



Winnebago County

The Wave of the Future

**LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (LCC) MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2025**

A. Call to Order

Convene:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Farrey at 9:00am

Present:

- **LCC Members:** Bruce Bohn (Teams), Chuck Farrey, Kristl Laux, Timothy Macho, Dan Stokes & Doug Zellmer
- **LWCD Staff:** Chad Casper, Jody Bezio
- **Other(s) present:** Levi Schultz, NRCS
- **Absent:** Doug Nelson

B. Confirm meeting/agenda has been properly public noticed in accordance with County policy.

Chairman Farrey confirmed with Director Casper that the meeting had been properly public noticed.

C. Approval of Minutes

1. February 3, 2025, Meeting Minutes
A ZELMMER/STOKES motion to approve the minutes passed 5-0

D. Public Comments on Agenda Items

None

E. Agency Reports

Levi Shultz, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) updated the LCC on the EQIP application process. Out of the 40 applications that were submitted for EQIP, only 4 are being funded. Schultz explained that there is a lot less money available this year than in years past. Schultz further explained that this is partially due to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding being held back, pending the ongoing review of government programs & funding. Schultz shared that 50 employees from NRCS have been terminated as part of the federal government workforce reduction. Schultz reported that payments on existing contracts with farmers have now resumed, after a one-month freeze.

F. Director's Report

1. Off-Shore Breakwall Updates
Director Casper updated the LCC on 2 breakwall projects:

1. The Van Dyke breakwall received a permit from the DNR about 1.5 weeks ago, unfortunately this was too late to begin construction. The promises that were made by the DNR Water Regulations to work with us and get it permitted in a timely fashion did not unfold. The contractor for the project voiced their frustration that if the permit had been approved earlier, the weather conditions were such that the contractor would have been able to make ice and install at least part of the project this year.
 2. The Samer's Bay/Terrell's Island breakwall site had odd ice conditions this year so no work was completed on this project. There is about 2500 feet of breakwall to complete, with some capping of the existing break wall and some tree drops. The permit on this project has now expired, and it is unclear what the process will be for extending it. There are also multiple grants associated with this project that will need to be ironed out to continue to extend the funding.
2. Land & Water Resource Management Plan Revision
Director Casper reported that he is actively working on the 5-year Revision to the Land & Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP). Director Casper and Chairman Farrey will present the LWRMP Revision to the State Land & Water Board in June. Director Casper is working on responses to 4 or 5 questions that are part of the Revision presentation and will share his responses with the LCC prior to presenting to the State Board.
 3. Key Executive Budget Requests for the 2025/27 Wisconsin State Budget
Director Casper gave the LCC an overview of the Governor's proposed biennial State Budget in regards to conservation funding:
 1. **Funding for Staffing:** The Governor has requested an increase in conservation staffing levels of \$3.1 million in 2025 and \$3.5 million in 2026 for total of \$15 million for state staff funding (up from approx. \$12 million currently). The staffing money is used to supplement county staff salaries for implementing state conservation mandates.
 2. **Producer-Led Watershed Grants:** The last 2 years Winnebago County has received funding from this grant for the Muddy Bottom Farmers Producer-Led group. The grant program currently has \$1 million in funding, requests for funding have been at \$1.5 million. The Governor has requested an increase of about \$500,000 annually to fund more of the requests coming in.
 3. **Soil and Water Resource Management Aid (DATCP funding for Best Management Practices):** Current funding level is at \$3.5 million and unmet requests are at \$3 million. DATCP and the Governor's request is to increase funding from \$3.1 to \$5 million annually to help meet unmet requests.
 4. **Wake Boats:** The Governor's DNR request recommends creating a project position of authority to collect and evaluate data on the waterways of Wisconsin to better evaluate the effects of wake boats on the lakes.
 5. **DNR Staffing - Winnebago Lake System:** The governor has also asked for additional DNR staffing to support the Winnebago Lake System.

Chairman Farrey shared that an email he received earlier today reported that if the Governor does not go along with certain criteria from the Republicans, the Republicans will not take up the budget. If they do not develop a budget, the last term's budget will roll over and funding will remain the same as the prior budget.

4. "Home is Where the Habitat is" Poster Contest
Director Casper shared with the LCC that Winnebago County has 2 youth posters advancing to the State Contest this week. Clara Rehberg (Grade K-1 Age Division) and Maeli Habersetzer (Grade 6-9 Age Division), both from the Winneconne School District received 1st place at the Regional Contest. All posters from the County Contest are currently on display in the hallway of the James P Coughlin Center.

G. Committee Chair's Report

Chairman Farrey discussed the issue of the inconsistent DNR permitting across the state. Chairman Farrey is advocating that under state law, there needs to be a revision requiring the DNR to establish administrative rules. Without established administrative rules, individual DNR personnel can implement the permitting process differently, which has led to a wide variation in permitting across the state. Chairman Farrey shared a couple of examples. As Chair of the Steering Committee, Chairman Farrey has requested that the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) put this topic on their upcoming agenda in March, but has not received a response.

H. Business Items

Action may be taken on any business items.

1. Action Item - LWCD Spirit Fund Program Cost-Share Agreements (CSAs) – SFP-BMP-25-02, Devon & Susan Jones, Wetland Restoration, SFP-BMP-25-03, Zernzach Rev Liv Tst, Shoreline Protection, SFP-BMP-25-04, Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration, SFP-BMP-25-05, Justin Marcellis/Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration

Following a review of the CSAs, a ZELLMER/STOKES motion to approve LWCD Spirit Fund Program Cost-Share Agreements (CSAs) – SFP-BMP-25-02, Devon & Susan Jones, Wetland Restoration, SFP-BMP-25-03, Zernzach Rev Liv Tst, Shoreline Protection, SFP-BMP-25-04, Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration, SFP-BMP-25-05, Justin Marcellis/Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration passed 5-0.

2. Action Item - Winnebago County Water Quality Improvement Program (CSAs) – 25-02, Zernzach Rev Liv Tst, Shoreline Protection, 25-03, Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration, 25-04, Justin Marcellis/Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration

Following a review of the CSAs, a STOKES / ZELLMER motion to approve Winnebago County Water Quality Improvement Program (CSAs) – 25-02, Zernzach Rev Liv Tst, Shoreline Protection, 25-03, Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration, 25-04, Justin Marcellis/Gabrielle Boehrig, Wetland Restoration passed 5-0.

3. Review Land & Water Conservation Department Project Lists

The LCC reviewed and acknowledged the new projects on the lists.

I. Adjourn

A STOKES / ZELLMER motion made to adjourn the meeting at 9:38am passed 5-0.