



WISCONSIN'S
greenfire
VOICES FOR CONSERVATION

Spring 2019

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Number 2

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Opportunities Now—

Conservation Issues 'Report Card' Shows WGF at Our Best

By Fred Clark

One of WGF's greatest assets is the unparalleled expertise of our members. Our in-depth knowledge of state agencies like the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and our relationships with outside experts and groups offers us a unique capacity to assess what is working and what is not working in conservation and environmental issues. WGF's *Opportunities Now: An Analysis of Priority Issues and Actions for Wisconsin's Natural Resources 2019-2021* is our first comprehensive effort to pull that knowledge together in a way that is useful for policy makers and the public. You can download copies of the full report and briefing papers on our website: <https://wigreenfire.org/>

Our initial concept for a conservation "report card" arose last September when our Environmental Rules Work Group led by Paul La Liberte began evaluating funding and performance in Wisconsin's CAFO program. With *Opportunities Now* we are taking that approach across all of our issue areas in a comprehensive report that will help inform the state budget process and the work of the 2019 legislature.

We knew that producing a report of wide scope within a few months would be a big lift for an all-volunteer organization. Fortunately, WGF member Mary Ellen (Mel) Vollbrecht, a career DNR water resources specialist and former Deputy Secretary, offered to help lead the effort. Mel



and Paul Heinen, WGF's new Legislative Liaison, met with our work group co-chairs to review a wide range of priority issues, and then began a systematic effort to gather input from stakeholders, interview agency staff, review budget information and performance reports, and recommend priority issues for the report's focus. Our Communications Coordinator Nancy Larson assisted greatly in editing and final development.

Our five identified issues—Agricultural Water Pollution, Groundwater Withdrawals, Our Land and Water Legacy, Chronic Wasting Disease, and Climate Change—are all issues that entail significant threats, but for which opportunities for action are equally

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President's Message

Photo credit: Diane Daulton



Tuning Up with Shared Values

By Terry Daulton

In January, my sister and I went on an adventure to Ireland, not exactly a popular winter destination. Because Diane is a musician, we were looking for lively Irish music “sessions” at local pubs. Even on chilly, gloomy nights, these traditional sessions featured Irish folk celebrating their shared culture by having a pint, singing, and playing fiddle, concertina, bodhran, and penny whistle. These sessions reminded me that it is the shared culture and values of many Wisconsin's Green Fire members—a love of Wisconsin's natural heritage—that provide the underlying motivation for spirited involvement in WGF.

During the past two years, WGF has spent a lot of energy getting organized, that is, metaphorically speaking, tuning up the instruments getting ready to play. As 2019 unfolds, you will see the “session” begin in earnest—issue-focused work taking shape and form as publications, presentations, and social media posts.

As an example, in this newsletter we are featuring our *Opportunities Now* publications, as well as an impressive summary of forestry policy work by our recently merged Public Lands and Forestry Work Group. I am pleased that our Climate Change Work Group is actively engaged with the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters in planning a statewide climate change summit for November 2019. The goal of the summit is to bring together the diverse parties working on aspects of climate change (adaptation, mitigation, research, renewable energy, and policy advocacy) and to set a course for effective climate change actions in Wisconsin.

Be sure to read the updates from work groups highlighting their recent efforts. To carry my Irish music analogy further, to date our work groups have been like duos or trios, but this year, by increasing member involvement, we hope to make work groups comprise several to many musicians engaged in lively music “sessions.” With more involvement, and by integrating volunteer efforts, we hope work group chairs will find their roles more fulfilling because work groups can achieve more. As John Mather, an astrophysicist said, “There is strength in numbers, but organizing those numbers is one of the great challenges.” Mather was not referring to volunteers, but I think applying his words to WGF is useful.

At one small pub, an elderly gent sang a song with the chorus *Treat my creatures gently, for you know right from wrong*. It was offered with such sincerity that, by the end, we were all singing. That pub held people from many countries and walks of life. As I looked around at all of us assembled there, I realized that his song had a message the entire audience could support. Since that night, I have also thought about his song in relation to WGF. As we plan our work, we want to seek out and promote the common values that stand behind our work and invite many diverse audiences to join us—to join in singing.

Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation

Mission

Wisconsin's Green Fire supports the conservation legacy of Wisconsin by promoting science-based management of Wisconsin's natural resources.

Vision

Wisconsin's citizens understand and support scientific and thoughtful long-term management of natural resources, and value the many benefits of clean water, clean air, and healthy ecosystems.

Values

- We honor our strong and robust conservation heritage in Wisconsin.
- We believe that public policy, laws, and natural resource management should be informed by objective scientific understanding.
- We believe that robust and independent scientific research, knowledge, and education are necessary foundations for a fair and prosperous society.
- We are dedicated to the principle that all people and groups in our society have the right to clean water, clean air, healthy natural ecosystems, outdoor recreation, and land managed sustainably to produce economic benefit to everyone. We are dedicated to the principle that a sound environment and economy go hand in hand. We are dedicated to environmental justice.
- We support transparent governmental decision-making and fair and just treatment of all sides of issues.
- Our actions challenge policy makers to think beyond the short term and to act on behalf of future generations.

