



WISCONSIN'S
greenfire
VOICES FOR CONSERVATION

Winter 2020

NEWSLETTER

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Communicating Science

Workshop Gives WGF Insights into Using Story Form

By Dolly Ledin

Remember the Gary Larson cartoon with paired panels: *What we say to dogs* (a string of commands) and *What dogs hear* (blah, blah, blah)? We need to think about our own communication in the same light, i.e., what do we want to communicate versus what do people hear, understand, and interpret of what we share.

WGF invited Holly Walter Kerby, a speaker and consultant on science communication, to help us learn how to use “story form” to design effective presentations. This method is different from “storytelling” as it focuses on designing presentations to meet specific goals. Presenting information in the form of a story helps the audience to pay attention, process, understand, and value the content. Holly put it this way—the story form helps people to want to hear what you want to tell them.

Nineteen WGF members and staff gathered at the Schmeekle Reserve in Stevens Point on December 4, 2019 for an all-day workshop.

Whether we are communicating to legislators, local officials, students, or a general audience, the tools and principles of story will help our message to be more engaging, interesting, and compelling. For example, when we start a presentation with a question to answer



Photo credit: Terry Daulton

Holly Walter Kerby leads participants in using “story form” to design effective presentations.

and share only the most essential details of our message, we draw the audience in and help them to want to know what happens.

We designed three-minute presentations and shared them with, and received feedback from, other participants. Holly offered to follow up with participants and review our presentations.

Those in attendance valued the workshop highly, making such comments as:

- The practice was very helpful.
- I loved the observation that stories can open a space with skeptics.
- Content, delivery, and teaching techniques reinforced the whole.
- I learned so much!

Participants felt that we should repeat the workshop for additional WGF members and possibly sponsor a workshop for members of other conservation organizations. We will definitely use the resources that Holly shared and the expertise we gained.

President's Message

Photo credit: Diane Daulton



The Fires of Hope

By Terry Daulton

Sometimes I awake at night and find my mind irritatingly alert and ready for action, while all my body wants to do is sink deeper into the soft warm bed. I have found that certain programs on public radio can soothe and distract my thoughts.

I stumbled on a captivating “hope” series on WPR’s “To the Best of Our Knowledge.”

Naturalist Claire Peaslee, one of the interviewees, captured my attention when she said that, in recent times, she alternates between deep bleak despair and excited hope at the potential for creating a better world. She finds hope while taking walks, being present to see the beautiful detail in nature, and focusing on our own connection to life on this planet.

In my own life, I think about the despair I felt during the January wildfires that ravaged Australia. Because I had travelled to Australia in 1995, I had a personal connection to the forests and creatures impacted by the fires. This past week I saw an amazing video clip showing a red fox nursing two baby koalas. I wanted to believe in the hope of nature’s resilience in the face of tragedy. I found hope in that fox, which offset my despair.

I recently saw a preview of a new David Attenborough film on bioluminescent species. Gretchen Gerrish, newly appointed director at UW-Trout Lake Research Station, is featured in the film. When she is not directing research on freshwater ecology at Trout Lake, her specialty is studying tiny ostracods that live on coral reefs in the Caribbean. She describes magical dives on dark starry nights when the ostracods create courtship and defense displays like miniature fireworks. Attenborough captures the pure beauty and mystery of our planet, from the dancing fields of fireflies to the science fiction-like deep sea denizens with monstrous teeth and bulbous eyes. This film filled me with hope.

Even neuroscience suggests that an optimistic bias is innate in humans and many other species, perhaps a part of our evolutionary survival. Yesterday as I walked in late afternoon, the sun lit up the tops of aspen trees, turning them rosy pink against a dusky blue sky. That walk filled me with hope.

Twice this month, my nine-year-old grandson, Keewin, has reprimanded me, as part of the baby boomer generation, for not stopping climate change. So far, I have squelched the response to sputter and be defensive. Instead, I have listened and enjoyed his youthful passion. I see hope in his generation to create new and un-dreamed of solutions for a better future.

Sometimes dealing with WGF issues brings me to a gloomy place, when policy decision-makers ignore dire threats to our state and planet. Yet this bleakness is countered with optimism every day by the incredible efforts and teamwork of our members and staff. Our steady, incremental success fans the fires of hope.

