

December News from Wisconsin's Green Fire

Year-end Musings from Meleesa

by Meleesa Johnson, WGF Executive Director

Some of my fondest childhood memories are of traipsing through the marshes and forests in what is now the Mead Wildlife Area. I learned to quietly sit and listen to the natural world. I remember watching a magnificent snowy owl as the sun came up over the cold November horizon, swooping down onto an unsuspecting rodent.

I delighted in foxes frolicking about and coyotes lurking at the edges of my perch. But the creatures I never saw, in all those years, were wolves and bald eagles. It wasn't until well into my 30s and 40s (in the late 1970s and early 1980s) that I witnessed those glorious creatures in the wild.



Photo: Snowy owl, via Pixabay

Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." In the short few years that I have spent with Wisconsin's Green Fire—first as a member and now as your executive director—I have come to believe this quote exemplifies Wisconsin's Green Fire, our founders, our leaders, and our members.

Despite the ever-changing and often volatile, political, and financial landscape, we have stayed focused on our vision: that Wisconsinites enjoy the benefits of clean water, clean air, and healthy ecosystems achieved through scientific and thoughtful management of natural resources. The work of conserving and restoring nature has been and continues to be a daunting task. The ongoing struggle to protect our natural world will likely plague generations to come. There will always be intervening forces to slow or even halt this work. But Wisconsin's Green Fire's dedication to our mission is unwavering.

Thank you for your support and all you do for Wisconsin's Green Fire. We're looking forward to the work ahead in 2024, and we'll see you at the annual meeting on December 27th. *Forward!*

[Register for Annual Meeting: Dec. 27th 4-6pm](#)

Representing Wisconsin's Green Fire, **Michael Cain** (co-chair of WGF's Public Trust and Wetlands work group) testified in **opposition to Senate Bill 541** on Nov. 15th at the State Capitol. This bill would change how [fill](#) can be used in commercial waterways and Great Lakes waters.



Michael Cain (seated at end of table) represents WGF, testifying in opposition to SB541. Photo by Paul Heinen.

In opposing SB541, Michael testified that, "the criteria and procedures in this bill" could allow "conveyance of State-owned lakebed to private individuals 'for private economic development' (page 5, line 23)."

He noted that some development in commercial waterways, like Milwaukee's Riverwalk can be consistent with the public trust doctrine and public rights to waterways and expressed a willingness to work with authors of the bill.

At the end of the hearing, Senate Committee Chair Senator Rob Cowles suggested that all of the groups get together and work out a compromise. Michael has already met with one of the mayors who testified in favor and with the lobbyists for the two major groups supporting the bill: the Realtors of Wisconsin and the League of Municipalities.

Wisconsin's Green Fire is hosting a meeting with all of the parties involved with the bill as we help lead the groups to a compromise before the end of this legislative session in February of 2024.

[Read More about WGF's Latest Work](#)

Aspiring Conservation Professionals

by Isabelle Bieser, Aspiring Conservation Professionals Work Group Chair

Register by Dec. 20th for the **2nd Annual Wisconsin Conservation Retreat!** Join us in talking about climate resiliency, conservation strategies, and more **January 3rd-5th, 2024.**



Aspiring Conservation Professionals

is partnering with the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Student Environmental Action Coalition for this retreat bringing students and professionals together. This gathering is for students who are passionate about the environment and conservation from **all fields of study**, not just natural resources.

Attendees will be invited to a **networking session** with other professionals and potential mentors. There will be an opportunity to **earn an interpretation certification** from the North American Association of Environmental Education Guidelines for Excellence. And there will be time for **exploring the Northwoods** through species identification or snowshoeing.

Please help us spread the word about this event with Wisconsin students

and conservation professionals in your life!



**Wisconsin Conservation Retreat
Bringing Students and
Professionals Together
January 3-5, 2024**



This gathering is tailored for students in Wisconsin who are passionate about engaging in professional conversations surrounding conservation initiatives and gaining insights into environmental education and communication strategies. The event will feature a dedicated networking session for professionals, along with a chance to earn certification in environmental education interpretation techniques from the North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE). Attendees can participate in discussions on climate change resiliency, nature interpretation, and identification adventures. Depending on the weather, activities such as snowshoeing (rentals available) and cross-country skiing (bring your own) may be included.

