Fixing Wisconsin’s waters

Focusing on hydrologic restoration

All across Wisconsin, communities face challenges related to water: more frequent, severe, and damaging flooding, polluted waterways, fish and wildlife population declines, and more. A root cause shared by these challenges is degraded hydrology.

To fix our waters, we need to address and reverse this root cause rather than merely addressing symptoms. We need to restore how water moves through our watersheds. Unfortunately, watershed-based hydrologic restoration is not an approach that is widely practiced in our state—yet.

Throughout this time, it has been hard to stay positive. What keeps me going is knowing that, despite the challenges, committed people are doing important things for each other and for our communities and that nature continues to provide solace to us all.

I am so proud of all that Wisconsin Wetlands Association has accomplished for our communities and for our wetlands in the past year. As you’ll read in this report, our work has not slowed down at all. Your contributions make this work possible. We know that the road ahead will bring challenges, but, together, we’ll continue to do good things for the wetlands we so dearly love and the communities they support.

Akemi Pita, Board Chair
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Dear Wetland Enthusiast,

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Alison Peña, Board Chair

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Alison Peña, Board Chair
Advancing wetland conservation policies and practices

WWA made remarkable strides on the policy front in 2020. We secured funding to help Lake Superior basin partners evaluate nature-based opportunities to reduce flood risks and damages. We also secured a state budget appropriation for natural flood management demonstration projects in Ashland County.

With your support, legislation simplifying permit review and creating a hydrologic restoration advisory council passed the State Assembly with unanimous support. While the pandemic prevented a Senate vote, work on this legislation set the stage for ongoing collaborations to move these issues forward.

Our work is helping policymakers understand how wetlands benefit their communities. Because of our strengthened relationships with legislative offices, decision-makers across the state see wetlands as solutions and now approach us to help solve water-related challenges.

Adapting programs and communications in the face of COVID-19

To bring more hope and positivity into the world during the pandemic, WWA developed new virtual wetland programming to help everyone stay connected with the outside world and with each other—all while learning about and sharing our love for wetlands.

Our Wetland Coffee Breaks featured live online presentations about wetland topics, including soils, birds, hydrology, and more. To far, our Wetland Coffee Breaks have attracted more than 900 viewers from across Wisconsin, the nation, and even internationally. Many of these viewers were new to WWA, and many return for multiple presentations.

We are grateful to our many partners who presented at the Wetland Coffee Breaks. If you missed any of these, watch the recordings at wisconsinwetlands.org/wetland-coffee-break.

Encouraging better wetland policy through engagement

WWA’s place-based work provides the guidance, tools, and understanding communities need to apply wetlands as solutions to their water issues. In the Little Plover River watershed, WWA is part of a collaborative effort involving citizens, agricultural and conservation groups, and multiple levels of government promoting watershed health through science-based, voluntary action.

Through the work is just beginning, WWA and partners have already applied wetland restoration, floodplain reconnection, riparian forest management, grassland re-establishment, cropland conversion, and on-farm water conservation to improve infiltration and flow and address other local water concerns. The river’s positive response to these initial efforts has exceeded everyone’s expectations. People in neighboring watersheds are reaching out to learn how they can replicate this approach to help their community’s waters.

Building partnerships

The Maurengo River watershed—like other watersheds across Wisconsin—is struggling with devastating flood damages from severe rain events.

Partners with diverse perspectives and expertise, from geomorphology to road maintenance, are exploring how natural flood management—restoring upper watershed wetlands and floodplain functions—can help reduce future damages and create a more resilient landscape.

WWA has led efforts to secure more than $450,000 in project funding and is providing project management and technical support. We continue to advocate for additional support from policymakers and state agencies to help establish and improve natural flood management policies and practices. The relationships and the trust we’re building are essential to our approach to finding community-led solutions to local water challenges.
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Our Wetland Coffee Breaks featured live online presentations about wetland topics, including soils, birds, hydrology, and more. To date, our Wetland Coffee Breaks have attracted more than 500 viewers from across Wisconsin, the nation, and even internationally. Many of these viewers were new to WWA, and many return for multiple presentations.