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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From the Executive Director

Tapping New Opportunities for Wisconsin's Green Fire

By Fred Clark

As I write in mid-February, much of Wisconsin is enjoying the deepest snow and coldest temperatures of the year. But we can feel the pull of transition as the mornings start earlier, the afternoon sun is a bit warmer, and the sap is starting to run.

The sap is starting to run again at Wisconsin's Green Fire as well—not that it ever really stopped. And the good news is, with your help, we're hanging our buckets just in time.

WGF is arranging our first modest office location in downtown Madison beginning in March. Nancy Larson has begun work in her new role as our Assistant Director. We'll soon be adding new positions, including a Science Director and a Communications Support staff member. And we welcome one of our newest members this month, U.S. Senator and long-time supporter of conservation, Russ Feingold. Expect to see more of Russ in the months ahead, as he's excited about helping WGF align with some of his own work in conservation.

In January, Ron Eckstein and other WGF members joined our colleagues from The Nature Conservancy to testify in support of old growth and natural areas in the *Northeast Sands Master Plan* in front of the Natural Resources Board (NRB), helping assure the NRB's approval of that important guidance for public land management.

WGF is partnering this spring with Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) assessing legal and regulatory issues around oil pipelines. We're planning to engage in more collaborative work with MEA and other nearby partners in Madison.

As the legislative session winds down, we're turning our focus to *Opportunities Now 2.0*, which will be one of our major work efforts this year. Version 2.0 of our biennial deep dive on conservation policy will build on our first edition of *Opportunities Now*, with a more comprehensive and in-depth assessment on a suite of conservation issues including climate change, wolf management, energy policy, and more.

Finally, we're planning to provide more opportunities this year for our members and supporters from around the state to get together, learn from each other, and experience more of what our great state has to offer. Look for notices of regional gatherings this summer and fall that offer more chances to get outside and learn from each other.

Wherever spring finds you, I hope you'll take the time to get out and enjoy it. On behalf of all of us at Wisconsin's Green Fire, thanks for all you do.

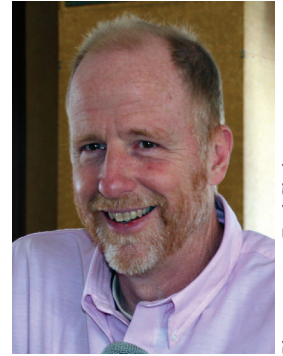


Photo courtesy Fred Clark



Art credit: Doman Christensen

Energy Work Group—

Launches Policy Paper, Opens Dialogue about Wisconsin's Energy Future

By Gary Radloff and Kerry Beheler, co-chairs

Welcome to the new energy future! As co-chairs of the new Energy Work Group for Wisconsin's Green Fire (WGF), we are eager to improve energy literacy, the goal of which is to educate people about the basic components and operation of Wisconsin's energy systems. We are also excited about increasing energy democracy and addressing energy policy with a *systems approach*. As a WGF work group, we want to ensure that science and environmental protection remain at the forefront as Wisconsin undergoes transitions in energy systems. We want to provide information on the best choices for energy policy and alternative energy transition for specific areas of Wisconsin. On behalf of WGF, we will always recommend actions that best serve the needs of Wisconsin citizens into the future.

Our new policy paper *Securing Wisconsin's Energy Future* is an introduction to both the technological and societal changes driving changes in the energy industry worldwide. WGF believes the science on climate change supports a fundamental change in the state's energy system. The amalgamation of engineering and economics—the *energy system*—includes all components tied to the production, conversion, delivery, and use of energy. The standard U.S. energy system has been a relatively passive service from utilities to user. Rapid-pace technology advances are moving toward an interactive, data-driven system between the new energy market place and the home or business. Wisconsin has not kept pace with these moves. Our *Energy Future* paper details what is happening and recommends steps that Wisconsin can take to modernize its grid and energy service delivery.

Our Energy Work Group plans to:

- Develop and share policy ideas, such as performance-based (rate-making) incentives, with local communities.
- Work with local municipal and state lawmakers on Wisconsin energy planning, energy policy, and energy laws, including Community Choice Aggregation laws.

- Educate the public about new technologies to manage energy demand and assist with their implementation at local and state levels.
- Help local communities understand and implement Distributed Energy Resource (DER) strategies, which include load management, grid modernization, increased energy efficiencies, microgrids, agrivoltaics, clean energy industrial parks, high energy electrothermal energy storage (heating and cooling for the food service or biotech industries), and batteries for energy storage.
- Provide credible sources and examples of working energy policies from other states and local governments.