Location: [5400 North Black Oak Lake Road, Land O' Lakes, WI 54540](#)

Bring your own sleeping bag, pillow and towel.

\$100 for 2 nights of lodging and meals, \$75 for 1 night of lodging and meals (donations are welcome)

Deadline to sign up: **Dec 20th**

<https://buytickets.at/uwoseac/1066985>

email SEAC@uwosh.edu with questions

This retreat was organized by UW O SEAC and Wisconsin's Green Fire.

THE MISSION OF THE STUDENT ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION COALITION IS TO ENCOURAGE AND ENGAGE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH TO TAKE STEPS TOWARD A MORE SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT. SEAC PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY AND BECOME LEADERS.



Learn more and Register Here!

Don't miss our new report! **Opportunities Now 2.0: PFAS in Wisconsin Drinking Water**

by Carolyn Pralle, WGF Communications Coordinator

November 2023

Concerned about PFAS contamination in Wisconsin drinking water? From municipal water systems to groundwater and private wells, these 'forever chemicals' pose severe and costly risks to human health and the environment.

Read our new Opportunities Now 2.0 paper, written by water experts from our Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CEC) Work Group.

Get key findings and recommendations from the paper on our blog post, and dive into the details in the full report!

OPPORTUNITIES NOW 2.0:

An Analysis of Priority Issues and Actions for Wisconsin's Natural Resources



PFAS in Wisconsin Drinking Water:
A Summary of Current Detections and their Implications for Wisconsin



Read More

Get Involved in Conservation

- **WGF Members: Attend the WGF Annual Meeting!** [Register via Zoom here](#) for the December 27th virtual meeting from 4:00-6:00pm CT.
- [Register now](#) for the **2nd Annual Wisconsin Conservation Retreat Jan 3-5, 2024!** See details above from the Aspiring Conservation Professionals Work Group.
- Learn about **wolf ecology** with in-person workshops this winter from the Timber Wolf Information Network (TWIN). [Learn more here.](#)

- View Wisconsin **climate data and resources** at the State Climatology Office's **new website**: <https://climatology.nelson.wisc.edu/>
- Document biodiversity by participating in a [Christmas Bird Count](#) between Dec. 14th and Jan. 5th.

Wisconsin's Green Fire in the News

WXPR - Dec 7 - Katie Thoresen covers WGF's new Opportunities Now paper on PFAS with an audio interview with WGF Executive Director, Meleesa Johnson: [Wisconsin's Green Fire releases updated PFAS Report](#)

Wisconsin Examiner - Dec 4 - Henry Redman describes findings from WGF's new Opp Now paper on PFAS: [Conservation group estimates PFAS cleanup in state drinking water would cost \\$208 million](#);

- **Urban Milwaukee** also picked up this story: [PFAS Cleanup of State Drinking Water Would Cost \\$208 Million](#)

WisBusiness - Dec 1 - Published our news release on our latest publication: [WGF: New opportunities now paper on PFAS in Wisconsin waters](#)

WisPolitics - Nov 30 - Published our news release on [GLWA's lawsuit: Wisconsin's Greenfire \[sic\] Not associated with Greenfire Law PC](#)

WXPR - Nov 30 - Katie Thoreson references WGF's position related to GLWA's lawsuit: [Wisconsin's Green Fire clarifies it's not part of wolf plan lawsuit](#)

PBS Wisconsin - Nov 22 - Ian Lewitz describes the WGF-sponsored program Scenic Treasures: Northwoods in article: [New PBS Wisconsin documentary explores natural wonders of northern Wisconsin](#)

WisPolitics - Nov. 21 - WGF cited in announcement about deer and chronic wasting disease (CWD): [Reps. Shankland, Considine, Sen. Smith: Introduce "Healthy Herd, Healthy Hunt" legislative package](#)

WisPolitics - Nov. 16 - Published our news release: [WI Green Fire: Senate passes imperfect PFAS bill](#)

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!

Wisconsin's Green Fire 715-203-0384 | info@wigreenfire.org | www.wigreenfire.org

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