

## June News from Wisconsin's Green Fire

### US Supreme Court Decision Reduces Protections for Wetlands



*By Michael Cain, Chair of the WGF  
Public Trust and Wetlands Work Group*

**The US Supreme Court recently rendered a decision** which reduced the scope of protections for wetlands and small ephemeral waterways under the [Clean Water Act](#). In the case, [Sackett v. EPA](#), a 5-4 majority of the Supreme Court narrowed the definition of “waters of the US” in a way that

will remove protections for approximately 50 percent of the nation’s wetlands and ephemeral waterways.

**Wisconsin wetlands may be impacted less than wetlands in other states.**

The impacts of the decision on protections of Wisconsin wetlands are lessened due to a statute that was adopted unanimously in both houses of the WI Legislature in 2001 in response to an earlier narrowing of the protections of wetland by the US Supreme Court. That statute provides that WI will review projects for “non-federal wetlands” under WI law. However, this will not protect all wetlands in WI due to exemptions for some wetlands that the Legislature put in place in 2017.

The weakening of these standards under the Clean Water Act will have **impacts on water quality, flooding potential and fish and wildlife habitat**. Four of the US Supreme Court Justices, including Justice Kavanaugh, noted that the decision “departs from 45 years of consistent agency practice, and from this Court’s precedents.”

In 2021, **Wisconsin’s Green Fire put together an *Opportunities Now* report**, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, to assess the impacts of a set of rules that removed protection of 55% of the nation’s wetlands. Read the full *Opportunities Now* report here: [Wetlands and Waterways in Wisconsin: Navigating Changes to the Federal Waters of the United States \(WOTUS\) Rule](#). **We intend, in the coming months, to update that analysis** for the new limits which have been put in place by the Sackett v. EPA decision.

*Photo: Wisconsin Landscape Scenic Image via Pixabay - CC License.*

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## Spotlight on Sam Dawson & Conservation Pathways



*By Carolyn Pralle, WGF Communications Coordinator*

**Please join us in welcoming Sam Dawson**, our new Conservation Fellow, to the WGF staff! Sam started with WGF in April. He will be coordinating the [Conservation Pathways Program](#) and working closely with the [Aspiring Conservation Professionals \(ACP\) Work Group](#).

Sam recently completed his Master's of Public Administration from the University of Washington. He has global experience as a teacher in Lebanon and in community development in Panama and Nicaragua. Here in the USA, he's held various program support roles in Milwaukee, WI and Seattle, WA.

As Conservation Fellow, a big part of Sam's role is supporting new generations of conservationists. This is one of [WGF's five conservation priorities](#) from our strategic plan.

- The **Conservation Pathways Program** provides a [\\$1,000 scholarship](#) and a one-year mentoring program for young people from all backgrounds and abilities who are interested in environmental careers.
- The **Aspiring Conservation Professionals Work Group** is an inclusive group of students and early-career professionals centered around [building connections](#) and opportunities among WGF's community of conservation experts and beyond.

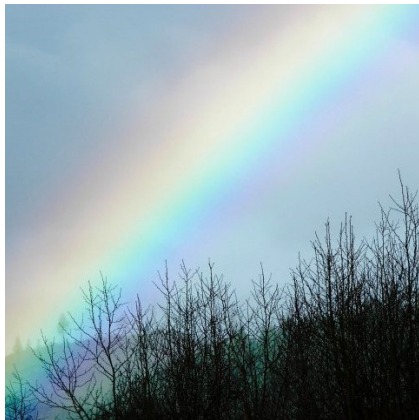
Reach out to Sam via email at [sdawson@wlgreenfire.org](mailto:sdawson@wlgreenfire.org). We're so excited to have him as part of our team!

Photo: Sam Dawson, 2023.

[Read More About Sam](#)

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## Celebrate Pride Month - June 2023



*By Carolyn Pralle, WGF Communications Coordinator*

**Happy Pride Month!** Respecting, honoring, and celebrating the LGBTQ+ community is a core part of who we are at Wisconsin's Green Fire (WGF). As a nonpartisan and independent member-supported organization, we're powered by the diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and interests of our conservation community. We're proud of the diverse identities among our members, including our LGBTQ+ members!

In our [Spring 2023 issue of Confluences](#), our Board President Tom Jerow reflected on his experiences as a gay man working in conservation in Wisconsin over the past 40+ years. He wrote, "Today the LGBTQ+ community



is better accepted but systemic homophobia is still with us. It is heartening, however, to see more acceptance particularly among our younger generation of aspiring conservation professionals. If we all work together toward an inclusive and accepting environment, life will get better for everyone.”

