

## **Land and Water Conservation Department and Committee Authority, Duties, and Personnel**

### **Authority**

The history of the Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) dates back to December 18, 1946 when the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors first created what was then called the Soil and Water Conservation District. The LWCD is supervised by the Land and Water Conservation Committee (LWCC) which was established by County Board Resolution No. 82-34 on June 8, 1982. Subsequent to changes in Chapter 92 of the Wisconsin Statutes which eliminated the District, County Board Resolution 82-73 adopted in October of 1982 further defined powers and procedures to be followed by the LWCC.

The Rules of Order for the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors details the following for the Land and Water Conservation Committee:

- Seven members appointed by the County Board Chair consisting of not less than five County Board Supervisors, including at least two members of the University Extension Education Committee, and at least one person who is engaged in an agricultural use, pursuant to Wis. Stat. 92.06.
- The Land and Water Conservation Committee shall have the powers as set forth in Chapter 92, Wisconsin Statutes, and provide policy oversight to the Land and Water Conservation Department.
- This Committee shall also be responsible for acquiring conservation easements, reviewing applications to grant such easements and recommending action thereon to the County Board when appropriate.
- This Committee shall also manage, supervise and be responsible for County farmland not held for future parks development. Leases of the farmland shall be approved by the County Board.

### **LWCD Duties**

The purpose of the LWCD is to provide for the conservation of the soil and water resources of Jefferson County. The Department has been charged with administering State Statutes and County ordinances all leading to the conservation and protection of our natural resources. The work of the LWCD is detailed in the Land and Water Resources Management Plan – a plan required by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection in order to be eligible for both staffing funds as well as funds to cost-share the construction of conservation practices.

Various programs and activities, as identified in the Land and Water Resources Management Plan, are undertaken in conjunction with cooperating agencies in order to carry out the purpose of the LWCD and fulfill a multitude of local, state and federal mandates.

Programs and activities implemented include: Farmland Preservation Program, implementation of the Agricultural Performance Standards, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Animal Waste and Nutrient Management Ordinance, Livestock Siting law, conservation cost-share programs funded through various sources, Non-metallic Mining, tree seedling sale, Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, aquatic invasive species prevention and management, Jefferson County farm management, nutrient management plan classes, water quality monitoring, water resource planning and protection projects, soil erosion and animal waste pollution investigations, land and water conservation education and outreach, land and water resources information and technical assistance, and Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program. The Department is also the fiscal agent for the Jefferson County Soil Builders and has an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Watertown to provide water quality trading technical services.

## **Personnel**

The LWCD has the following full-time staff: Director/County Conservationist, 3 Resource Conservationists, Water Resources Management Specialist, and Administrative Assistant.

Patricia Cicero

Director

920-674-7121; [partriciac@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:partriciac@jeffersoncountywi.gov)

Dave Hoffman

Resource Conservationist

920-674-7115; [dhoffman@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:dhoffman@jeffersoncountywi.gov)

Colton Hutchinson

Water Resources Management Specialist

920-674-7111, [chutchinson@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:chutchinson@jeffersoncountywi.gov)

Kim Liakopoulos

Administrative Specialist

920-674-7110; [kiml@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:kiml@jeffersoncountywi.gov)

Sam Peterson

Resource Conservationist

920-674-7112; [speterson@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:speterson@jeffersoncountywi.gov)

Joe Strupp

Resource Conservationist

920-674-7483; [joes@jeffersoncountywi.gov](mailto:joes@jeffersoncountywi.gov)

# Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department Annual Report 2023

The purpose of the Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) is to provide for the conservation of soil and water resources of Jefferson County. The LWCD is charged with administering state statutes and county ordinances that conserve and protect our natural resources.

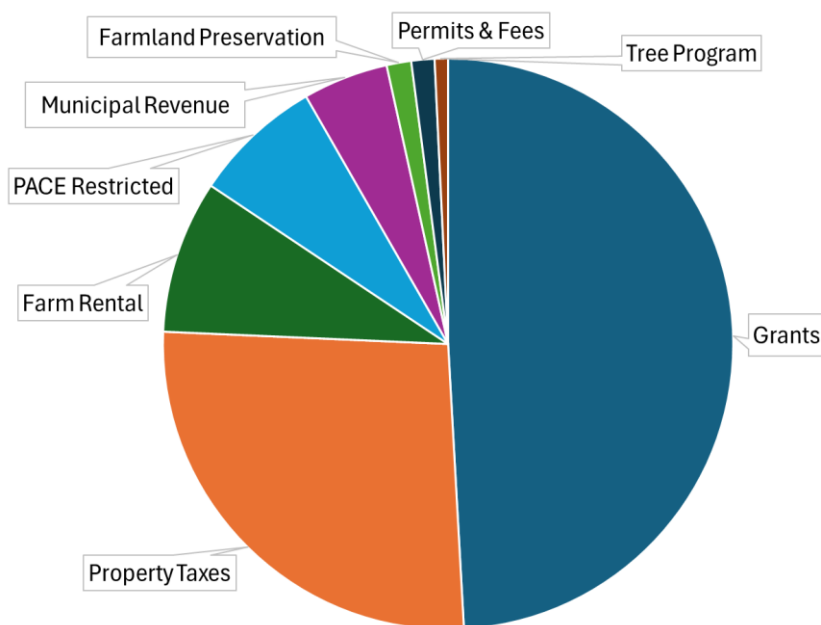
## 2023 Land and Water Conservation Committee Members

