



WISCONSIN'S
greenfire
VOICES FOR CONSERVATION

Autumn 2020

NEWSLETTER

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Feingold Gives Annual Keynote: **Perspectives on Global Conservation, Policy, and Science**

by Bruce Neeb

When former state and U.S. Senator Russ Feingold addressed “Global Conservation, Policy, and Science” as the keynote of Wisconsin’s Green Fire’s series of annual gathering webinars, he highlighted the bi-partisan conservation-oriented partnership of Wisconsin Governors Warren Knowles (R) and Gaylord Nelson (D) in establishing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program. This program has played an important role in setting aside undeveloped lands that protect water quality—and the quality of life—in Wisconsin.

Feingold spoke of his accomplishments as a U.S. Senator made possible only through cooperation with other politicians, often from the other party. One example was the landmark campaign finance reform legislation he developed with Republican Senator John McCain.

Also while a U.S. Senator, Feingold took a lead role in the effort to establish the Great Lakes Compact in cooperation with other legislators from the Great Lakes and with Canada. After he left the Senate, Feingold served (2013-2015) in an appointed role as special envoy to the Great Lakes region of Africa, working to protect the people and resources of Eastern Congo and Rwanda. He collaborated with then Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 Director Susan Hedman (now a WGF member) to bring about a conference to discuss issues shared by the Great Lakes in the U.S. and in Africa



Photo courtesy Russ Feingold

(e.g., Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika). He was stunned when an African colleague explained that Africa’s Great Lakes date back 10 million years—and no one has explored their depths.

As a result of his Africa work, Feingold became active with the Campaign for Nature. As that organization’s honorary ambassador, he will attend the International Conference on Biodiversity next year in China. Campaign for Nature provides a \$1 billion investment in support of a coalition of nations and organizations to help communities, indigenous peoples, and nations conserve 30 percent of the planet in its natural state by 2030. The “30 by 30” goals are reminiscent of those established by the international committee on climate change. Conserving 30 percent may be a modest goal in countries like Canada, while in other places, it will be a challenge. Unfortunately, one country that has yet to sign on to the compact is the United States. www.wysscompact.org.

Keynote: Feingold continued on page 8

President's Message

Photo credit: Erica Peterson



Thinking Like a Planet

By Terry Daulton

I recently visited with a new supporter of Wisconsin's Green Fire, someone who was not familiar with the conservation work of Aldo Leopold. Her expertise in branding and communications led her to comment that our name might be puzzling to many in the general public. I immediately recalled the name debates we struggled with four years ago, brainstorming such novel ideas as Science or Silence Coalition, Long Green Line, or more pragmatically Science Voices for Wisconsin Conservation and Association of Natural Resources Professionals. From 26 options, we finally settled on *Wisconsin's Green Fire – Voices for Conservation*.

We hoped our name would be memorable, while recognizing that some people would be unfamiliar with Leopold or the literary reference to his essay "Thinking Like a Mountain." Leopold coins "green fire" in that essay as he describes the dying gleam in the eyes of a wolf he killed in the mountains of New Mexico. This experience resulted in his epiphany that all species, including predators, have a role in the ecosystem. For Leopold, thinking like a mountain means realizing the expanse of a mountain (ecosystem) needs the roles of all species, from the smallest to the apex predator wolf. In selecting our name, we knew that for those not steeped in conservation history, our name might puzzle, or even sound a bit inflammatory. But we also hoped our name would give opportunities for education and discussion.

When I think about it, maybe Leopold was not setting his sights high enough. In the year 2020, it is clear that we need to go a step further, we need to be *thinking like a planet*, our irreplaceable blue marble, as photographed from space. We also know that the "we" must include people from all ethnic and social strata. WGF and other groups need to actively promote diversity goals in our conservation planning. The green fire we use as our symbolic ethical guide today might not be the gleam in the eyes of a wolf, but rather lingering images of the child living in a home with lead pipes or of the bleached corals in the Great Barrier Reef.

Here at WGF, we are working locally, but trying to think like a planet, whether increasing carbon sequestration in our Wisconsin forests and farmlands or reducing water contamination. In these challenging times, many good causes call out for financial support, but we hope you will place us high on your list. This fall, please help us keep alive all the green fires we work to protect—with a generous donation and by taking our conservation message to friends and neighbors. Use the envelope in this newsletter to send your gift of green to WGF, or pass it on to someone you know and help us grow. As I said to our new supporter, WGF's brand is about providing natural resource science to decision makers so that future generations will be able to think like a mountain—and like a planet.