One broad goal of an energy system transition is to reduce greenhouse gases—the main drivers of climate change. Reducing such gases involves aggressive efforts to reduce carbon emissions and to facilitate our transition to renewable energy sources. It also includes strategies to sequester atmospheric carbon.



A philosophic grounding to frame and explain the policy needed for change is called *energy democracy*. Core concepts of energy democracy include an energy system that allows greater public participation and equity in energy, best shaped by local communities. Several Wisconsin cities, towns, counties, and tribal communities are taking independent practical actions that allow our social, economic, and political systems to effectively adapt to a climate-altered future. So far, coordinated state-wide actions and energy planning are lacking in Wisconsin.

Some potential focus areas for the Energy Work Group include:

- Who will pay the social costs of greenhouse gases from the current and future energy systems? How will these costs be paid, e.g., carbon tax, fee and dividend, cap and trade?
- How will we pay for stranded assets in the old electric utility generation systems (e.g., old, aging, or retired coal plants and natural gas plants)?
- How will we integrate new technology into the energy system in a fair and affordable manner?
- How can we increase public participation in the Wisconsin energy system?
- How can we make the energy system more transparent, with accountability in governance?
- How can we reintroduce citizen ratepayer input into energy planning in Wisconsin?

Please find and read our *Securing Wisconsin's Energy Future* policy paper on Wisconsin's Green Fire website: <https://wigreenfire.org/securing-wisconsins-energy-future-a-wisconsins-green-fire-policy-analysis/>.

Let us know your questions, thoughts, and ideas. The Energy Work Group is partnering with the Climate Change Work Group on a number of steps and strategies in the coming weeks and months. We would welcome your participation in an Energy Work Group meeting or discussion. Together we can help our state reduce greenhouse gases and have a modern energy system.

Please contact: Gary Radloff glradloff@gmail.com or Kerry Beheler kerry.beheler@gmail.com.

Student Perspectives on WGF

By Dolly Ledin* [* see page 6]

At our last Wisconsin's Green Fire Annual Meeting, we hosted seven students and recent graduates from various college campuses around the state, so they could learn about WGF. We asked these young adults to serve as an advisory council to provide their insights and perspectives on our work and help us to determine how we can better serve young people and others who are currently not represented in our membership.



Photo credit: Nancy Larson

They took their role very seriously and provided insightful comments and suggestions. These are some of their comments:

- They were impressed with the depth and breadth of expertise of our members, our commitment, our enthusiasm, and our willingness to listen to other perspectives.
- They felt very welcome and enjoyed our relaxed, friendly atmosphere.
- They were glad to hear that multiple perspectives were considered on issues, such as the wolf panel.
- They recognized our lack of diversity in age and cultural backgrounds and felt that we could be perceived as exclusive.
- When discussions contained jargon and were geared at experts and those already involved, it was difficult to determine what role a new member could play.
- They felt that the issues we addressed were important, but that we need to also address issues of interest to urban citizens.

The students identified skills that might be of benefit to WGF and areas where they might contribute: social media, video production, research, writing, organizational skills, connecting to other students and faculty, providing perspectives on issues of interest to youth, helping with communication, field work, and data analysis. They are interested in potential internships as well as in volunteering.

They felt that WGF could benefit them by providing:

- mentorships and other experiences working on natural resource issues with professionals.
- opportunities to build their resume, establish a network of professional contacts, and apply studies to real world issues.

Student Perspectives continued on page 6

They also appreciated having a forum for their voices to be heard, as well as a chance to meet students from other campuses. Challenges to student involvement include how students would find time to participate, how students would travel to meetings, and how WGF can reach out to students to make them aware of WGF and its opportunities for youth participation.