Wisconsin's Green Fire: Voices for Conservation

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Fred Clark, Executive Director
Nancy Larson, Communications
Paul Heinen, Legislative Liaison
Ruth Ann Lee, Administration

Newsletter Editor

Lucy Tyrrell

For more information

www.wigreenfire.org
info@wigreenfire.org

Wisconsin's Green Fire
P.O. Box 1206
Rhineland, WI 54501
715-203-0374

Words of Encouragement

"Once again, thank you for the valuable help you gave us. I have shared WGF information with my friends and activists. You folks are making a difference!"

—email from John Scott

[to Jon Heinrich for help with understanding requirements for cement batch plants]

Your Input Needed

- Stories and photos of research and resource management successes
- Photos of natural resources and conservation action in Wisconsin

Please send to info@wigreenfire.org

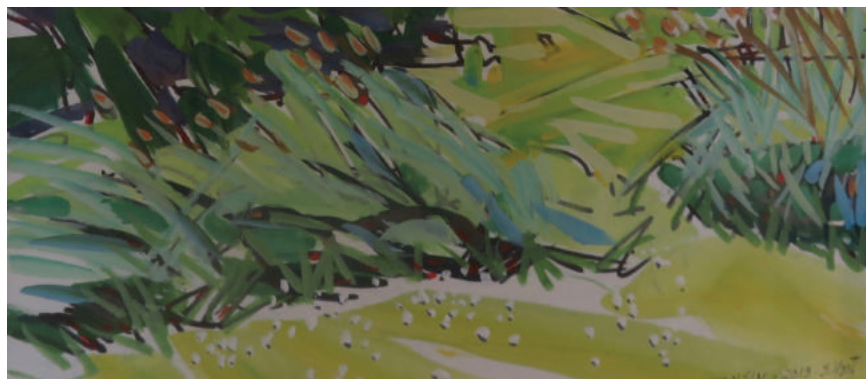
Opportunities Now (continued from page 1)

significant. These issues are not our only issues by a long shot, but they are ones where we have the opportunity to change the conversation right now. And I can tell you that since *Opportunities Now* was released, we are already changing that conversation.

In October, when we began this effort, we did not know who our next governor would be. But with the election of Governor Tony Evers, and his appointment of Preston Cole to lead the Department of Natural Resources, our expectations are high. *Opportunities Now* is already being used as a playbook for state agency leaders, elected officials, and our partners as we enter what we all hope is a new era of renewed conservation legacy in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's Green Fire members are contributing our expertise on these and many other issues right now. As I write this, our member Jim Baumann is providing testimony on a water quality trading bill on behalf of WGF—based on his extensive experience operating similar programs. Jim's work is just one example. We have dozens of members about whom we could say the same thing, and our goal is to make sure you all have a voice!

I hope you will stay involved and stay tuned with WGF as our momentum builds in 2019. We will be doing more and communicating more in the year ahead, and your own involvement will make a difference in making our successes possible. Thanks for all you do!



Art credit: Sally Yost

New Role as Communications Coordinator

By Nancy Larson

In mid-February, I stepped into a new role in Wisconsin's Green Fire, part-time paid Communications Coordinator. As a relatively new organization, WGF faces the challenges of delivering information effectively to the right audiences, and with quick turn-around times demanded by our electronic information age. We have many dedicated volunteers with experience and interest in communications and we needed some paid staff time dedicated to support our volunteers with internal and public communication functions. I work closely with Fred Clark, Terry Daulton, and our Communications Committee co-chairs Bruce Neeb and Jim Perry. Please feel free to contact me at nlarson@wigreenfire.org or 715-203-0384 ext 2.

WGF Comments—

Proposed High-Voltage Line Bisects Driftless Area in Wisconsin and Iowa

By Kerry Beheler

In 2014, American Transmission Company (ATC) and ITC proposed a high-voltage (345 kilovolts) transmission line between Dubuque, Iowa and Middleton, Wisconsin (see map below). According to these developers, the line would improve system reliability in the area served. Named for the two power substations it would connect, the proposed Cardinal-Hickory Creek line (CHC) would cross more than 120 miles of sensitive scenic landscapes of the Driftless (unglaciated) Area in Dane, Iowa, and Grant counties in Wisconsin, and in Dubuque County in Iowa.

Both state and federal Environmental Impact Statements are required for the proposed CHC. The Wisconsin EIS informs state decisions including whether the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) will grant approval and the DNR will issue permits. The federal EIS informs about environmental impacts for federal decisions on approvals or permitting, such as for crossing the Mississippi River.

On behalf of Wisconsin's Green Fire, WGF members from several work groups provided comments, approved by the WGF Board, to the PSC and DNR for the state EIS, and to the Rural Utility Services for the federal EIS.

The proposed CHC would fragment the sensitive Driftless Area. Wisconsin public trust lands potentially affected include: Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, Ice Age National Scenic Trail, Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, and Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area. Public trust waters that would be crossed by the CHC include the Mississippi, Grant, and Platte rivers, headwaters of the Sugar and Pecatonica watersheds, and more than 20 Class 1 or Class 2 trout streams in Dane and Iowa Counties, including Black Earth Creek and Trout Creek fishery and wildlife areas.

