



Wisconsin
Wetlands

ASSOCIATION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear wetland enthusiast,



Thank you for being an active member of Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA).

As we put another year in the history books, I like to reflect on all the accomplishments you made possible through your support of WWA. The Wetland Coffee Break continues to showcase captivating speakers and share wetland knowledge. The Wetland Science Conference, held “in person” for the first time since the pandemic, provided timely reports on the latest developments in wetland science and an opportunity for attendees to gather once again with like-minded wetland supporters. Work in the Lake Superior Basin is helping small communities obtain funding to care for wetlands and improve their watershed health. Pro-wetland policies are garnering bi-partisan support, and state agencies are

developing wetland-friendly policies for the future.

My gratitude goes to members like you who make all this work possible. YOU protect Wisconsin's wetlands. Through your support of WWA every year, you help Wisconsin maintain and protect our most valued natural resource: water.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison Peña". The signature is fluid and cursive.

—Alison Peña, WWA Board Chair

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July 2022-June 2023

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\$2,500 or more

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\$2,500 or more

Ashland County
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Chippewa Indians
The Brico Fund
The Brookby Foundation
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Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade and Consumer Protection
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers
Association
Wisconsin Public Service Foundation
Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory
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ERIN O'BRIEN

Town of Ashland and Ashland County road managers provide critical review of data on flood risks and degraded hydrology to protect vulnerable infrastructure.





Partnering to build healthy wetlands and resilient roads

To achieve our vision of a state where wetlands are healthy and abundant enough to meet ecological and societal needs, we need new communities, constituencies, and sectors engaged in wetland conservation. Building on our flood-resilience work in the Lake Superior basin, this year we established partnerships focused on restoring wetlands and floodplains to protect vulnerable roads, culverts, and bridges.

- Collaborated with Trout Unlimited and Wisconsin Towns Association to secure a grant to help rural, flood-prone communities compete for federal grants focused on restoring wetlands to increase resilience.
- Held exploratory conversations with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation leadership on opportunities to collaborate on hydrology-focused approaches to increase the flood-resilience of state and local roads.

After the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in Sackett v. EPA, we hosted a special Wetland Coffee Break with a panel of presenters who discussed possible implications of the decision for wetlands and waters in Wisconsin.

Today's Agenda:

1. Why/How Wetlands Relate to the Health of Navigable Waters (O'Brien)
2. Clean Water Act Evolution & the Sackett Decision (Feinauer)
3. How Wisconsin Law Protects Non-Federal Wetlands (Nedlund)



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Wetland Coffee Break





In spring of 2023, we released several new videos highlighting how the Bad River and Red Cliff Tribes protect and care for wetlands and watersheds.

Connecting people with wetland knowledge and experiences

Sir David Attenborough once said, *“No one will protect what they don’t care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced.”* WWA’s programs connect people with wetlands and help them increase their wetland knowledge.

- Wetland Coffee Break webinars keep our community connected and learning about wetlands throughout the year from anywhere. 700 new people joined our audience this year.
- Our short documentary-style videos highlighting people and communities caring for wetlands have been viewed by thousands. Watch them at wisconsinwetlands.org/videos.

WWA's Policy Liaison Jennifer Western Hauser testifies to a Senate Committee in support of SB 222.





Increasing state investments in watershed assessment and hydrologic restoration

This year we led a campaign to establish a new grant program to help flood-prone communities reduce flood risks and damages. The program will help communities complete watershed-scale vulnerability assessments and design and implement wetland and floodplain restoration projects.

- 32 bi-partisan legislators co-sponsored the bill that would establish this program (AB 222/SB 222). Nearly 20 diverse organizations are also registered in support.
- The Wisconsin Senate unanimously passed SB 222. The Wisconsin Assembly is expected to vote on AB 222 in spring 2024.
- The Legislature and the Governor approved \$2 million in funding for the program.

Attendees at the in-person Wetland Science Conference enjoyed being able to literally roll up their sleeves to explore wetland soils at a hands-on wetland community types workshop.



MONIKA BLAZS



JOSHUA WATER



Bringing professionals together for learning and networking

Third time's the charm! After holding our annual conference virtually for two years during the pandemic, we hosted more than 350 people for three days of in-person learning and networking amidst a February snowstorm in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

- The conference, themed *Wetlands: Central to Wisconsin*, offered working groups, roundtables, and abundant networking opportunities, including a local beer tasting.
- Five workshops covered topics from wetland natural communities of Wisconsin to identifying aquatic plants and sedges.





Expanding the wetland and stream restoration toolbox

We collaborated with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) to reduce regulatory barriers and increase funding for hydrology-focused wetland and stream restoration practices.

- Updates to ATCP 50 (the soil and water resource management rule used by DATCP) include the addition of hydrologic restoration and stream restoration as activities that will be eligible for state cost-share dollars, pending approval.
- A new Hydrologic Restoration General Permit is creating an easier path to approval for projects that improve hydrologic conditions, connections, and functions is in the final stages of development and approval by WDNR.

Wetland Legacy Club

Anonymous
Betsy Barnard
Katie & Rich Beilfuss
Agnes Chwae & Tim Walsh
Scott & Ann Eshelman
Tod Highsmith
Sharland Huffaker
Bruce Moore
Darrel Ruechel & JoAnn Krueger
Peter & Jean Solac
Nicole & Paul Staskowski
Karen & Martin Voss
Elizabeth Zimmerman & Jack Ferguson

If you have included WWA in your estate plans but are not listed here, please contact us so we can properly thank you for your generosity.

Hundreds of households entered the Swampstakes—WWA's sweepstakes with a wetland twist. Jeffrey Bahls (center) won the grand prize, a 1941 Old Town wood-canvas canoe restored by WWA Board Member Jim Ruwaldt (right).



Sustaining and growing a healthy organization

To accomplish our big vision for wetlands, Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) must remain strong and continue to grow. Support from members is an essential part of this growth.

- Wetland Legacy Club members have notified WWA that they have included us in their estate plans through a charitable bequest and/or beneficiary designation.
- Wetland Gems® are members who donate to WWA via automatic recurring monthly gifts. In 2023, 70 households provided this sustainable, reliable source of funding to WWA.



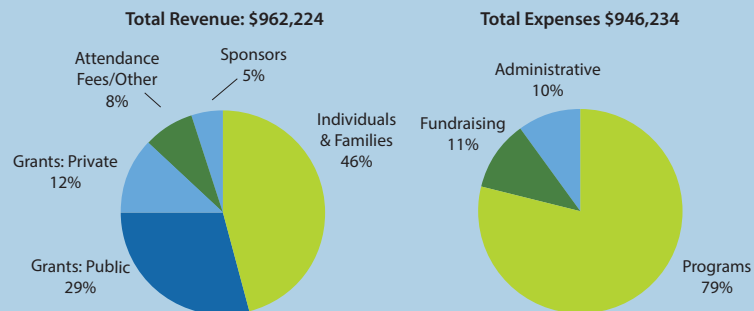
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Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022–June 2023)



Unaudited figures. Our audited figures will be completed by January 2024.

Wisconsin Wetlands Association is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education, and advocacy.

@WetlandsAssoc
facebook.com/WisconsinWetlands
www.wisconsinwetlands.org

214 N. Hamilton St, Suite 201
Madison, WI 53703
608-250-9971