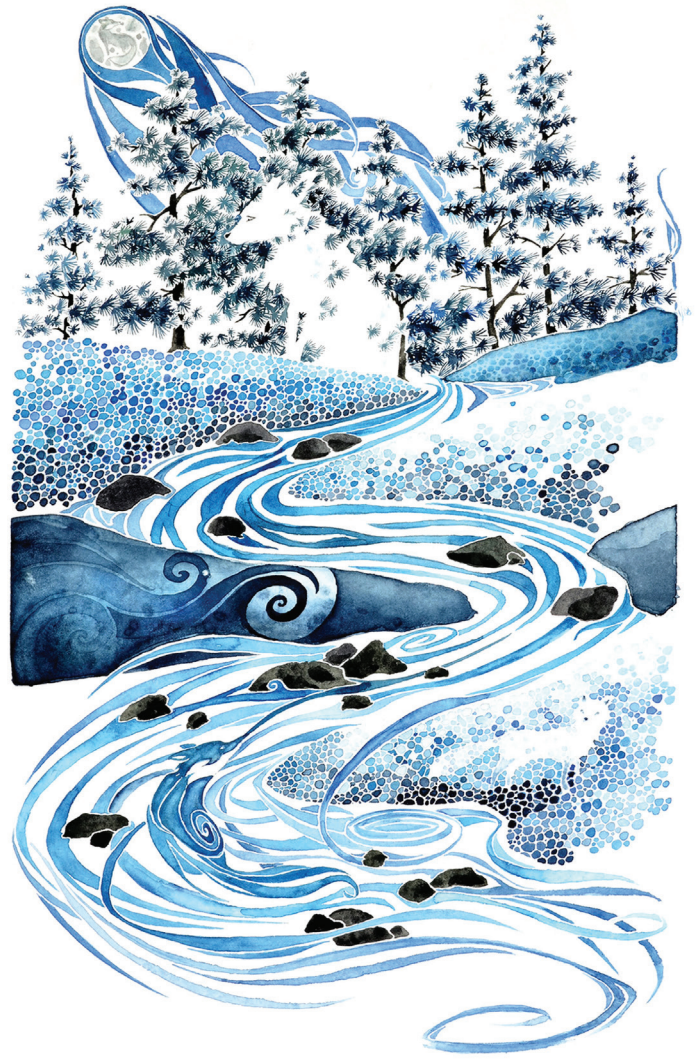
Here are a few of their suggestions:

- Increase social media, paid internships, student ambassadors to campuses, presentations to college students on careers.
- Increase and clarify roles for non-expert members.
- Develop an action plan to increase WGF membership diversity.
- Provide opportunities for students to job shadow professionals, to give talks, and connect with members.
- Include a student liaison to the WGF Board.
- Do not focus on the term “conservation legacy,” which could alienate disenfranchised people who have not been included or valued in Wisconsin’s history. Instead, focus on the future, such as was done in *Opportunities Now*.

Overall, the students had a positive experience at our meeting, as summarized by this student’s comment, “I met a lot of fantastic people who are working hard to protect the environment in Wisconsin and I learned a lot about what is being done to address environmental problems. I made meaningful connections with members.”

WGF leadership is very interested in following up on the issues raised by these students. We plan to start by offering two internships later this year. We are particularly interested in trying to set up a WGF mentoring program in the future. If you are interested in working with students in a mentoring capacity, please contact Dolly Ledin (daledin3@gmail.com).

*with input from Shyanne Eustace (Northland College), Hannah Gargrave (UW Stevens Point), Loretha Jack (UW Milwaukee), Emma Ledin (University of Minnesota), Briana Shea (UW Madison), Christopher Totten (UW Oshkosh), and Will Vuyk (UW Madison).



Art credit: Pete Sandker

Save the Date
Wisconsin’s Green
Fire Annual Meeting
September 25-26,
2020
Madison vicinity

Successful Hosting of WGF Friend-Raisers

By Jim Perry

How does one become aware of all the good work that WGF does? Word of mouth from current members is one of the more effective means. Social media and our website are good places as well. So are the speaking engagements at service clubs that many of us have done over the last two years.

We've also embarked on a proactive method by conducting several "Friend-Raisers" around the state over the last year. Shannon Thielman and John Robinson got things moving in Wausau, providing a good model that we duplicated in the Fox Cities (for Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha, Neenah, and Oshkosh) and in Madison.

Of course, we hope these events generate new members, but I personally feel that it is important to simply let people know that we exist and that we are dedicated to re-establishing the conservation legacy of giants like Aldo Leopold, Fran Hamerstrom, Gaylord Nelson, Sigurd Olson, and others.

To make the Fox Cities event as attractive as possible, I recognized that while I was once deeply involved as a local university administrator, there are very highly respected individuals now more active in our community who care deeply about conservation issues and environmental justice. I enlisted their support and asked them to contact their networks to encourage a good turnout. Current WGF members in the area invited their friends and in some cases sent invitations to members of like-minded organizations.