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

Supporting Wisconsin's Green Fire

By Fred Clark

What a year it's been! There is no doubt that at the end of 2020 our world will be dramatically different than the year we began in January.

Our board of directors, staff, and our active members who define Wisconsin's Green Fire are navigating the many changes of this unprecedented year. But despite all the challenges and unknowns, WGF has been more active and more influential in 2020 than at any point since our founding.

Our staff and many of our members have been engaged in formulating our seven science-based issue briefs for *Opportunities Now 2.0* (Natural and Working Lands Solutions for Climate Change, Wolves in Wisconsin, PFAS, Status of White-tailed Deer, Agriculture and Clean Water, Waters of the U.S. - Public Trust, and 21st Century Energy System). Our members are doing what we have always done best—diving deep on technical issues where details matter, in order to serve a crucial need in the conservation community.

Your financial support now will help make sure we can continue this important work.

If you've contributed to our success this year with your volunteer efforts—thank you! WGF is a lean organization because we rely extensively on the volunteer efforts of our professional members. Our 2020 operating budget is under \$275,000. Our revenue comes from foundation grants and support from people like you (membership dues and donations).

Now is when we are asking all our members to provide a contribution that will help us continue our efforts on behalf of a clean and healthy environment for all. We have included an envelope in this newsletter for your convenience. If you're one of our many existing supporters, please know that you are making our work possible. If it has been awhile since you have supported WGF financially, we're asking you to join us in whatever giving ways you can, so WGF can enter 2021 in a strong position.

Please refer to the article on page 9 for ideas on how to give. We also recently sent a mailing about end-of-year giving. Your financial support of Wisconsin's Green Fire can take many forms including:

- Individual unrestricted gifts
- Sponsorship of one of our programs
- Planned monthly giving
- Gift of appreciated securities

To discuss how we can facilitate your support for WGF, please contact me at fclark@wigreenfire.org or 608.697.2226. I'd love to talk with you.



Photo courtesy Fred Clark



Photo credit: NASA

Wisconsin's Green Fire Celebrates with Fourth

September was a milestone for Wisconsin's Green Fire—we held our 4th Annual Meeting! But, given the circumstances of COVID-19 in 2020, we met the challenges of social distancing with an online approach.

This year's meeting title "Age, Race, Politics, and Conservation - Addressing the Elephants in the Room" expressed our interest in how to better WGF in our current times. We offered panels, WGF updates, a webinar on race, a keynote, and a business meeting. More than 260 people registered for the racial equity webinar (see Racial Equity article this page). While we missed the in-person chance to get better acquainted with each other through field trips and to lighten up a bit with some fun, we could still gather, listen to inspiring speakers, and use Zoom break out groups for smaller conversations.

In this newsletter, we share articles that highlight the webinars. Find the recorded webinars at <https://wigreenfire.org/category/green-fire/>. Feel free to email your opinions or questions to info@wigreenfire.org.

Young Voices, New Members, and New Opportunities

By Diane Daulton

This webinar offered members and prospective members an opportunity to learn more about our organization. WGF leaders shared the year's highlights citing recent successes, such as *Opportunities Now*, participation in the Climate Forward Conference, and the sharing of expertise through testimony, media, and field tours.

Dolly Ledin, Chair of the Environmental Education Work Group and the annual meeting organizer, introduced WGF's collective desire to develop new relationships with young professionals and students in a two-way interaction (share expertise, gain insights relevant to WGF's future). Building on the "seeds" sown last year when Dolly led the creation of a student advisory group and several students attended last year's annual meeting, this year reaped the "fruits" of the advisory group outreach. Seven students (four from last year plus three additional students) shared their perspectives as featured speakers during the webinar.

Even with their diverse ethnicities and backgrounds, fields of study, geography, and career goals, common conservation threads emerged—students communicated interest in topics from climate change to sustainable

agriculture to forest health, wildlife management, pipeline hazards, pollinators, and more, including environmental justice. They were genuinely interested in connecting with our organization's experts and tapping in to mentor opportunities and graduate student research. They were pleasantly surprised to be welcomed so openly.

After hearing from the students, webinar participants (students and non-students) were assigned to Zoom break-out sessions to mull over how WGF can respond to topics that students care about and to brainstorm ideas for concrete projects and collaboration with WGF student involvement. These sessions revealed opportunities for those in careers or majors that didn't necessarily sport a conservation label, like those studying law, engineering, or urban planning fields.

