Wisconsin Dells.

For more information visit wisconsinlandwater.org/our-work/youth-education

2. Other State and National Organizations Representing the Interests of LCCs and LWCDs

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

Wisconsin Counties Association

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) 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 website, ongoing training and educational opportunities through seminars, legislative exchanges, and an annual conference.

For more information, visit www.wicounties.org

National Association of Conservation Districts

Organized in 1946, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) serves as the national voice for the conservation district movement. NACD pools the experience of over 3,000 conservation districts in developing national conservation policies on a continuing basis. Though Wisconsin's local conservation delivery structure is counties, as opposed to districts, our priorities still align closely to NACD's. Operational funds are provided by dues from member LCCs in Wisconsin, WI Land+Water, individuals, and member conservation districts nationwide.

For more information, visit www.nacdnet.org

3. State Agencies and Boards

The State Land and Water Conservation Board

Chapter 92 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 DACTP and DNR, 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/Pages/About_Us/LandWaterConservationBoard.aspx

Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

Chapter 92 names the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (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 LWCDs. 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 LWCD 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 LWCD technicians and other persons who design, review, and approve agricultural engineering practices.

For more information, visit www.datcp.wi.gov

Department of Natural Resources

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) 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 LWCDs through several DNR programs.

For more information, visit www.dnr.wi.gov

University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension supports lifelong learning by bringing the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to people wherever they live and work. Division of Extension teams up county Extension faculty with regional and statewide specialists throughout the UW System to provide educational programming across the state. Division of Extension supports county land conservation activities through numerous programs, centers, and educators addressing agriculture, natural resources, and community development.

For more information, visit www.extension.wisc.edu

Wisconsin Resource Conservation and Development Councils

Wisconsin Resource Conservation and Development Councils (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.

To learn more, visit www.wisconsinrcd.com

4. Federal Agencies

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), 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 to reduce soil erosion on highly erodible farmland, protect water quality and wetlands, and to encourage wildlife habitat.

For more information, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov

Farm Service Agency

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) 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, visit www.fsa.usda.gov/state-offices/Wisconsin/index

*A 2021 FSA determination stated that Chapter 92 cannot be enforced on USDA employees, including FSA county committee members, and that FSA county committee member participation in their local LCC is voluntary and must be done as a citizen/producer.

Acronyms and Initials

(current as of April 2022)

AEA	Agricultural Enterprise Area (DATCP)
AIS	Aquatic Invasive Species
ATCP	WI Administrative Code: Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
BMPs	Best Management Practices
BOD	Board of Directors
CAFO	Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation
CCA	Certified Crop Adviser
CEUs	Continuing Education Units
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program (NRCS)
CREP	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (NRCS & DATCP)
CSP	Conservation Stewardship Program (NRCS)
DATCP	Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
DC	(USDA-NRCS) District Conservationist
DNR	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Programs (NRCS)
Extension	University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension
FPP	Farmland Preservation Program (DATCP)
FSA	USDA Farm Service Agency
GIS	Geographic Information System
GLRI	Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (EPA)
GPR	General Purpose Revenue
HUC	Hydrologic Unit Code
LWCB	Land and Water Conservation Board (State of Wisconsin)
LCC	Land Conservation Committee
LWCD	Land and Water Conservation Department
LWRM(P)	Land and Water Resource Management (Plan)
MDV	Multi-discharger Variance (DNR)
MFL	Managed Forest Law (DNR)
MRBI	Mississippi River Basin Initiative (NRCS)
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
9KE	Nine Key Element Plan (EPA)
NM	Nutrient Management
NMFE	Nutrient Management Farmer Education (DATCP)
NOD	Notice of Discharge (DNR)

NOI	Notice of Intent (DNR)
NON	Notice of Noncompliance (DNR)
NPS	Nonpoint Source Pollution
NPM	Nutrient & Pest Management
NR	WI Administrative Code: Natural Resources
NRCS	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
PDHs	(Engineering) Professional Development Hours
PIC	WI Land+Water's Professional Improvement Committee
PWS	Public Water System
RC&D	Resource Conservation and Development
RCPP	Regional Conservation Partnership Program (NRCS)
SEG	Segregated funding or appropriation
SITCOM	State Interagency Training Committee
SNAP PLUS	Soil Nutrient Application Planner
SOC	Standards Oversight Council
SWIMS	Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System (DNR)
SWQMA	Surface Water Quality Management Area
SWRM	Soil and Water Resource Management Program (DNR)
"T"	Tolerable Soil Loss
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load (DNR/EPA)
TRM	Targeted Runoff Management (DNR)
TSS	Total Suspended Solids
UNPS	Urban Nonpoint Source & Stormwater Management (DNR)
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USFA	United States Forest Service
USGS	United States Geological Society
WAAE	Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators
WAEE	Wisconsin Association of Environmental Educators
WCA	Wisconsin Counties Association
WGNHS	Wisconsin Geologic & Natural History Survey
WHIP	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (NRCS)
WICCI	Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (UW)
WPDES	Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (DNR)
WRP	Wetlands Reserve Program (NRCS)
WSTC	Wisconsin State Technical Committee
WTCAC	Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council
WWOA	Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association



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