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Encouraging better wetland policy through engagement

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Building partnerships

The Marron River watershed—like other watersheds across Wisconsin—is struggling with devastating flood damages from recent rain events. Partners with diverse perspectives and expertise, from geomorphology to road maintenance, are exploring how natural flood management—restoring upper watershed wetlands and floodplain functions—can help reduce future damages and create a more resilient landscape.

WWA has led efforts to secure more than $450,000 in project funding and is providing project management and technical support. We continue to advocate for additional support from policymakers and state agencies to help establish and improve natural flood management policies and practices. The relationships and the trust we’re building are essential to our approach to finding community-led solutions to local water challenges.
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Adapting programs and communications in the face of COVID-19

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Our Wetland Coffee Breaks featured live online presentations about wetland topics, including soils, birds, hydrology, and more. So far, our Wetland Coffee Breaks have attracted more than 850 viewers from across Wisconsin, the nation, and even internationally. Many of these viewers were new to WWA, and many return for multiple presentations.

We are grateful to our many partners who presented at the Wetland Coffee Breaks. If you missed any of these, watch the recordings at wisconsinwetlands.org/wetland-coffee-break.

Encouraging better wetland policy through engagement

WWA’s place-based work provides the guidance, tools, and understanding communities need to apply wetlands as solutions to their water issues.

In the Little Plover River watershed, WWA is part of a collaborative effort involving citizens, agricultural and conservation groups, and multiple levels of government promoting watershed health through science-based, voluntary action.

Through the work is just beginning. WWA and partners have already applied wetland restoration, floodplain reconnection, riparian forest management, grassland re-establishment, cropland conversion, high-capacity well removal, and on-farm water conservation to improve infiltration and flow and address other local water concerns. The river’s positive response to these initial efforts has exceeded everyone’s expectations. People in neighboring watersheds are reaching out to learn how they can replicate this approach to help their community’s waters.

Building partnerships

The M炭rongo River watershed—like other watersheds across Wisconsin—is struggling with devastating flood damages from severe rain events.

Partners with diverse perspectives and expertise, from geomorphology to road maintenance, are exploring how natural flood management—restoring upper watershed wetlands and floodplain functions—can help reduce future damages and create a more resilient landscape.

WWA has led efforts to secure more than $450,000 in project funding and is providing project management and technical support. We continue to advocate for additional support from policymakers and state agencies to help establish and improve natural flood management policies and practices. The relationships and the trust we’re building are essential to our approach to finding community-led solutions to local water challenges.
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To bring more hope and positivity into the world during the pandemic, WWA developed new virtual wetland programming to help everyone exposed at home stay connected with the outside world and with each other—all while learning about and sharing our love for wetlands.

Our Virtual Coffee Breaks featured live online presentations about wetland topics, including soils, birds, hydrology, and more. To far, our Virtual Coffee Breaks have attracted more than 800 viewers from across Wisconsin, the nation, and even internationally. Many of these viewers were new to WWA, and many return for multiple presentations.

We are grateful to our many partners who presented at the Virtual Coffee Breaks. If you missed any of these, watch the recordings at wisconsinwetlands.org/virtual-coffee-break.

Encouraging better wetland policy through engagement

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Building partnerships

The Marengo River watershed—like other watersheds across Wisconsin—is struggling with devastating flood damages from severe rain events. Partners with diverse perspectives and expertise, from geomorphology to road maintenance, are exploring how natural flood management—restoring upper watershed wetlands and floodplain functions—can help reduce future damages and create a more resilient landscape.

WWA has led efforts to secure more than $450,000 in project funding and is providing project management and technical support. We continue to advocate for additional support from policymakers and state agencies to help establish and improve natural flood management policies and practices. The relationships and the trust we’ve built are essential to our approach to finding community-led solutions to local water challenges.
Fixing Wisconsin's waters

Focusing on hydrologic restoration

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To fix our waters, we need to address and reverse this root cause rather than merely addressing symptoms. We need to restore how water moves, not just fix it when it causes problems. Fixing Wisconsin's waters requires a focus on hydrologic restoration.

To find out more, we need to address the root cause rather than merely addressing symptoms. We need to restore how water moves throughout Wisconsin's watersheds. Unfortunately, watershed-based hydrologic restoration is not an approach that is widely practiced in our state—yet. Read on to learn about some of the ways WWA is promoting hydrologic restoration throughout our work.