As always, the conversation with students brought out more questions than answers. While we may not have known exactly where to start, the important thing is that, together with students, we identified some first steps to begin to work together. Now we'll continue the conversation as we find ways to engage students with our leadership and infuse student ideas into our workplan and WGF's future.



Photo credit: Lucy Tyrrell

Understanding Racial Equity and Inclusion in Conservation

By Kate Reilly

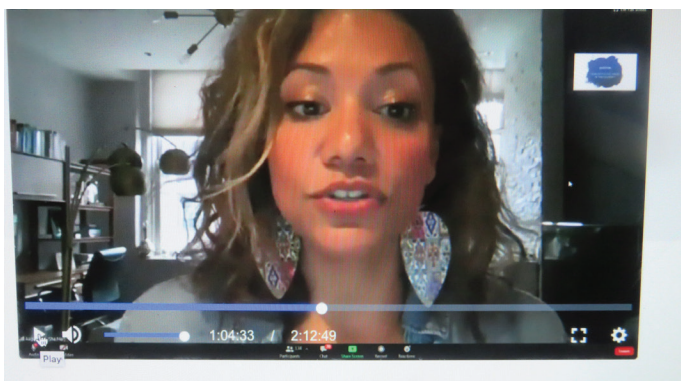
The term climate change may have a new meaning for Wisconsin's conservation community. Since George Floyd's killing by police officers in May, people of good will throughout the nation have begun to question, discuss, and learn about systemic racism, white supremacy, social justice, and many other topics related to diversity and equity. Many of us welcome a changing racial climate, but are unsure about how to move forward personally and professionally to make and sustain change.

Racial Equality continued on page 5

Annual Meeting—Recap and Retrospectives

Racial Equality continued from page 4

On September 16, August Ball of Cream City Conservation (<https://www.creamcityconservation.org/>) helped us begin this journey with her presentation, “Understanding Racial Equity and Inclusion in Conservation.” The webinar, co-hosted by WGF, Gathering Waters, and the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin (NRFW), was designed by August to help participants build a shared understanding of race, racism, and the history of racism in America.



August Ball illustrated how systemic racism was established and maintained over hundreds of years. Government actions to disadvantage people of color started in the 1600s and continue today in more familiar programs, such as the Social Security and the Federal Housing Acts, which continue to create barriers for people of color.

The pressing question for many of the participants is where do I begin to change racism in our society? August points out that our identities, behaviors, and the spaces or positions of power we occupy may vary greatly, so how we approach dismantling racism will vary greatly as well. She suggests the work begin within us individually and within our own circles of influence.

Wisconsin’s conservation community is our sphere of influence. What are the barriers for conservation students or young professionals of color? August suggests that attracting diverse students of color isn’t as much of an issue as retainment. We need to understand better what marginalization looks like in conservation, for students, for professionals, for people just trying to enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities white people take for granted. August’s presentation was the beginning of a conversation that hopefully will lead to positive climate change in racial inequities in Wisconsin’s conservation community. WGF, Gathering Waters, and NRFW are

committed to keeping this conversation going. Watch for information from each of these organizations on new opportunities for continuing education and discussion on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A video recording of August’s presentation on September 16 is available at <https://wigreenfire.org/category/green-fire/>.



WGF’s Business Meeting 2020

By Terry Daulton

As Board President, I launched the Wisconsin’s Green Fire annual business meeting using an analogy from 1980s television “Mission Impossible” to explain how we accepted the daunting mission to provide sound science for decision making in Wisconsin. Executive Director Fred Clark followed with highlights of our year’s work.

We honored Tom Hauge, who is stepping down after four years on the board, but continues as co-chair of the Wildlife Work Group. We introduced three new incoming board members—Robin Schmidt, Bryan Pierce, and Jodi Haybush Synikin.

We provided a series of “shorts:”

- Nancy Larson (WGF Assistant Director) shared an eight-minute film (her debut) in which she explores WGF’s work on the Enbridge oil pipeline (Line 5) project. By the side of the rushing Brunsweiler River, she brings together issues of fragile Lake Superior watersheds, climate change, environmental justice for tribes, world class wetlands, and complex regulatory challenges. See article page 7.
- Ron Eckstein and Fred Clark provided a summary of WGF’s work in forestry, climate resilience, and forest biodiversity.
- John Robinson and Sarah Wilkins presented a quick summary of PFAS.