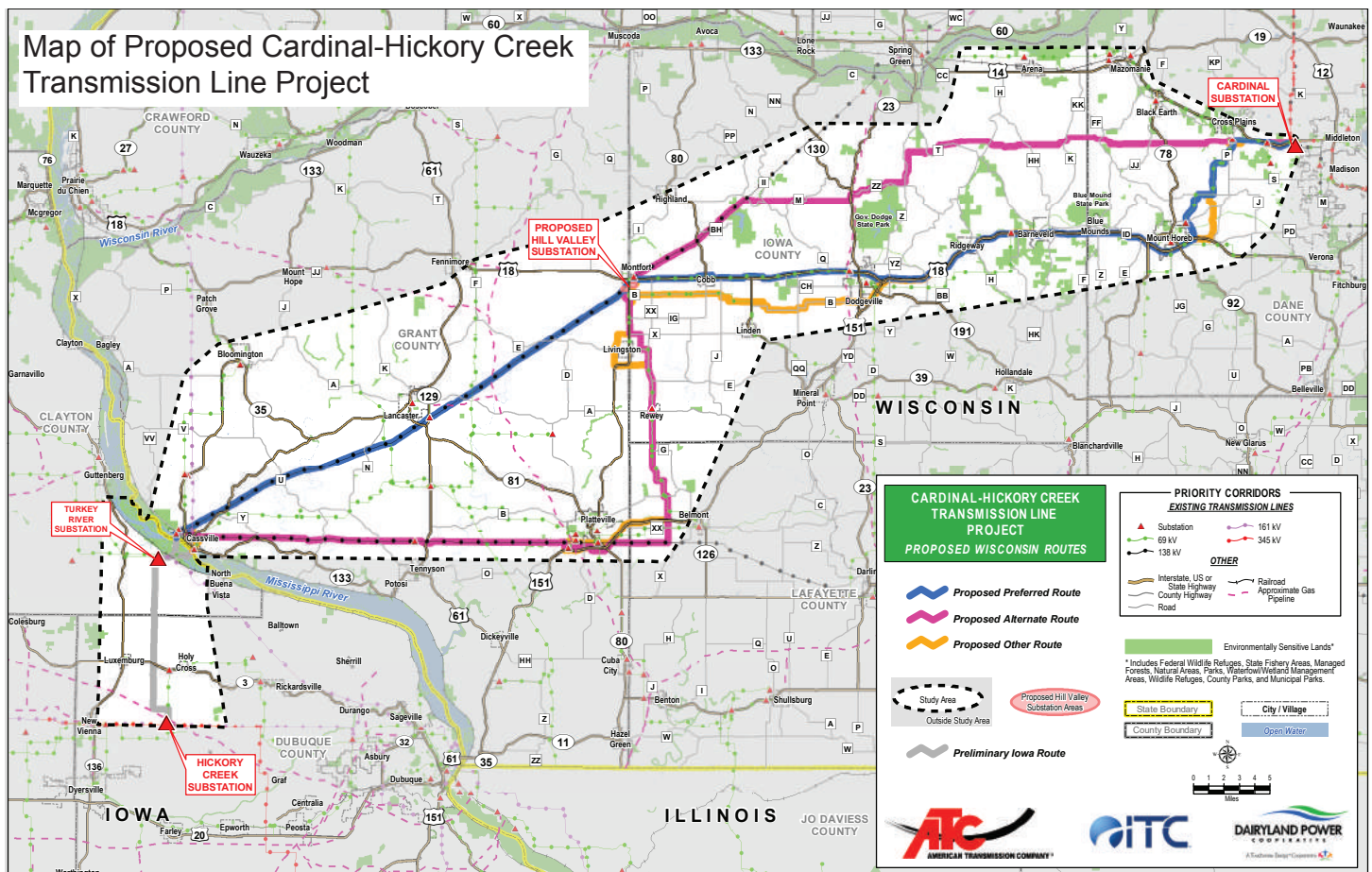
continued on page 5

To view the draft EIS:

http://bit.ly/PSC_CHC_DEIS_Vol-1

To view WGF's scoping comments and comments on the EIS drafts: <https://wigreenfire.org/our-work/>

To ask questions or provide input: Kerry.Beheler@gmail.com



Our comments focused on public trust and wetlands, environmental rules, environmental and outdoor education, public lands and conservation funding, and fish & wildlife. The comments complement the recently released *Opportunities Now* in the areas of “Our Land and Water Legacy” and “Climate Change.”

- WGF concluded that the proposed CHC has many potential impacts to the lands, waters, species, and quality of life in the Driftless Area and would affect its ecological, cultural, agricultural, recreational, tourist, and economic resources.
- WGF requested that the PSC fully investigate *all* of these aspects, evaluate non-transmission alternatives, and recommend actions which best serve the needs of Wisconsin citizens into the future.
- WGF requested that each EIS address any cumulative impacts on the ecological health of the area including habitat fragmentation.
- WGF requested that each EIS examine the impacts of construction, as well as the permanent impacts, on springs and seeps, on coldwater and coolwater streams and other surface waters, and on wetlands.
- WGF also requested that the economic evaluation include the value of conserved lands, in particular the

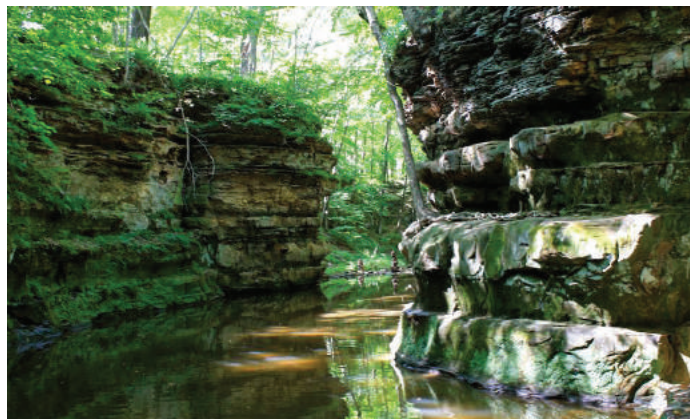


Photo credit: Kerry Beheler

WGF concluded that the proposed CHC has many potential impacts to the lands, waters, species, and quality of life in the Driftless Area of Wisconsin.

present market value, along with what public and private investments had been used to accomplish land and water conservation in the CHC project area. Many government agencies and groups have made substantial investments of time and money over the years for conservation of prairie lands and water resources of the Driftless Area.