Matt Foelker (Chair) (UWEX Member), Walt Christensen (Vice-Chair), Dan Herbst (UWEX Member), Cassie Richardson, Meg Turville-Heitz, Kirsten Jurcek (FSA Rep), and Margaret Burlingham (PACE Rep)

## Land and Water Conservation Department Staff

Patricia Cicero (Director), Joe Strupp (Resource Conservationist), Dave Hoffmann (Resource Conservationist), Sam Peterson (Resource Conservationist), Colton Hutchinson (Water Resources Management Specialist - started 11/13/2023), and Kim Liakopoulos (Administrative Specialist)

## 2023 Department Funding



## Land and Water Resources Management Plan

Required by the Department Agricultural, Trade and Consumer Protection, this plan makes the LWCD eligible to receive staffing and conservation practice funding. Updated in 2021, the plan lays out the mission, goals, and work plan for the LWCD. Practices installed in the last 4 years:

- 2020 projects: 1 grassed waterway (563 ft), 2 manure storage closures, 1 well closure, and 1 shoreline stabilization (70 ft)
- 2021 projects: 1 nutrient management plan (163 acres)
- 2022 project: 1 well closure
- 2023 project: 1 well closure

## Cover Crop and Pasture Establishment Cost-Share Program

The cover crop and pasture establishment cost-share programs are funded by municipalities who are required to reduce phosphorus. In 2023, contracts were signed to fund the following:

- 1,414 acres of cover crops
- 17.2 acres of pasture establishment

## Jefferson County Soil Builders

The LWCD is the fiscal manager and collaborator for the Jefferson County Soil Builders whose vision is to inspire farmers to keep soil in place, nutrients in the fields, and waters clean. The LWCD assisted with educational events and cost-sharing of cover crops. In 2023, the following was achieved:

- 429.7 acres of multi-species cover crops planted after wheat harvest
- 333 acres of cover crops planted at other times of the year

## Farmland Preservation Program

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program offers farm owners a Wisconsin income tax credit in exchange for compliance with state conservation standards that protect soil and water resources. LWCD works with landowners and producers to ensure they meet program requirements. The tax credit is calculated as a flat, per acre rate. In Jefferson County, most landowners receive \$10.00 per acre. Landowners located in an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) can sign a state 15-year agreement and receive \$12.50 per acre. An AEA is created when landowners petition the state to create an area dedicated to long term agricultural use. Jefferson County has one AEA located in parts of Palmyra and Sullivan Townships.

- 601 total FPP participants covering a total of 111,371 acres
- 6 AEA agreements covering 802.5 acres
- \$1,115,718 total tax relief

## Agricultural Performance Standards

State law (NR 151) identifies minimum standards that agricultural producers must follow. These rules regulate manure management and require soil conservation and nutrient management plans. LWCD works with producers to help them achieve compliance with the laws.

- Received nutrient management plan checklists from 1,050 landowners covering 107,597 acres.
- Received and investigated six manure complaints, all were compliant with laws.

## Livestock Siting

Under state law (ATCP 51) and the Jefferson County Zoning Ordinance, livestock producers who expand their animal numbers over 150 animal units must complete an application and worksheets. LWCD ensures these materials are complete and meet state standards before the farms can apply for a conditional use permit through the Zoning Department. There is an amendment process when changes are made but livestock numbers stay under the permitted levels.

- 26 farms in Jefferson County have livestock siting conditional use permits.
- In 2023, there was one new permit and two amendments to existing permits.

## Nutrient Management and Farmer Education Classes

State law (NR151.07) and the Farmland Preservation Program require that all cropland where nutrients are applied be covered by a nutrient management plan. These plans must be updated annually to

account for crop rotation and changes in fertilization. LWCD offers classes to teach farmers how to write and update their plans. In 2023, there were: 2 classes, 7 pupils.

### **Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Program**

The Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program permanently protects working farms from non-agricultural development through purchase or donation of development rights. LWCD assists landowners with the process and documentation of conservation easement applications to protect agricultural land and natural resources from development. Work includes securing grant funding, completing land transactions, mapping requirements, annual inspections, and reporting.

- Since the program's inception: 5 purchased easements totaling 873.62 acres and 5 donated easements totaling 248.83 acres.
- Since 2022 there has been a significant increase in program interest.
- NRCS grant funding and County PACE funds protected 92.31 acres of prime agricultural and conservation land.
- Through 2026, federal funding is secured through a partnership with NRCS, American Farmland Trust, and other regional municipalities and land trusts.
- LWCD is working on a 98-acre farm easement in Concord Township set for purchase in 2024.