The suggestions offered about diversity and environmental justice during Zoom breakout groups, along with member ideas from our entire annual meeting, will help guide WGF planning, specifically our work plan for 2021. We missed the in-person camaraderie of the annual meeting in 2020, but want to continue to engage in the two-fold charge of WGF—have an impact and provide sound science, and have fun with colleagues as we tackle conservation work.

More Articles of Annual Meeting Recap on page 6

More WGF Annual Meeting Recap

More Articles of Annual Meeting Recap continued from page 5

Panel Discusses Conservation Issues

By Don Behm

Four lawmakers and a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) official provided a virtual discussion of “Transformative Opportunities and New Challenges in Conservation” at the invitation of Wisconsin’s Green Fire. The panelists spoke at the WGF annual meeting webinar on September 23.

Speakers at the forum included State Senators Janet Bewley (D-Mason), Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay), and LeTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) along with State Representative Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) and WDNR Assistant Deputy Secretary Todd Ambs. A video of the full 90-minute forum can be viewed at <https://wigreenfire.org/category/green-fire/>.

The panelists provided their somber assessments of the upcoming state budget. In brief, because the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted Wisconsin’s economy and reduced the flow of income and state sales taxes this year, Wisconsin’s government already is tamping down expectations of including new environmental protection efforts in a 2021–2023 state spending plan.

Since March, the administration of Governor Tony Evers has directed agencies to trim a total of \$320 million from their current operating budgets in response to the revenue shortfall. For that reason, lawmakers are not likely to gain approval of a new environmental cleanup measure or other proposal if it requires spending significant amounts of tax dollars from the state’s general fund.

As it is, a battle is shaping up over the future of Wisconsin’s cornerstone of land conservation, the 30-year-old Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. The WDNR budget request includes a 10-year reauthorization of the Stewardship Program with an increase of borrowing authority up to \$50 million a year. The current budget reauthorized the program for only two years with borrowing authority of \$33 million annually.

Ambs said the WDNR will continue to emphasize the need for cleaning up the state’s waters, response to the adverse impacts of climate change, and reauthorizing the Stewardship Program.

Johnson, a member of the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Finance, discussed the need to remove more of the



Photos courtesy of the panelists.



Conservation Panelists—top row (State Senators): LeTonya Johnson, Rob Cowles, Janet Bewley; second row: Joel Kitchens (State Representative), Todd Ambs (WDNR Assistant Deputy Secretary).

200,000 lead pipe “laterals” delivering drinking water to residences in Wisconsin. Lead exposure causes serious health problems, particularly in young children.

The WDNR’s 2021–2023 budget request includes a one-time transfer of \$63 million in federal dollars from the state’s clean water loan program to the state’s drinking water loan program, Ambs said. The money will help communities pay for removing the laterals that connect street water mains to residences and businesses.

Cowles, Chair of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy, said he will be pushing for taking lead out of drinking water in schools, improving water systems in state parks, and providing adequate staff for the WDNR’s wastewater permit program.

Kitchens, Chair of the Assembly Environmental Committee, said one priority for him will be boosting funding for county conservationists across Wisconsin. He also pledged to support 10-year reauthorization of the Stewardship Program.

Bewley, the Senate Minority Leader, expressed her frustration with the refusal of state Republican leaders to increase taxes to pay for needed public health and environmental initiatives.



Photo credit: Lucy Tyrrell



Nancy Larson, Assistant Director, WGF

Film Debut with WGF Story of Pipeline

By Nancy Larson

Our brains seem to be wired for stories. Stories can even help us understand science and speak to us in ways that facts alone do not. Good stories employ a quest, conflict, or problem. A protagonist changes during the story through the challenges she faces. Good stories have a turning point, resolution, and outcome.

During last December's "Communicating Science through Story" workshop, Holly Walter Kerby, an award-winning college science educator and instructor with the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science, guided us to share our science messages through a story board and crafting three-minute stories.

To put these lessons into practice, a small team, comprised of me (script writer and actor), Holly (coach and reviewer), my husband, John Spangberg (film crew), and Jim Perry (film editor), decided to make a home-made video. Our video premiered at our annual meeting to update WGF members on our oil pipeline work. I wrote the script, thinking I wanted to tell *everything* about the pipeline—because it is all interesting and important. Holly (and other reviewers) helped me focus on what rungs of the story ladder were essential—and cut the rest. It wasn't easy to condense a year of work into an eight-minute story. John used our digital camera to film me next to the Brunswiler River, which is on the path of the proposed re-route of the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline.