Our WGF voices matter. WGF’s objective, science-based comments on behalf of the project area’s natural resources carry great weight. WGF submitted comments on the two draft EISs by the April 1 federal and April 14 state deadlines. The final phase is to comment at public meetings, which will be held this summer.

WGF’s New Legislative Liaison

By Paul Heinen

As of October 2018, Wisconsin’s Green Fire contracted with me to be its Legislative Liaison in the State Capital. In this capacity, I provide several government relations services. One is to represent WGF at the Capitol in meetings with Governor Evers and his staff, with state legislators and their staffs (see photo at right), and with state agency representatives. Another role is to have a seat at the Conservation Lobbying Table with the rest of the statewide conservation and environmental groups who work on budget and policy issues. In addition, I will work closely with WGF work group co-chairs on their priority issues, relay WGF’s expert opinions and policy papers to the Governor and Wisconsin Legislature on issues selected by the WGF Board, and report back to the Board on all my liaison services.

What prepared me well for this role was being the Wisconsin DNR Legislative Liaison for 34 years and the Wisconsin State Government Relations Director for The Nature Conservancy for the past 4 years. I am delighted to rejoin so



Photo courtesy: Paul Heinen

Paul Heinen meets with Senator Cowles’s staff.

many of my colleagues and meet many WGF members I hadn’t known. I kept hearing about WGF while I was at the Capitol last year. Now I get to represent you—the organization and its members.

Whenever you have a question about a budget or policy issue working its way through the Legislature, I will help you get answers and guide you through the Legislative and State Agency process on bills and rules. I’ve written a blog *How an Idea becomes a Law*—posted on the web at <https://wigreenfire.org/2019/03/27/how-an-idea-becomes-a-law/> Please feel free to contact me: pheinen@charter.net or 608-692-0279.

Updates from Committees

Communications

By Bruce Neeb and Jim Perry

WGF's new Communications Coordinator Nancy Larson continues to respond to information requests and media inquiries and to help work groups find assistance with outreach planning and projects.

Some of WGF's communications plans within Nancy's oversight include: (1) more email updates to keep members informed of time sensitive conservation issues we are working on, (2) an upgrade to the design of the WGF website, (3) expanded functions of the website, with the help of a hired consultant, i.e., ability to search for our work products and information, (4) an expanded social media presence including Facebook, and (5) continued work on standards for work products to provide a unified "brand" and public face for WGF.

Along with Nancy, we are thinking of reconvening the Communication Standards and Templates Team as we work to increase our communications capabilities. Lucy Tyrrell played a significant role in the initial development of the WGF communications style guide. She also keeps our quarterly newsletter on track and lends assistance with PowerPoint presentations.

Several WGF board members and work group chairs have given presentations about WGF to varied audiences. We are developing a "generic" PowerPoint with basic information about WGF to provide members with guidance as they talk to groups and participate in partner events.

Members of the Communications Committee with editing skills continue to review issue papers, other outreach tools, and publications, such as the newly-released *Opportunities Now* reports. We are working to introduce policy makers and the public to WGF's *Opportunities Now* reports and to help work groups set up communications plans for 2019.

We'll be surveying Communication Committee members soon to gauge continuing interest and we hope to draw in more volunteers. We're excited by the opportunity to build our communications capabilities through the talents and ideas of WGF members.

Development

By Jim Perry

The support WGF received in our first full year of existence was extraordinary—hard to top in year two. Since our year-end membership and gift drive began November 1, 2018, we have received a remarkable \$33,300, including several very large gifts and many donations of \$100 or less. Each one, regardless of size, means much more than just the dollar amount—it verifies the philosophical support of our members

Fred Clark's transition from Board Member/Development Chair to Executive Director left a gap in an important area— friend-raising and fund-raising. Part of Fred's duties will include these functions, but it is important that staff members are not solely responsible for this area. Terry Daulton suggested that more of this area will fall on my shoulders now. I would like some assistance. If you have been responsible for donor relations and fund raising in a previous life, please let me know. In the next few months, WGF will be fine-tuning our three-year work plan and the document we use when approaching individuals and foundations for support.

Membership

By Jim Perry

Our membership is about 390, a slight drop from 2018—perhaps due to the outcome of the gubernatorial

election, giving some people the feeling that there is not quite as much urgency as there was when WGF was formed. Indeed, the stated objectives of Governor Evers and Secretary Cole are laudable. Even so, WGF remains the independent, non-partisan go-to organization that can be trusted to provide scientifically sound information. In other words, the need for WGF is not diminished at all. Also, given the turnover at the DNR, WGF is being viewed by other groups as the institutional memory of the DNR.

We think the new membership categories (Individual, Family, Sustaining, Student) better reflect the composition of WGF members. Student membership is a developing focus, as WGF works with colleges and universities.

A small group is finalizing a PowerPoint that can be used by the developing Speakers Bureau to inform more Wisconsinites of what we do, and thus gain members.