WGF President Jerow continued, “At Wisconsin’s Green Fire, one goal of our recently adopted strategic plan is to work toward a more inclusive conservation community that benefits from the participation of both the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.” Here are two of the ways we’re building that inclusive culture into our organization:

1. We’re taking a leadership role in the [DEIJ Community of Practice for Wisconsin Conservation](#), a community of 92+ organizations across Wisconsin. **You can join in too by [filling out this form](#).**
2. We’re building DEIJ ethos and practices into our efforts with every one of our [WGF Work Groups](#). We’re actively seeking and using feedback from our members about our DEIJ initiatives.

So, let’s be clear: if you are lesbian, gay, bi, trans, non-binary, queer, questioning, ace, two-spirit, or another identity we didn’t name here (or a straight ally) and you share our commitment to science and conservation, **you are welcome and encouraged to be a part of Wisconsin’s Green Fire!**

We want to hear from you, including your input on how we can be more inclusive as an organization. Reach out to our Communications Coordinator, Carolyn Pralle, at [cpralle@wigreenfire.org](mailto:cpralle@wigreenfire.org) or [find us on social media](#).

Photo: Rainbow over Paddock Lake, Wisconsin. Via Wikimedia Commons.

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## Aspiring Conservation Professionals Column

### Congratulations to Isabelle Bieser, New ACP Work Group Chair!

*By Carolyn Pralle, WGF Communications Coordinator*

The Aspiring Conservation Professionals (ACP) Work Group welcomes [Isabelle Bieser](#) as the new rising Chair of the Work Group as of June 2023. Congratulations Isabelle!

Isabelle currently works as the Manager of Innovation & Community Engagement at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. She has a background in geosciences from Wellesley College and a Master's in Environmental Conservation from UW-Madison.

[Loretha Jack](#) is the outgoing ACP Chair. Thank you, Loretha for your



leadership and dedication with ACP!

Loretha has been involved with WGF since 2019, working on wetland policy and protection with the Public Trust and Wetlands Work Group before becoming Chair for the ACP Work Group in 2021. Loretha graduated from UW-Milwaukee with majors in Biological Sciences and Conservation and Environmental Science. She currently works for the WDNR as an LTE Water Resources Management Specialist.

The ACP is always open to new members. Reach out to [Isabelle](#) via email to learn more and get involved. She's interested in building and finding mentors, birding in Milwaukee, and the power of community engaged conservation.

[Read more about WGF's ACP Work Group](#)

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## Get Involved in Wisconsin Conservation

**Job Opportunities! Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) is hiring for two positions.** WTCAC is seeking an [Outreach and Education Coordinator](#) and a [Community Conservationist](#). Deadline to apply is July 1st, 2023.

- [Learn more here](#). Submit resumes and cover letters to [jmears@wtcac.org](mailto:jmears@wtcac.org).

**Public Comment Period Open for Updated Trails Network Plan:** The DNR and Legislative Trails Council are seeking public comment on a draft update to the state's Trails Network Plan, last updated in 2003. [Submit your comment](#) about trail use via the interactive web map by August 7th, 2023.

- [Read more](#) about the plan and additional ways to submit comments.

**Join the Timber Wolf Alliance (TWA) for a wolf ecology volunteer-certification course August 18th-20th at the Northland College Forest Lodge Educational Campus.** Learn about wolf ecology, wolf monitoring techniques, and the latest wolf issues from biologists and educators immersed in this field. This workshop meets the ecology qualifications for being a Wisconsin DNR volunteer carnivore tracker and the training for the Timber Wolf Alliance's Speakers Bureau. **Wisconsin's Green Fire is co-sponsoring this event.**

- [Learn more and register here](#) for the TWA workshop.

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## Wisconsin Conservation News

Northern News Now Jun 1st article and TV broadcast featuring WGF's Adrian Wydeven: [Sen. Tammy Baldwin introduces bill to delist gray wolves from endangered species list](#)

WPR's Jun 2nd article featuring WGF's Michael Cain: [Wetlands in Wisconsin may fare better than other states after Supreme Court limited federal regulation](#)

Wisconsin Examiner's June 5th article featuring WGF's Michael Cain: [State law keeps Wisconsin's wetlands protected despite U.S. Supreme Court decision - Wisconsin Examiner](#)

WGF Member Michael Williamson confirmed by WI Senate on June 7th to [serve as a member on the DATCP Livestock Facility Siting Review Board](#)

Wisconsin's Green Fire needs your support. Your donation assures that conservation issues around the state are addressed with the best scientific information available.

**Give Today to Support Conservation Tomorrow!**

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