

December 6th, 2019

Dear Wisconsin Conservationist,

In 2017 conservation professionals from throughout Wisconsin came together to form a new organization with an exciting and important mission – restoring the role of science in natural resources. As we near the end of 2019, Wisconsin's Green Fire (WGF) is fulfilling the role our founders intended as a trusted source for science and professional experience in natural resources. *Your support has allowed us to take big steps forward as an organization.* As we look ahead to 2020, it's worth taking a moment to recognize what we've accomplished in 2019.

Opportunities Now



We ended 2018 with the recognition that a new administration and new legislature needed to understand our highest priority conservation issues. Mel Vollbrecht, Nancy Larson and Fred Clark worked with our work group experts to assess those issues and offer recommendations for legislators and state agencies. Our first major report - *Opportunities Now* - addressed: Agricultural Water Pollution, Groundwater Withdrawals, Our Land and Water Legacy, Chronic Wasting Disease, and Climate Change.

The positive response we have seen to *Opportunities Now* has helped establish WGF as an organization with unique capacity for breadth and depth in conservation issues. We're now planning for an expanded *Opportunities Now 2.0* for release in late 2020.

Wisconsin's Year of Water

Governor Evers' designation of 2019 as the *Year of Water* triggered a renewed focus on clean water throughout the state. Our Agricultural and Water Quality Team has played an important role advising policy makers and agency staff and using our deep experience in environmental standards for contaminants like nitrate.



WGF member George Kraft testifying to the Speaker's Water Quality Task Force

WGF members Paul LaLiberte, Jimmy Vandebrook, Bob Martini, George Kraft, and Nancy Larson were invited to testify to the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality. Our recommendations to reduce nitrate contamination have been adopted by other conservation groups and are reflected in the state rule scope statements. Our clean water work will continue in 2020 with focus on a broader range of water issues.

Protecting our Public Trust



Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine is an essential and long-standing principle of protection for Wisconsin's waters and shorelines. Wisconsin's Green Fire's Public Trust and Wetlands Team, led by Michael Cain and Ron Grasshoff, continues to educate policy makers and the public about the important legal implications of the doctrine and our state's long history protecting it. Our fact sheet: *Protecting the Public Trust* lays out the reasons why "*the navigable waters and the carrying places between them are to be common highways and forever free for the use of all citizens.*"

Sustaining Wildlife and Fisheries

Our Wildlife and Fisheries Work Groups are a voice for science in the contentious decisions around hunting and fishing. Wildlife Work Group members led by Tom Hauge and Adrian Wydeven have provided comments on ruffed grouse and bear management, and John Lyons and Dave Vetrano on our fisheries team have led extensive comments on our state's inland trout plan, and our fish hatchery program.

WGF's Tom Hauge led the founding of Wisconsin's Chronic Wasting Disease Action Initiative and has continued to lead efforts to engage agency and policy makers around CWD best practices and opportunities for slowing the spread and testing new strategies for containment.

In 2020 we'll be focusing our efforts on renewing Wisconsin's outdated 1999 Wolf Management Plan, which will be critically important if the US Fish and Wildlife Service acts to de-list Gray Wolves in our region as expected.



Adrian Wydeven presenting on wolf conservation at the WGF Annual Meeting October 4th, 2019

Stepping Up on Climate Change



WGF has focused on climate change as a primary issue since our founding. Wisconsin's Green Fire was a lead sponsor of the Climate Fast Forward Conference on November 8th led by the Wisconsin Academy. Executive Director Fred Clark, WGF's Energy Policy Work Group co-chair Gary Radloff, and founding member Curt Meine each led breakout sessions at the

conference program. Our Climate Change work group led by Nancy Turyk and Mike Meyer has provided guidance on climate issues in training programs in local communities.

WGF will be increasing our investment in climate work in 2020 with projects in climate resilience planning for rural and underserved communities, and in developing strategies for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through improved management on forests, farms, and conservation lands.

Our Public Lands and Forests

WGF's Public Lands and Forest team has monitored and provided technical comments on our State Master Planning process and public land acquisitions throughout 2019. Our co-chair Ron Eckstein, together with Fred Clark have been participating as advisors to the Wisconsin DNR's Division of Forestry's 10-year Forest Action Plan which is in development this year. Together with our partners we've helped frame climate change as a priority issue for the future of Wisconsin's forests and our forestry sector.

Students in Conservation

As we look to the future of conservation and our own future as an organization we're putting an emphasis on bringing a younger and more diverse membership into the Wisconsin's Green Fire family. Our members Dolly Ledin, Mel Vollbrecht, and Meta Brandt helped welcome students from environmental and natural resources programs from throughout Wisconsin to our annual meeting in October. Our engagement with our newest student members was one of the most rewarding components of our program.



Our Plans for 2020

Although we've achieved a lot since our founding, we don't have the time or luxury to rest on our laurels. We're making plans right now to build on 2019's successes by building a stronger, more capable organization with increased focus on conservation issues that are both urgent and important to Wisconsin citizens. With your help, WGF will:



- Develop ***Opportunities Now 2.0*** by late 2020 to bring our road map solutions to policy makers and agency staff on a broad range of important conservation issues.
- Emphasize **climate change** as a core priority and identify climate-related aspects of all our work group focus areas.
- Continue our role as experts in **nitrate contamination of water** and add new capacity on emerging issues like **PFAS**.
- Grow our capacity for impact through outreach work with **policy makers, agencies, partner organizations**, and the public.
- Support Wisconsin's participation with the **U.S. Climate Alliance** by helping develop strategies for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through **Natural and Working Lands**.
- Assess complex issues and opportunities in **energy usage, transmission, and generation**.
- Collaborate with other groups to better understand the environmental and economic risks from Wisconsin's **network of oil pipelines**.
- Increase our reach and impact by telling the **human stories** behind our core conservation issues with our members using new platforms such as video and podcasts, and **time in the field with our expert members**.

Our goals for next year are bold, but they're within reach if we have your support.



Will You Support Us to Do More in 2020?

If you have been a supporter in the past, please accept our sincere thank you. Year-end support from our members still makes up more than 50% of our budget. **We hope you will be inspired to support us for an even more successful 2020.**

Your contribution through a year-end gift of **\$1000, \$500, \$250, or \$100** will allow us to make the investments needed to meet our goals in 2020 and will also help assure that we're able to respond quickly and to be involved where it matters on emerging issues.

Contributions can be mailed in the enclosed envelope to **Wisconsin's Green Fire, PO Box 1206, Rhinelander, WI 54501**

You can make an on-line contribution at <https://wlgreenfire.org/make-a-difference/make-a-donation/>

We know that if we want our children, and their children, to enjoy the same benefits we have enjoyed from our natural resources in Wisconsin, then we need to continue what we have started today. We're incredibly inspired to be part of an important effort with you to conserve Wisconsin's natural resources and our environment for all their values.

We hope we can count on your continued support.

Thank you from all of us for all you do,

Terry Daulton, President

Wisconsin's Green Fire Board of Directors

Fred Clark, Executive Director

Wisconsin's Green Fire