Through this process, we learned what any videographer already knows. For example, an external microphone (which we didn't have) is needed to cut out background noise. We also learned it isn't easy to show a high-resolution video to a large group over Zoom without delays in the feed. Despite the foibles, I really enjoyed the compliments on my hat. You can watch the pipeline

Film Debut continued on page 9

Students Respond: UW-Oshkosh Earth Charter Week's Keynote—J. Drew Lanham

By Loretha Jack, *Samantha Sprenger, Christopher Totten, *William Vuyk, *and Shannon Davis-Foust

"Same air, same water, same soil, same earth, same fate" were poignant words uttered by **J. Drew Lanham**, Ph.D. in his virtual keynote address at UW-Oshkosh's Earth Charter Community Summit on October 6. Dr. Lanham attended UW-Oshkosh. He is Distinguished Alumni Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Master Teacher at Clemson University. Dr. Lanham's speech was intense.

He covered hundreds of years of global environmental history leaving his virtual audience with a lot to sort out. How does the next generation interpret Lanham's message? Four recently- and nearly-graduated UW students share their responses to a few of his main points.

Former House Representative John Lewis liked to encourage "good trouble," which Dr. Lanham expanded to "better trouble." What is your idea of "better trouble" for environmental issues?

Samantha Sprenger (senior double major in environmental studies and geology at UW-Oshkosh): Creating good trouble means going against the status quo in the name of what is morally right. We need to actively decide not to simply "follow orders" when that causes harm and degradation. Creating good trouble may tackle one issue (i.e., pollution), but in order to create "better trouble," we need to recognize how that issue is interwoven with many other issues (e.g., social justice).

Christopher Totten (recent graduate of UW-Oshkosh, with a major in political science, a minor in chemistry): Better trouble means BIGGER trouble. It means disrupting the corporate status quo. With companies like Coca-Cola, Nestlé, and Adidas exploiting not only our environment, but our fellow human beings, it is time to reexamine our complacency with corporate immorality. Regardless of if they are "too big to fail," we need to let companies that refuse to change their exploitative ways "fade away" by removing their political allies from office, demanding stricter, more robust social and environmental policies, and voting with our dollars when we make a purchase.

**members of WGF's Student Work Group*

Students Respond continued on page 12



Photo credit: Clemson University

Acknowledgments

Photo courtesy Patty Loew



By *Patty Loew, Ph.D.*
Professor, Medill School of Journalism
Director, Center for Native American & Indigenous Research
Northwestern University

Another Indigenous Peoples Day has come and passed. It's gratifying that hundreds of cities, states, schools, and organizations have replaced the Columbus holiday with a day commemorating this country's First Peoples. Most of us know that, as far as heroes go, Columbus was a non-starter—a brutal, tyrannical agent of genocide who never set foot on the North American continent. Increasingly, he is being supplanted by celebrations of diversity and inclusion...and land acknowledgments.

Land acknowledgments are a formal recognition of the Indigenous people who inhabited, and in many cases still inhabit, the land now settled by others. It's a movement across the U.S. and Canada and has been for a few years. As long as it's not performative, I think most Native people appreciate the tribute. Although Kiowa journalist Tristan Ahtone, who recently spoke to my class at Northwestern University, likened it to a roommate stealing your laptop. "So, he says, yeah, I took it. But I put up a plaque and admitted it, so it's all good."

What does it mean to really acknowledge the connection between Indigenous people and their lands? I think it reminds us to not only own up to the fact that the prosperity some enjoy came at others' expense, but also remember that we have an obligation to the land we now share. The land is what connects the past to the present and the present to the future. The Ojibwe call it Seventh Generation thinking, a philosophy that obligates us to make decisions in the best interests of our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and beyond and to look back and be grateful for the sacrifices made by our ancestors seven generations ago.

The generosity of spirit and the willingness to act to preserve our natural resources is what has drawn me to Wisconsin's Green Fire. It reminds me of the noteworthy environmentalists: Aldo Leopold, Gaylord Nelson, Walt Bresette, and so many others who inspired organizations like yours. Their work and yours is a clarion call to a new generation that decries environmental racism and social injustice. The millennials I teach are smart and sensitive, less greedy than my generation, and

embrace new concepts like "Rights of Nature"—another increasingly popular worldwide initiative, which holds that nature in all forms has the right to exist, persist, maintain, and regenerate. Land, people, and nature coexisting in harmony—now that's a triad worthy of acknowledgment.