Photo credit: Lucy Tyrrell

Supporting WGF Members, Work Groups

By Fred Clark

Since our formation, WGF has been organized around a set of work groups that reflected priority conservation issues and our members' experience and interests. Our work groups have naturally shifted a bit in their focus and varied in their level of activity over time. Our work group co-chairs and members are all volunteers—there are limitations to how much any all-volunteer effort can accomplish. Beginning in April, Nancy Larson and I will be engaging regularly with all our work groups and providing support for their planning—helping them set and execute our priority strategies.

One of our goals as an organization is to make it as simple as possible for members to get involved and contribute their special and unique talents to WGF's work. One of the questions we'll be asking you is, how well does our current structure facilitate that involvement? Please keep an eye out for an invitation from us to participate in some town hall discussions about that.

A second question we'll be asking is, how does the public we serve understand and access our work? As part of that assessment, we'll be considering other ways to organize and present our growing set of information on natural resources issues. Meanwhile, please read on to see the extensive accomplishments from our work groups recently, all thanks to you and our other members!

Updates from Work Groups

Air Quality

By Jon Heinrich

Mercury Air Toxics Standard (MATS)

In December 2018, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced changes to the Mercury Air Toxics Standard (MATS) established in 2012. The MATS requires reduction of mercury air emissions from electric utility coal and oil fired boilers.

The EPA proposes to leave the mercury emission limits in place, but rescind the determination that the rule was necessary. When the EPA originally determined the rule was necessary, it considered the health benefits of reducing

other air pollutants in addition to mercury. These “co-benefits” were part of the legal and economic justification of the Mercury Air Toxics Standard. The EPA now believes this reasoning is wrong.

In Wisconsin, the issue of mercury contamination is critically important because of our many lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands and the numbers of people who catch and eat fish. Mercury air emissions are responsible for methyl mercury contamination of fish—a human toxin. Certain waters, in our state and nationwide, have fish consumption advisories to protect some groups, e.g., sensitive individuals, pregnant women, and young children.



Art credit: Lois Osterberg

We are preparing written comments that will highlight our concerns about abandoning the “co-benefits” approach and, in particular, our concern about the need to address mercury contamination in Wisconsin.

Proposal to Require Public Hearings on Existing DNR Guidance Documents

An amendment included in the December 2018 “lame-duck” legislation signed by Governor Walker gives state agencies a six-month period to hold public hearings on their existing guidance documents. All existing and new guidance documents must be submitted to the state's Legislative Reference Bureau for public review and hearings. We have provided comments to several organizations about the need and possible consequences of this requirement specifically as it relates to the air quality program guidance provided by the Wisconsin DNR. From our perspective, the requirement has limited value for those benefiting from the guidance and imposes a significant work effort on the DNR.

Support for the Climate Change Work Group

To meet our commitment to the Climate Change Work Group, we are finalizing our report that evaluates and suggests updates to previously proposed Wisconsin-specific actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which reviews the actions outlined in the July 2008 Governor's Task Force Report - *Wisconsin's Strategy for Reducing Global Warming*.

Conservation Funding

If you are interested in leading this work group, please contact Fred Clark at fclark@wigreenfire.org.

Work Group Updates continued on page 8

Climate Change

By Mike Meyer and David Mladenoff

Wisconsin's Fish are in Hot Water

Frank Pratt, one of our Climate Change Work Group members, spoke on this topic to over 250 people during three high school and three evening presentations in Wausau, Millador, and Merrill in late February. He shared the results of his 38 years of research on our rivers, streams, and lakes to help us understand what is already happening to fish and what that means for the future. Dan Barth, of the Citizen Climate Lobby commented that they were able to get television and news article publicity and that "Frank's presentations were...extremely informative and alarming."



Art credit: J.R. Lince-Hopkins

Planning for Climate Change Summit in November

Fred Clark represented our work group at a planning meeting sponsored by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters. The Academy is developing a team to hold a statewide summit on "Climate Change in Wisconsin" to be held at the Monona Terrace in November 2019.

Input to Opportunities Now Report

Our work group assisted in developing the Climate Change chapter of the WGF *Opportunities Now* report—detailing which policy and budget actions WDNR should undertake to get back on track adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change in Wisconsin.

Course on Climate Change

As a collaboration between WGF and Fe University, a program started by the Iron County Aging-Friendly Communities Coalition, work group members Mike Meyer and Nancy Turyk presented a two-session class in Mercer (March 19, 26) on "Climate Change: Causes, Effects, Solutions." Students learned about how we know there are human influences, why there are increased storm events, what options can reduce the extent of temperature alterations, the projected impacts on Northwoods wildlife, forestry, and water, and management strategies to lessen the impacts.

Environmental Education

By Dolly Ledin and Meta Brandt

Mentoring

Our proposal "Engaging the Next Generation of Science Professionals" to the Union of Concerned Scientists was not funded. However, we are soliciting other funds and developing mentor guidelines. We have contacted a number of campuses and organizations serving college students. If you have a contact to provide, please check with Dolly (see email below), and if it is not already on our list, it can be added.