### **Water Resource Planning and Protection**

The LWCD plans and implements projects in partnership with local resource organizations and municipalities to protect and improve water resources. Work includes collecting data, educating the public, developing management plans, and implementing conservation practices.

- 2 shoreland gardens and 1 rain garden installed with grant funding.
- Reviewed shoreland plant restoration plans for Zoning Department permits.
- Partnered with Rock Lake Improvement Association to purchase equipment to measure stream flow so that phosphorus loading can be determined.
- Partnered with UW-Stevens Point on a county-wide groundwater quality study.
- Purchased groundwater nitrate screening tools for use by LWCD and the Health Department.

### **Invasive Species Management**

Since 2021, the LWCD receives an annual Department of Natural Resources grant to fund invasive species education, management, and control work. In 2023 the following was accomplished:

- Ongoing training for citizen volunteers performing early detection surveys on Rock Lake.
- Implemented programs to educate the public on preventing aquatic invasive species, including assisting the Town and City of Lake Mills with a Clean Boats, Clean Waters Program.
- Worked on an early detection and response grant to manage a Phragmites population.
- Produced press releases and social media posts relating to local invasive species education.
- Participated in statewide education events and meetings.
- Conducted an inventory of 44 aquatic invasive species signs at water access locations.
- Visited three bait shops to supply them with educational pamphlets on aquatic invasive species.

### **Surface Water Quality Monitoring**

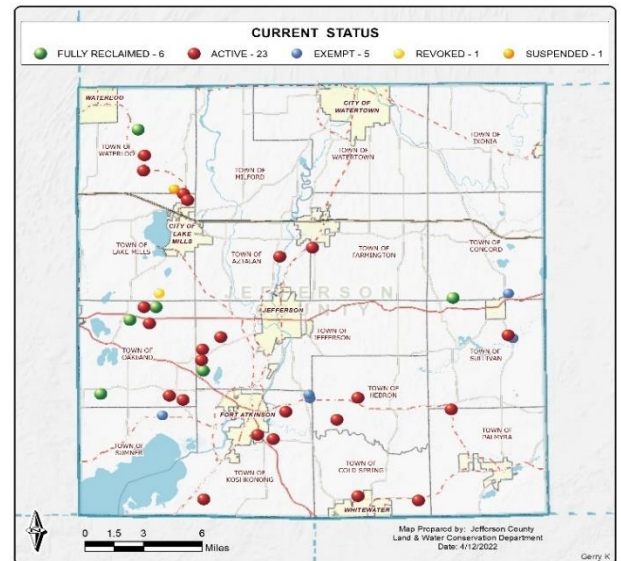
LWCD trains, equips, and supports citizens who monitor lakes and streams. Results are tracked and shared with partners and citizens. In 2023, the following was accomplished:

- Training events: 5 stream sampling, 1 lake sampling, and 1 invasive species monitoring
- 7 lakes were monitored; 17 stream sites were monitored
- Assisted DNR with PFAS background monitoring on Hope Lake. Results were non-detect for PFOS and significantly below the recreation standard for PFOA.

## Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation Permitting

Under state law (NR 135) and the Jefferson County Ordinance, non-metallic mines must have a permit to extract materials and ensure subsequent reclamation of mined land. LWCD ensures that the mines and the reclamation plans meet standards.

- Inspected 33 sites: 23 active, 1 inactive (opening in 2024), 3 reclaimed, 2 with revoked permits, and 5 with permit exemptions
- 563.20 acres of open mining land in 2023
- 13.3 acres of interim-reclaimed land in 2023
- 2.3 acres fully reclaimed in 2023
- 18.5 acres of newly exposed mining extractions



## Tree Program

LWCD administers an annual tree and shrub sale for citizens, and tree planter and sprayer rental.

- 2022/2023 sale offered 8 species with 5,700 trees/shrubs sold
- 2023/2024 sale offered 7 species with 4,700 trees/shrubs sold

## Other Programs and Projects

- Worked on Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program in partnership with the federal Farm Service Agency and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture to assist landowners with implementing stream buffers, grassed waterways, and wetland restorations. In 2023:
  - 12 onsite inspections with DATCP staff: 2 sites were compliant, 7 sites were compliant with needed management, and 3 sites were in violation.
- Partnered with the City of Watertown and Rock River Coalition on planning for the installation of agricultural conservation practices to reduce phosphorus. Work included a meeting with residents to explain the program, site visits to determine program eligibility, communications with the Department of Natural Resources on program elements, and modeling phosphorus reductions.
- Provided expertise on land and water issues regarding solar farms and the liquid natural gas plant.
- Developed, customized, and maintained applications for data tracking of LWCD programs. This enables us to perform the required reporting for State grants.
- Served as a pass-through for funds in both the Wildlife Damage Abatement Program (reimburses farmers for crop loss) and the Deer and Turkey Donation Program (meat supplied to food pantries).
- Attended Jefferson County Drainage Board meetings.

**Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department**  
**311 S Center Ave, Rm C1050 ~ Jefferson, WI 53549 ~ (920) 674-7110**