Art credit: Donn Christensen

Keynote: Feingold continued from page 1

According to Feingold, one current challenge involves getting people to understand that the loss of biodiversity rivals the climate crisis in terms of threats to life on Earth. Species threatened by development, overharvest, and contamination include not only such large species as polar bears, elephants, and gorillas, but also millions of bird, insect, and microscopic species that form the foundation of life on the planet.

Feingold said he is excited by the growing environmental interest among young people around the country, as evidenced by groups of high school students showing up at municipal offices and hearings to demand change. He is saddened, he says, that COVID-19 lockdowns appear to have taken some of the steam out of the youth movement on the climate crisis. It may be hard to accept that we need to fight these two major challenges at once. It will be essential, he says, to evaluate and assess the impacts of both climate change and habitat loss, to tell the stories as impacts are witnessed, and to remind people of what we stand to lose.

See WGF's 60-second videos featuring Russ Feingold at wigreenfire.org/wisconsins-green-fire-is-a-critical-voice-for-science-in-conservation/. We appreciate his support of WGF.

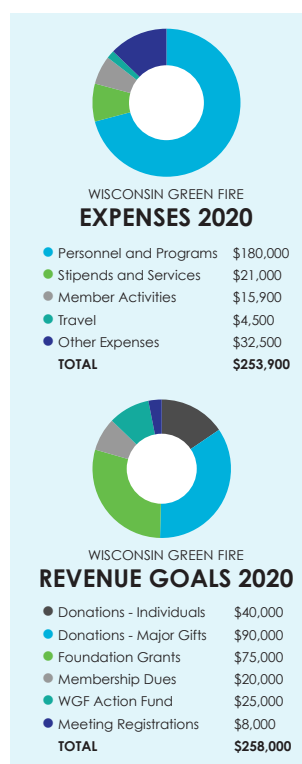


Photo credit: Lucy Tyrrell

Creative Giving Benefits You and Wisconsin's Green Fire

By Bob Gurda, WGF Treasurer

We're heading toward the end of the year, the time of charitable donations. We have included a donation envelope in this newsletter to encourage you to think about giving to WGF, a gift to help throughout 2021, in support of a healthy environment for everyone—by sharing science for management of Wisconsin's natural resources.



In 2020, WGF added staff (Science Director, Communications Specialist) whose work on behalf of WGF adds breadth to what we can accomplish. We ask that everyone share in the financial support of WGF projects, such as the new and forthcoming *Opportunities Now* reports, as well as of our committed and productive staff. Here we enumerate some ways you can offer that support—perhaps ideas that you have not considered. Regardless of the amount of your gift, all donations make a difference and are very much appreciated.

One option is to simply provide a cash gift by sending a check or using a credit card on the WGF web site. New for tax year 2020 is the ability to make a charitable contribution deduction (up to \$300) even if you choose the standard deduction on your federal tax return. The amount of benefit you receive depends on your marginal tax bracket. For those who itemize deductions, for 2020 only, because of the impacts of the pandemic, Congress increased the limit on charitable deductions from 60 percent to 100 percent of your adjusted gross income.

Some less well-known ways of charitable giving have even larger tax benefits that might work for you. For example, consider the case where you have assets you wish to sell, for which, because they have appreciated

over time, you would pay tax on the capital gains. However, you might consider gifting these assets directly to WGF, thereby avoiding the capital gains tax, plus generating an itemized deduction for the full value of the assets on that date. Any time is a good time to take this approach, but when the market value is higher brings optimal benefit.

If you have a traditional IRA and must start taking a minimum required distribution, you can satisfy this requirement by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution directly to WGF and avoid being taxed on the gift. There is a limit of \$100,000 per year per person. If you have a tax-deferred account such as a 401(k), 403(b), or 457, these funds can be easily rolled over (with no tax consequences) to an IRA so that this kind of distribution can be made.

Another option is to create a Donor Advised Fund through a local organization such as a community foundation. Here you can make a large-enough donation in one year to be able to benefit from itemizing deductions, but you can distribute those funds all at once, over several years, or on a schedule. Using this approach, you can donate assets like stocks, mutual funds, real estate, or even that Picasso on the wall! And finally, there are many ways to benefit WGF through your estate plan, including trusts and wills.

We suggest you consult with your financial advisor to consider the details and decide what approach might work best for you and your situation. As the potential recipient, WGF stands ready to help with the details of accepting your giving and generosity: fcclark@wlgreenfire.org.