Citizen Science

- According to the Wisconsin DNR's Citizen Monitoring Coordinator Eva Lewandowski, many local citizen science groups need help analyzing and interpreting their local data. If you are interested in helping this useful venture, please contact Dolly (see email below).
- Dolly Ledin and Joanne Kline served as judges for "Science Strikes Back," a community science fair at Escuela Verde in Milwaukee
<https://www.sciencestrikesback.com>

K-12 Teachers

- Bob Martini spoke to the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers on March 9.
- Karen Mesmer will serve as our liaison to science teachers and will be the contact person for teacher requests.
- Skylar Primm is our new liaison for environmental education. He serves on the board of the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education and will keep us informed of legislative or policy changes.



Art credit: Sophia Grund, Grade 1

Helping WGF Members in Education Roles

- To help science professionals "grow their skills to meaningfully engage decision makers" about the issues WGF is involved with, several WGF members are participating in the 4-week sessions of Empower U that started in late March or early April. See details at <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/wifdn/empoweru/#details>
- To assist WGF members in engaging audiences to communicate science, we are developing a "Toolkit" to provide ideas and contacts for training opportunities. Workshops may be offered this year on *Storytelling in Science* and *Facilitating Public Discussions*.

Please contact Dolly Ledin daledin3@gmail.com if you would like to be involved in any of these efforts!

Environmental Rules and Water Resources

By Paul La Liberte

Our Agriculture and Water Quality Issue group presented information about phosphorus and nitrogen from fertilizers of all kinds and pathogens from manure to a county committee evaluating agricultural ordinances. We are using the feedback received from this initial effort to improve the messages and delivery for use in other settings. Credit for this effort goes to Jim Bauman, Chris Mechenick, Ed Peters, Jimmy VandenBrook, and Ken Wade.

We worked with UW Madison researchers on enhancements to the “Snap Plus” nutrient management model to better align it with the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) phosphorus water quality goals and add a estimator of nitrogen loss to groundwater.

Art credit: Betty Sibon



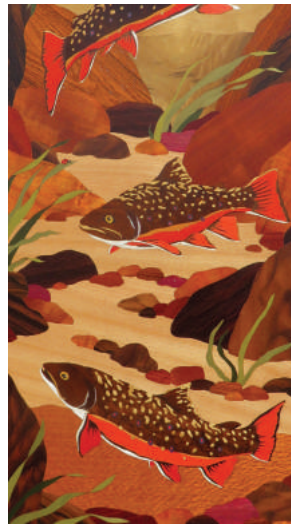
Our work group also:

- provided a review of proposed legislation pertaining to water quality trading, including testimony at the hearing by Jim Baumann.
- developed the Agriculture and Water Quality component of the WGF *Opportunities Now* document.
- provided a letter to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board on the funding of the DNR CAFO program. Fees collected from CAFOs currently fund only 3 percent of the program, but are now proposed for increase.
- submitted a WGF issue paper outlining scientifically-supported options for addressing the impact of nitrogen on Wisconsin surface waters during the DNR public comment period for the Wisconsin Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology. Credit for this effort goes to Jim Baumann, Dave Marshall, and John Sullivan.

Fisheries

By John Lyons

Art credit: Jeff Nelson



I gave a talk about WGF on February 25 at the monthly meeting of Badger Fly Fishers in Madison.

Our work group is ready to review and comment on the WDNR’s Draft 10-Year Inland Trout Management Plan, but the release of the draft has been delayed a couple of times. The review process for this long, complex, and important document will extend well into 2019.

Forestry and Public Lands

By Ron Eckstein

In January, WGF board members voted to combine Public Lands and Forestry into one work group. John Robinson of Wausau has agreed to be co-chair. For Public Lands, we will use the best available information (science) to continue WGF’s efforts to inform decision makers of the benefits of public land. Our emphasis in 2019 will be the reauthorization of the state’s Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Here follows the Forestry update for our work group.

Art credit: Barbara McFarland



WDNR’s Silviculture Handbook is a 797-page technical manual that helps guide forest management on public and private lands in Wisconsin. Since 2013, changes to this handbook have been developed and approved by the Silviculture Guidance Team (SGT). SGT’s

17 members represent all aspects of the forest products industry from saw and paper mills, to consulting foresters, loggers, small and large landowners, county and national forests, UW research, DNR Forestry, and resource conservation. From 2013 on, I have held the resource conservation seat on the SGT, representing the Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society and, starting in 2018, Wisconsin’s Green Fire. Our main resource conservation interest is forest habitat and forest biodiversity.

In the last six years, handbook chapters for management of jack pine, red maple, paper birch, aspen, red pine, northern hardwoods, and tree marking were revised. This is a lengthy development and review process with numerous revisions and approval steps. It typically involves 8 to 12 meetings per year, but in 2018, it included attending 19 meetings and one conference.

Photo credit: Ron Eckstein



A Wisconsin Silvicultural Guidance Team meeting in Stevens Point in mid-March. Ron Eckstein holds its resource conservation seat and as such represents both the Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society and WGF.

In 2018, in addition to SGT work, WGF sent 11 comment letters to WDNR Forestry and the Natural Resources Board on issues that affect forest habitat and forest biodiversity. The topics included ATV trails and motorized access, public land timber sales, disease and pest management, managed Forest Law Rules, forest research priorities, and the land conservation easement purchases.

Forestry concerns were not included in Wisconsin Green Fire's *Opportunities Now* report. Instead, we developed a Division of Forestry Overview document with general and specific staffing and management recommendations. This document was presented to DNR Division of Forestry staff at Rhinelander in February. During 2019, we will meet with DNR Forestry staff to further explain our forest habitat and forest biodiversity concerns.