The Friend-Raiser was a good chance to use our new banners and share WGF materials, such as membership forms and past issues of newsletters. We captured contact information with a sign-in sheet. It was a big success, with about 60 attendees. The format that seems to work well is a brief presentation of our history and who we are, followed by a relatively short talk of conservation success stories.

Board member Bob Martini provided a snapshot of how environmental stewardship was a winning situation for not only the Wisconsin River, but for regional businesses and industry as well. Bob is a natural storyteller who engages the imagination of the audience. Several other WGF work group chairs described their activities.



Photo credit: Jim Perry



Photo credit: Fred Clark

Bob Martini speaks at Fox Cities Friend-Raiser (top).
The Madison Friend-Raiser drew over 100 attendees (bottom).

Being part of the Wisconsin culture, we have found that there are two other key ingredients for success: beer and food. Our events have been held at places that have a cash bar; we have invested in modestly priced hors d'oeuvres. Often WGF members help offset the food costs with generous donations. It all works together.

The Fox Cities event generated a number of new members and resulted in a request for a repeat event in 2020. We are exploring opportunities to work with partners in the Fox Cities to develop a program on climate change resiliency, perhaps in fall of 2020, if a suitable niche for WGF is identified. Several WGF members organized a similar event in Madison at the Great Dane pub in November. More than 100 attended, bringing the total number of those who have participated in the three fundraisers so far to 200.

Paul LaLiberte is planning a Friend-Raiser event for the Eau Claire area on June 2. The WGF Board is actively working toward hosting additional events in Rhinelander, Milwaukee, and Ashland. We need one in the southwestern Wisconsin area (LaCrosse or maybe even...Potosi???), and one in Green Bay. If you would like to host one, there are people who can help you. Email info@wigreenfire.org to ask to initiate a Friend-Raiser or to help with an upcoming one in the areas mentioned.

Work Group Updates

Water Resources and Environmental Regulations Work Group

By Paul La Liberte

Our WGF work group was busy with a number of activities. We share our updates below by issue (Agriculture and Water Quality, Groundwater Withdrawal, and PFAS). In addition to these focused activities, Paul La Liberte consulted with Midwest Environmental Advocates on the Waukesha diversion of Great Lakes water.

Agriculture and Water Quality Issue Group

An article about Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) in the December 12, 2019 *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* included mention of WGF member Jimmy VandenBrook:

“ ‘No question, CAFOs are more regulated,’ said Jim VandenBrook, executive director of the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association from 2012 to 2018 and a former state agriculture department regulator. ‘But we don’t have a handle on whether those practices are being followed because there is so little oversight on spreading [of manure that would add to runoff pollution].’ ”

The issue group presented comments to Wisconsin DNR staff on the scoping statement for the Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter NR 151, which pertains to Agricultural Performance Standards and Prohibitions. Jimmy VandenBrook also summarized these comments before the Natural Resources Board on December 10.

On January 21, issue group members Jim Baumann, Jim Matson, and Jimmy VandenBrook met with several staff of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to talk about a variety of approaches to improve water quality. The staff included Interim Secretary Randy Romanski, Assistant Deputy Secretary Angela James, and Agricultural Resource Management Division Administrator Sara Walling.

On January 22, Paul La Liberte presented information to Burnett County’s committee on agriculture and water quality addressing concerns about CAFOs.

The issue group investigated the status of Wisconsin’s phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to learn how the WDNR is positioned for implementing this plan for reducing phosphorus loads from all watershed sources.

On February 6, Jim Baumann, Jim Matson, Jimmy VandenBrook, Mel Volbrecht, and Paul La Liberte met with Michael Tiboris and Raj Shukla of the River Alliance of Wisconsin to talk about the Clean Water Farms program for recognizing farmers’ efforts to improve water quality.

The WGF issue group and the River Alliance are investigating how to address high nitrate groundwater with agricultural practices, by examining what is being done by Discovery Farms, UW Stevens Point, and the State of California.

Groundwater Withdrawal Issue Group

While Wisconsin awaits the results of a key legal challenge on regulating high capacity wells, work group member George Kraft is meeting with outside experts to develop management alternatives.

PFAS Issue Group

John Robinson is considering options for WGF’s involvement in this issue.