Contributions can be made:

Electronically:

<https://wlgreenfire.org/make-a-difference/make-a-donation/>

By Mail:

Wisconsin's Green Fire
PO Box 1206
Rhinelander, WI 54501

Film Debut continued from page 7

video at WGF's website: <https://wlgreenfire.org/wisconsins-green-fire-work-on-oil-pipelines/>.

I look forward to a broader use of story techniques and short films within WGF to convey our messages. Stories in films can reach people how they are accustomed to receiving information. To find WGF's YouTube channel, go to YouTube.com and search on "Wisconsin's Green Fire."

Photo credit: Lucy Tyrrell

Wisconsin DNR Submits 2021–2023 State Budget Request

By Paul Heinen, WGF Legislative Liaison

Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has submitted its budget request for 2021–2023 to Governor Tony Evers. (See the complete budget request at: <https://widnr.widen.net/s/uravmog37o>)

The budget highlights included here indicate the success and influence of WGF's *Opportunities Now*, as ideas and funding suggestions in our report were incorporated in the budget requests. Stewardship re-authorization, water clean-up and management, and agricultural programs are key strategic WGF priorities. We have worked closely with WDNR staff and other statewide conservation and environmental groups on these issues.

Stewardship Program

The budget request includes statutory language changes to reauthorize the Stewardship program at \$50 million per year for another 10 years (through fiscal year 2032) with subprogram funding levels yet to be determined. WGF staff and members have been active in supporting re-authorization. Executive Director Fred Clark met with Governor Evers in October to discuss our support and sent our ideas for a new Stewardship program to WDNR Secretary Preston Cole.

Water Clean Up

Clean drinking water is a WGF priority. In the budget, there is an item for \$25 million in additional bonding authority to remove contaminated sediments in Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, and their tributaries. Funding would be used to leverage as much as \$117 million from federal agency programs like the Great Lakes Legacy Act, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Continuing Authority Program, as well as from other non-federal sponsor contributions.

Achieving Water Quality in Agriculture

Agricultural pollution reduction is a key part of our recommended actions for 2019–2021. The WDNR is requesting \$6.5 million in additional bonding for small-scale and large-scale Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) projects and Notice of Discharge (NOD) cost-sharing grants to governmental units working with owners and operators of livestock operations to meet required pollution controls. Additional funding would implement agricultural performance standards and

prohibitions statewide and help achieve the water quality goals of total maximum daily loads (TMDL) in targeted watersheds as required in the federal Clean Water Act.

Social Justice and Water Issues

Grants are being sought that would provide funding to local units of government to assist with the costs of storm water management, flood reduction, and improvements in water quality and water habitat. These programs are designed to reduce the economic and social impact on municipalities. It is great to see the WDNR linking social justice goals to its budget request.

Beyond the scope of *Opportunities Now*, two requests have been included: (1) a request for \$95,000 annually to address statewide utility cost increases for the Parks account, (2) a request for statutory authority to establish a new, stand-alone program revenue appropriation for Aquatic Plant Management fees (about \$150,000 generated annually would be placed specifically for this program rather than being comingled with other revenues).

The Department will add more items after the November election and make its final budget submission in December of 2020. The Governor will introduce the State Budget in January of 2021 and the Legislature will debate it and pass it by July 1, 2021.

Stayed tuned over the upcoming months as we continue to refine whether and how to push for any remaining items we feel are priorities in an austere budget for the next two years. We will also look for ways to use our science and expertise to support bills introduced in the 2012–2023 legislative session starting in January of 2021 and we will keep you informed of their progress.



Photo credit: Lucy Tyrrell

Staff Adds Anna Hawley as Communication Specialist

By Nancy Larson

Anna Hawley joined Wisconsin's Green Fire in September as the half-time Communications Specialist. She holds a B.S. in psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and an M.S. in Environmental Conservation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Photo courtesy Anna Hawley

Before joining WGF, she worked for 10 years at the Aldo Leopold Foundation, first as the Public Program Coordinator and later as the Leopold Fellow's Curriculum Coordinator. Anna scheduled onsite workshops and tours (Aldo Leopold Shack and Farm, sandhill crane viewing behind the shack). Her other roles ranged from handling the monthly e-newsletter and social media accounts for the Foundation to coordinating the Wisconsin Phenology Calendar. She also worked with the project team to revamp the Leopold Foundation's internship program with a formal curriculum that would train the next generation of conservation leaders.

