



February 2, 2012

Dear Wetland Enthusiast,

Happy World Wetlands Day! Each year, we celebrate [World Wetlands Day](#) to mark the adoption of the International Convention on Wetlands on February 2nd, 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar.



WWA's contributions to this world-wide celebration include ongoing work on the wetlands bill (update below) and an appearance on Wisconsin Public Radio's [Larry Meiller Show](#) earlier today. WWA's Executive Director Tracy Hames and Outreach Programs Director Katie Beilfuss were on hand to talk about wetland restoration, WWA's upcoming conference, and the [Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award](#) that Katie will travel to Romania to receive on WWA's behalf this summer. If you missed the show this morning, look for it in the [archived programs](#).

*What's happening with the Wetland Regulatory Reform Bill?*

We're pleased to report that the Wetlands Bill has not yet been scheduled for a floor vote in either the Senate or the Assembly. The next floor period does not start until February 14th, so we are making the most of the time we have to continue educating legislators about the need to repair the bill to ensure that the desired reforms are achieved while also protecting our valuable wetland resources. We are also focused on making certain that Wisconsin citizens understand the bill and have a chance to voice their concerns.

You can help by continuing to spread the word about the problems with the bill and the need to repair it. Please consider circulating some or all of the following resources to help educate friends, neighbors, and organizations about the need to speak up in favor of fixing the bill:

1. Sportsmen may be interested in this [joint letter to the legislature signed by Trout Unlimited, Ducks Unlimited, WI Waterfowl Assn., WI Wetlands Assn., WI Wildlife Federation, and Pheasants Forever](#) stating that Wisconsin sportsmen and sportswomen oppose, but want to help fix, the Wetland Bill (SB 368/AB 463).
2. A clear explanation of how the bill relies too heavily on mitigation can be found in [this column by Joe Knight in the Eau Claire Leader Telegram](#).
3. A compelling explanation of how and why wetland mitigation projects often fall short in restoring the functions and services of natural wetlands can be found in [this New York Times article](#) explaining the results of a new study that looked at and

documented the deficiencies of more than 600 wetland restoration projects around the globe.

4. Wisconsin's Steve Walters interviewed the bill's authors, Sen. Kedzie and Rep. Mursau, and opponent Rep. Molepske on this [recent edition of Newsmakers](#).

As you'll see, the bill's authors continue to insist that avoidance of wetlands remains a priority and that consideration of mitigation is limited to requests to fill "marginal wetlands," but **the language in the bill does not support these claims**. The bill's authors also say that since Wisconsin's mitigation program was established it has seen a "net gain in high-grade wetlands." We are unaware of any research supporting this claim. In fact, [this DNR study of Wisconsin DOT sponsored transportation projects](#) found that most projects weren't monitored for wetland functions (e.g., water quality improvement) and that floristic quality at the sites visited was generally low. Major findings are summarized on pages 1-2 of this document.

For these and other reasons, WWA continues to advocate for policies that discourage development in wetlands. If you have already contacted your legislators it may not be fruitful to do so again, but please encourage your friends and neighbors to add their voice to yours.

*Other legislative news:*

While WWA staff are hunkered down working to secure changes in the wetlands bill, two other major bills are also on the horizon.

1. Our friends at Wisconsin Lakes are working hard to prevent passage of another regulatory streamlining bill that threatens to significantly weaken protections for Wisconsin's lakes, rivers and streams. Among other things, the bill creates a default permitting system where applications for impacts to aquatic resources are automatically approved if DNR does not render a decision within 30 days. [Click here for Wisconsin Lakes' most recent alert on this bill](#), which includes a link to a complete analysis of the bill. Formerly named AB/SB 24, the bill is now listed as AB 421 and SB 326, respectively.

2. A mining bill to "streamline" the review and approval of iron mines continues to work its way through the legislature. The bill is strongly opposed by dozens of environmental groups, many tribes, and thousands of Wisconsin citizens because of many provisions that rollback or eliminate existing natural resource protections for iron mining projects. Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters has been spearheading an aggressive campaign to educate Wisconsin citizens and communities about the bill and its impacts. More information about the proposed mine and legislation can be found on [their website](#). They have also released a 6-part (and counting) "Scrap the mining bill" series, which is posted [here on their website](#).

Sincerely,

***WWA Staff***

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