



Winnebago County
The Wave of the Future

**LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (LCC) MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 7, 2025**

A. Call to Order

Convene:

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

Present:

- **LCC Members:** Bruce Bohn, Chuck Farrey, Kristl Laux, Timothy Macho, Doug Nelson, Dan Stokes & Doug Zellmer
- **LWCD Staff:** Chad Casper, Jody Bezio
- **Other(s) present:** Levi Schultz, NRCS, Paul Kaiser, Winnebago County Finance
- **Absent:** None

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. June 2, 2025, Meeting Minutes

*A **ZELLMER / BOHN** motion to approve the minutes passed 7-0.*

D. Public Comments on Agenda Items

Supervisor Laux gave an update on the round goby (invasive fish species) that was found in Lake Winnebago about two weeks ago.

E. Agency Reports

Levi Schultz (NRCS), reported that the agency is currently awaiting the release of its upcoming budget, expected within the next few months. This budget will determine future staffing structure and program funding allocations. Schultz also informed the committee that NRCS has received additional EQIP funds reallocated from other states, which has enabled the funding of several additional applications in Winnebago County.

F. Director's Report

1. Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP)

Director Casper reminded the committee that the Climate Smart Commodities Grant was officially terminated in April. He reported that the program has since been rebranded as "Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP)". The LWCD will be partnering with the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance (FWWA), which submitted a grant application for the re-branded program on June 20. Casper is anticipating all 8 counties will again participate in the grant. For Winnebago County, the proposed grant includes \$200,000 in funding for agricultural producers, with \$175,000 allocated for soil health and cover crop initiatives, and \$25,000 designated for structural conservation practices, such as grassed waterways and wetland

restoration. If the grant is awarded, the LWCD's goal is to enroll 2,000 acres in the program during the next calendar year.

2. Land and Water Conservation Board 5-Year Review

Director Casper provided an update to the LCC regarding the five-year review of the county's Land and Water Resource Management Plan. Casper presented the five-year update to the State Land and Water Board on June 3, with Chairman Farrey attending the review virtually. The State Board unanimously approved the five-year update. Director Casper noted that the next step will be a comprehensive re-write of the ten-year plan, to be completed in 2030.

3. 2025-27 State Biennial Budget

Director Casper informed the Land Conservation Committee (LCC) that the 2025–2027 State Biennial Budget includes significant increases in funding for county conservation staff—a 30% increase in 2026 and a 37% increase in 2027. He explained that this funding structure supports 100% of the salary for the department's highest-paid conservation position, 70% for the second highest-paid, and 50% for the third. Director Casper noted that this represents the largest increase in conservation staffing funding he has observed and described it as a major victory for conservation efforts in Wisconsin. Director Casper also reported an increase in funding for the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP). He noted that several producers in Winnebago County are currently participating in this pilot program, which aims to research and enhance nitrogen management practices.

4. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Summer Meeting

Director Casper informed the Land Conservation Committee (LCC) that the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) will be holding its summer meeting in Milwaukee from July 25–29. He noted that this event presents an excellent opportunity for Wisconsin to showcase its conservation programs and highlight how conservation efforts are structured and implemented across the state. Chairman Farrey reminded the LCC members that they should all have an email with the NACD invitation if they are interested in attending.

5. Land & Water Conservation Department Website

Director Casper informed the LCC that the County is currently in the process of updating its website. As part of this effort, Jody Bezio, Administrative Associate, has been working on updates to the LWCD section. Bezio provided the LCC with a preview of the changes that have already been implemented on the public-facing website. Director Casper invited committee members to explore the updated website and encouraged them to submit any suggestions or recommendations to either himself or Ms. Bezio.

G. Committee Chair's Report

Chairman Farrey reported that he attended the Planning & Zoning public hearing held last week regarding revisions to Chapter 27 of the Winnebago County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. As part of the review, it was noted that Chapter 23 – General Zoning was included within Chapter 27. Due to changes in state law enacted under Act 145, the committee voted to remove Chapter 23 from the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. This proposed revision will next be submitted to the DNR for approval, and subsequently brought before the full County Board for final consideration. Chairman Farrey explained that this change will result in a greater share of shoreland zoning responsibilities being transferred to individual townships and requested that LCC members reach out to their townships to make sure they are aware of the potential changes.

H. Business Items

Action may be taken on any business items.

1. Authorize a five-year Grant Contract between Winnebago County and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for county awards for staff and support and landowner cost-sharing through an annual allocation.

*After a brief discussion, a **ZELLMER/BOHN motion** to recommend authorization of a five-year grant contract between Winnebago County and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,*

*Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) for staff support and landowner cost-sharing was **approved 7-0**. The contract and corresponding resolution will be forwarded to the full county board for approval at their next meeting.*

2. Discussion on the potential need for a Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) in the Land & Water Conservation Department
Chairman Farrey led a discussion regarding the potential need for a Utility Task Vehicle (UTV) for use by the LWCD. Chairman Farrey expressed that a UTV could be a valuable tool to support fieldwork that might involve carrying equipment and walking long distances to access practice sites. Director Casper reported that, after internal discussion, LWCD staff did not identify a significant need for such equipment. He explained that the limited number of instances in which a UTV might be used would not justify the ongoing time and resources required for maintenance, transportation, and storage. Director Casper also stated that the Parks Department already owns a UTV that the LWCD could borrow if needed. Chairman Farrey is open to proposing a resolution to amend the budget in the next few months if a need for UTV-type equipment is identified before the final 2026 budget is passed.
3. Action Item - LWCD Spirit Fund Program Cost-Share Agreements (CSAs) – SFP-BMP-25-12, Daniel E. & Gina D. Stokes Waterway System and Stream Crossing Project, SFP-BMP-25-13, Kathryn Burton Well Abandonment Project & SFP-BMP-25-14, Timothy & Jennifer Eddy Well Abandonment Project
*Director Casper gave a short presentation on Stream Crossings, a conservation practice utilized to allow heavy machinery to cross waterways between fields to minimize damage to the waterway. The committee also discussed the current challenges with obtaining permits from the DNR for conservation practices such as these. Following a review of the CSAs, a **LAUX / ZELLMER motion** to approve Cost-Share Agreements (CSAs) – SFP-BMP-25-12, Daniel E. & Gina D. Stokes Waterway System and Stream Crossing Project, SFP-BMP-25-13, Kathryn Burton Well Abandonment Project & SFP-BMP-25-14, Timothy & Jennifer Eddy Well Abandonment Project **passed 6-0 (Abstain: Dan Stokes)**.*
4. Review Land & Water Conservation Department Project Lists
The LCC reviewed and acknowledged the new projects on the lists.

I. Adjourn

*A **STOKES / BOHN motion** made to adjourn the meeting at 10:17am **passed 7-0**.*

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