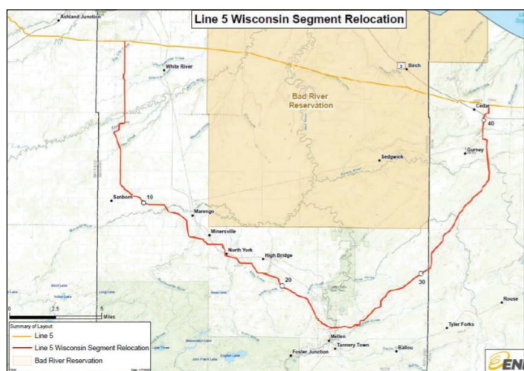


Art Credit: Pete Sandker

WGF Partnership on Pipeline Information

By Nancy Larson

Enbridge Energy Partners, LP describes Line 5 as a 30-inch diameter pipeline carrying light crude and natural gas liquids. It runs from Superior, Wisconsin across northern Wisconsin, through the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and under the Straits of Mackinac to Lower Michigan and Canada.



On February 7, 2020, Enbridge Energy filed applications to the federal government and the state of Wisconsin to reroute a 12-

mile segment of its Line 5 petroleum pipeline off the reservation of the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

The Bad River Band is in a legal action with Enbridge Energy over the pipeline and has asserted their desire *not* to have the pipeline cross through the Lake Superior watershed.

Many citizens are concerned about the vulnerable waters in the region. A small group of Wisconsin's Green Fire members has been meeting with other citizens and Mashkiziibii (Bad River) Natural Resources staff to identify ways that our organization could help citizens in the region get good information about the regulatory processes involved and other issues surrounding pipeline construction and operation.

WGF is partnering with Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) to produce a series of brief citizen guides on regulatory approvals for pipelines and opportunities for public input. Time is of the essence to make this information available to citizens. WGF will use \$5000 from our rapid response fund to support guides on top priority topics specific to Wisconsin in the coming months. The first topics will include eminent domain and condemnation of property, environmental review, and state and federal permits related to construction. WGF and MEA will post the guides on our web sites as they are developed.

Profiles in Conservation

Defending Wisconsin's Natural Resources

By Michael Cain, Wisconsin DNR for 34 years

I grew up in southwestern Wisconsin on a dairy farm where I learned lessons about land conservation. I fished the trout streams of Crawford County, developing an interest in conservation and resource management. I received a B.S. in Biology from UW Stevens Point and a J.D. from UW Madison.



Photo courtesy Michael Cain

I was the lead attorney for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in their wetland and surface water regulatory program from 1975 until I retired in 2009. Through collaboration among Department staff, Wisconsin has developed a program which continues to be a national leader in surface water and wetland protection and conservation. We developed the first Water Quality Standards for Wetlands in the nation, and I received the Wisconsin Wetland Award (2009) and the National Wetland Award from the Environmental Law Institute and EPA (2010) in recognition of our collective work.

I was involved in drafting and developing laws and regulations protecting Wisconsin's waters under the Public Trust Doctrine. As the lead attorney for enforcement and litigation of these programs, I led the Department through hundreds of permit and enforcement cases to successful outcomes. It was a privilege to work with experts and scientists from the DNR, other state agencies, Federal agencies, the University of Wisconsin System, and regional planning commissions. I was involved in education and outreach on Public Trust and natural resource legal issues with the public, Wisconsin's attorneys and consultants, and at its law schools and universities.

I am now on the Board of Wisconsin's Green Fire and Co-Chair of the Public Trust and Wetlands Work Group. It is again a privilege to work with many of the same dedicated professionals as we contribute to the preservation of the institutional knowledge of our state's conservation heritage and help inform public discussions of the science and the policy implications of natural resource laws and policies.

P.O. Box 1206, Rhineland, WI 54501

Not a member?
Please join
Wisconsin's Green Fire

Please visit:

<https://wigreenfire.org/make-a-difference/>
to join or renew on-line or to download
a membership form.

Thank you for supporting
the conservation legacy of
Wisconsin.

Art credit: Ashli Burns-Fletcher



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Art credit: Betty Sibon



Art credit: Jane Herrick

April 22, 2020

Earth Day
celebrates 50th
anniversary

Wisconsin's
Green Fire
celebrates 3rd
anniversary

Art credit: Dagmar Plenk