Another priority is to work with a newly-formed integrated DNR forestry team developing a 10-year Forestry Strategic Plan called the *Forestry Action Plan*. The *2010 Forestry Action Plan* developed by then Chief State Forester Paul DeLong recognized the importance of forest habitat and forest biodiversity in Wisconsin's forests. Our goal is to ensure that the *2020 Forestry Action Plan* continues a strong forest conservation emphasis.

Members interested in either public lands or forestry issues can contact Ron Eckstein at roneckstein@charter.net.

Public Trust and Wetlands

By Ron Grasshoff and Michael Cain

In January, our Public Trust and Wetlands Work Group completed our final draft of the work group Strategic Plan. It states that the Public Trust Doctrine must be preserved and expanded, rather than limited in scope, when conflicts arise between public and private rights in our streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. Action items in the plan focus on applying facts about our water resources and using scientific knowledge to influence policy on water use, water quality, and aquatic habitat protection and restoration.

To protect and expand the doctrine, we will encourage relationship building, an expansion of expertise to seek new ideas, and the analysis of existing and proposed legislation. An information and education effort is the logical first step to raising awareness and expand public participation in issues involving the doctrine.

To provide printed and visual material for WGF members to share with the public, we have a fact sheet and brochure on the doctrine, thanks to work group members Bruce Neeb and Mel Vollbrecht, and volunteer Irene Golembiewski. We will combine two PowerPoint presentations in order to better address a broad audience—including the conservation community, public officials, and the general public. We are also working on a reference document about the doctrine.

In the policy arena, we have established a working relationship with DNR staff who have an interest in devising ways to collect data on the impacts of ACT 183, which exempts specific wetlands (i.e. non-federal and artificial wetlands) from the regulatory process. The ultimate goal is to develop recommendations that will result in a regulatory system that (1) reduces adverse impacts to all wetlands and (2) emphasizes restoring and enhancing wetlands to improve water quality, reduce urban flooding, and for their intrinsic value.

FACT SHEET: PUBLIC TRUST AND WETLANDS WORKING GROUP



Protecting the Public Trust in Wisconsin's Lakes and Streams

To maintain this public trust for us citizens, Wisconsin citizens have had a key to setting the types and amount of uses of their shared waters. Initially, they had to go to court to do so. For example, Cal Wale v. Frank Wade went fishing in a stream claimed by the private Wilem River Club, was arrested, and went in court to argue that everyone could fish in all streams. The Legislature took on many decisions about individual uses as settlements grew and lumbering, mining and transportation began to increase. By the early 1900s, the pace of development and increasing number of decisions needed about water use led to the creation of administrative agencies. The Railroad Commission was assigned water duties because many of the decisions still involved dams for milling proposed in waters also used for boat transportation. In 1968, the Department of Natural Resources was established and assigned to manage the state's water resources, including physical modifications, haring, fishing, water diversion, and disposal of waste through discharge to waterways. While the concept of shared public rights and responsibilities is simple, carrying it out in practice is a challenge. From streams you can step across to lakes you can't see across, Wisconsin's waters are diverse. Water uses ranging from tankers and barges moving cargo, to recreational motorboats, jet skis, canoes and kayaks, fishing boats and hunting crafts... from pristine natural shorelines to bustling urban waterfronts, makes for a complicated picture. Scientific knowledge about water and land use interactions, fish and wildlife ecology is constantly improving the basis for decisions. The Public Trust Doctrine provides a consistent set of factors for science-based evaluation of water use proposals and ensures participation opportunities for all users. Wisconsin's Green Fire helps increase awareness of citizens' rights and responsibilities as participants in the public trust. Wisconsin scientists and professionals want to assure that the people of the state and its decision makers have access to current science and practical solutions as they develop and carry out natural resource policy. Wisconsin's Green Fire, with membership representing more than 3,000 years of professional natural resources study and experience, is committed to the public trust in Wisconsin's waters, the idea that no one person can claim ownership over the bounty of the lakes and streams... that these are gifts to be enjoyed and cherished by all.

PO Box 1206, Rhinelander, WI 54501 • info@wisconsinfire.org • <https://www.greenfire.org>

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Photo credit: Bruce Neeb

The economic value of wetlands is estimated to be higher than that of any other inland land cover. According to the 2017 report, *Wetlands by Design—A Watershed Approach for Wisconsin*, prepared by the WDNR and The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin, the value of wetlands on lands in the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Midwest was estimated to exceed \$1.6 million per acre each year.

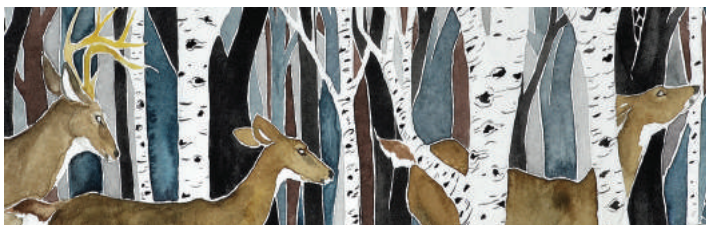
Wildlife

By Tom Hauge and Adrian Wydeven

Our Wildlife Work Group members have stayed busy working on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), ruffed grouse management, wildlife management program policies, Recovering America's Wildlife Act, and wolf management.