Anna was born and raised in northern Minnesota, but now lives in Gonzales, Texas with her husband Rodd and three cats. Her hobbies include reading, gardening, and exploring her new home state. When she isn't working on WGF projects, she serves as the Administrative Assistant for the San Antonio River Foundation. Anna is excited to plug back into Wisconsin's conservation community, focusing on communication strategy and implementation.

Anna is settling in to several roles at WGF. She'll be coordinating with our staff and volunteers to produce WGF work products. She'll keep information flowing to our members and the public on our web site, social media, and e-newsletters. She will also help manage our member databases. We are pleased to expand our communication capacity with Anna's experience and expertise. You can reach Anna at ahawley@wigreenfire.org.

Profiles in Conservation

A Winding Life-Career Path

By Robin Schmidt, Wisconsin DNR (33 years), DATCP (6 years)

I never envisioned a single life-career path. Every time I veered, I found fresh, fulfilling experiences. When I was a Master's student at UW-Madison (Land Resource Program), the Groundwater Law was enacted and GIS was just emerging as a tool for managing resources. Because I also worked full time in the Wisconsin DNR's Water Resources Program, I selected a thesis project that was relevant and innovative—using GIS technology to overlay several physical maps to show Groundwater Contamination Susceptibility in Wisconsin. My “pizza” map (colors like tomatoes and cheese) continues in use 33 years later! <https://wgnhs.wisc.edu/pubs/000420/>



Photo courtesy Robin Schmidt

From there, my path led me to the WDNR's Remediation and Redevelopment program—I managed the process for rating potential Superfund sites and served as manager on several sites. Next, I became the team leader for the State Spill Response Team and the Dry Cleaner Environmental Response Program—taking on new skills, issues, and challenges.

After 20+ years in the “clean-up” world, my path shifted, taking me to my role as Emergency Manager/Homeland Security Liaison in Wisconsin's Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. For six years, I worked on pandemic planning, flood response, food security, and animal disease outbreaks. While it was fascinating and I helped the agency move forward, I truly missed links to the environment.

Beginning in 2010, I became the WDNR's Environmental Loans Section Chief to help manage municipal water construction projects. Because of the horrific impacts of lead in drinking water in Flint, Michigan, we assessed water supplies in Wisconsin. Indeed, we discovered a significant lead issue in water systems of many older municipalities with lead pipes (originally used in northern climates because of their flexibility). My team and I used creativity and innovation to form a lead pipe replacement program that was one of the first in the country. Within three months of approval from the Secretary and Governor, we were up and running with a \$22 million program to help replace lead laterals that connected water mains with people's homes.

I also served for 10 years on the Dane County Board. Now retired, my path takes me to work with organizations such as Wisconsin's Green Fire where I continue to be among friends, former co-workers, and others who are committed to our environment.

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Students Respond continued from page 7

Dr. Lanham drew parallels between environmental exploitation and human exploitation. In what ways can social justice be incorporated into conservation work and how can conservationists be convinced that they do need to address these issues?

William Vuyk (current biology major at UW-Madison): Many conservation organizations, often pressed for funding while in the ring with governments and powerful corporate interests, have to pick their battles. However, both social justice and sustainability are so significant that to relegate them to their own separate committees and organizations is a mistake. Both issues deserve a seat at every table, a place in every room, as Dr. Lanham said. When everyone takes a stake, then no one group has to shoulder the immense weight of social justice alone.

Loretha Jack (recent UW-Milwaukee graduate with a double major in biological sciences and conservation and environmental science): As a black woman and an environmentalist, I have never been able to separate my commitment to social justice from my commitment to conservation. One of the reasons I became interested in conservation was because I saw that environmental

problems disproportionately impact the most vulnerable members of society. A theme of Dr. Lanham's speech was convergence, something I think is imperative if we wish to create a sustainable society. Despite struggles to find resources to cover every important topic, we should always try to relate conservation issues back to a human level when we convey our messages to the public. When people are still fighting for basic rights and needs, it leaves a lot less time and energy to advocate for environmental issues. All environmentalists should have a personal commitment to fighting for social justice so all people are treated fairly and are free to join this cause.

These UW students are keenly aware that a large proportion of the world suffers with worse air, worse water, worse soil than the rich and powerful. But when it comes to surviving the consequences of climate change, societal labels don't matter. Regardless of wealth, political affiliation, religion, or ethnicity, "we are all neighbors on the same spinning blue ball tumbling through space." Dr. Lanham's mantra of "same air, same water. . ." is a cry for unification and justice. Humanity needs to come together with compassion for one another and start cramming conservation into every room . . . both physical and virtual.