Wisconsin's CWD response continued to dominate our work as we developed a CWD section to WGF's *Opportunities Now* analysis. In addition, we developed a set of recommendations that were provided to Governor Evers's transition team. Work group co-chair Tom Hauge also wrote an opinion editorial for the December 28 edition of *Wisconsin Outdoor News* titled "Hospice or Treatment – Wisconsin's CWD Future." Most recently, WGF Executive Director Fred Clark convened a small meeting of some of Wisconsin's conservation group leaders to forge agreement on a set of CWD management actions that the Governor and legislature should act on.

Art credit: Pete Sandker



Work group member John Kubisiak (see also Profile at right) has been representing WGF on the DNR's Ruffed Grouse Conservation Plan writing committee. This 14-member group also includes professionals from the DNR, The Ruffed Grouse Society, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, and the US Forest Service. The group is working with Mark Witecha, DNR Upland Wildlife Ecologist, to provide a final Conservation Plan draft to the Natural Resources Board by January 2020. The ruffed grouse management program goals, objectives, and strategies have been developed. The principal elements include population, habitat, partnerships, research and monitoring, hunter experience, and outreach and education.

Fellow work group member Chuck Pils is leading our work group's effort to build support for S 3223/HR 4647, federal

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Profiles in Conservation

Wisconsin Deer, Grouse, and Wild Turkeys

By John Kubisiak, WDNR for 34 years

I was raised on a dairy farm in Portage County, Wisconsin where my long-standing passion for wildlife and outdoor education began. I graduated with a B.S. degree in Wildlife Management in 1961 from the University of Michigan. During my wildlife management and research tenure with the WDNR, I authored or co-authored more than 40 technical and popular publications on white-tailed deer, ruffed grouse, and wild turkeys.

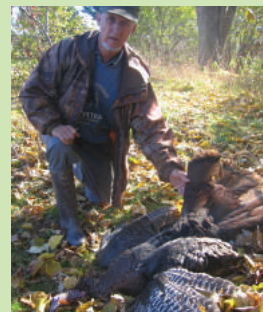


Photo courtesy: John Kubisiak

My wildlife research has led me and others through a variety of field conditions, such as sloggng through wet areas in hip boots or conducting surveys in hot summer weather with swarms of mosquitoes and deer flies. In contrast, there were surprising rewards, too—on one field foray, I found a ruffed grouse nest with 15 eggs (remarkable given the average is 11).

In conducting research on all three species, I used a variety of techniques to sample populations and verify that our estimates had very good accuracy. We used intensive ground surveys, incidental observations, live-trapping (to place leg bands on grouse or radio transmitters on turkeys), and helicopter counts.

For example, I helped validate the pre-hunt population estimate (600) for the deer herd enclosed by a 9-foot high fence on the 9,150-acre Sandhill Wildlife Area by using a "total removal hunt" in 1972, in which hunters shot and registered 552 deer and another 38 were found dead.

Also at Sandhill, as part of the development of a population model of ruffed grouse, in 1980-1982, I live-trapped more than 1,100 grouse to fit them with leg bands that offered \$5 or \$10 rewards as an incentive for hunters to report birds harvested. From this study, we determined how many chicks were produced (4+ chicks per hen), movements (up to 7 miles), and survival (very few birds lived beyond 2 years).

To study wild turkeys in southwestern Wisconsin, two of my assistants captured and attached radio transmitters on hundreds of wild turkeys. By monitoring the turkeys, we learned about their movements (5-10 miles), survival (~half live through any given year), hen nesting success (~20%), and leading causes of mortality (hunting, predation by coyotes and red foxes).

In 2004, I was honored when part of the Wood County Wildlife Area was named for me. I also received the Award for Excellence from the WDNR Bureau of Research (1987) and The Wisconsin Award (1998)—the highest honor bestowed by members of The Wildlife Society (Wisconsin Chapter).

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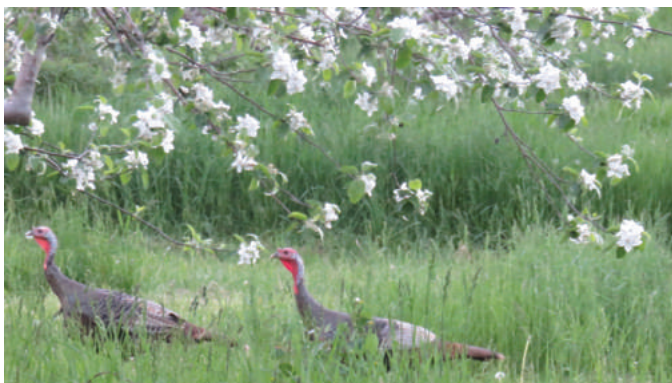
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the conservation legacy of
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Photos credit: Lucy Tyrrell

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legislation to create a stable funding source for nongame wildlife. Wisconsin's would receive \$23 million/year if this legislation is passed. Chuck has met with both DNR and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation to discuss plans to build a coalition of support in Wisconsin.

Co-chair Tom Hauge also participated in a wolf management panel discussion at the Milwaukee Outdoor Sports Show. The estimated 90-100-person audience listened to excellent overviews of wolf population and depredation history in Wisconsin and appreciated the in-depth discussions of the impacts of wolf predation on deer.

The US Fish and Wildlife service published a proposed delisting rule for gray wolves in Wisconsin and the rest of the lower 48 states on March 15. The USFWS will accept comments on the proposed delisting by May 14, 2019. Members of the Wildlife Work Group are examining the rule and will recommend whether WGF should comment on it.

In the coming months, the work group expects to review the draft Black Bear Conservation Plan and 2019 antlerless deer quotas and deer season recommendations.