

Land and Water Conservation Committee Minutes

August 19, 2026

1. Call to Order:

The monthly meeting was called to order by Meg Turville-Heitz at 8:30am. Committee Members Meg Turville-Heitz (Chair), Matt Foelker (UW) (Vice-Chair), Margaret Burlingham (PACE), Walt Christensen, Scott Schultz (Ag) and Gary Skalitzky (@ 8:32) were present. Also in attendance were Patricia Cicero, Director, Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD); Kim Liakopoulos, LWCD; Dave Hoffman, LWCD; Joe Strupp, LWCD; and Danielle Thompson, County Corporation Counsel. Elizabeth Hafften (UW) was absent.

- Others in Attendance: Antia Martin. Via Teams; James Kuckkan, Watertown Daily Times and Michael Miller.

2. Roll Call (Establish a Quorum):

A quorum was established.

3. Certification of Compliance with the Open Meetings Law:

It was determined that the committee was in compliance with the Open Meetings Law.

4. Review of the Agenda:

The agenda was reviewed by the committee members. No changes were proposed.

5. Approval of the July 15, 2026 Meeting Minutes:

Foelker made a motion to approve the July 15, 2026 meeting minutes as written, Burlingham seconded. Motion passed 5/0.

6. Public Comment:

There were no comments.

7. Communications:

- Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Report.

8. Discussion on Departmental Updates:

Cicero, Strupp, and Hoffman had a meeting with the City of Watertown on potential projects for the Watertown Waterways Improvement Program. Hoffman is working on modeling four buffers. Cicero attended meetings of two Strategic Planning Implementation teams: Highly Regarded Quality of Life and Transformative Government. Cicero is helping to plan a Southern Area Association Summit with the Department of Natural Resources on October 29, 2026. Colton Hutchinson worked on aquatic plant surveys for Lower Spring Lake and Rock Lake. Hutchinson gave a fun and educational presentation at Kuhl Corner Campus Daycare on aquatic insects, aquatic plants and the groundwater flow model. Hutchinson coordinated Snapshot day to search for aquatic invasive species with 5 volunteers at Carlin Weld Park Pond, Lower Spring Lake, and the Scuppernong River. Hutchinson attended the Rock Lake Improvement Association annual meeting. Hutchinson conducted a stream fish survey on Lake Ripley. Strupp and Sam Peterson are completing cover crop cost share contracts. Peterson is attending the final Grazing Academy session this week. LWCD staff have had onsite meetings about conservation practice design work with DATCP engineers. Hutchinson met with the engineers on shoreland erosion control projects. Strupp met with the engineers on the Sugar River Genetics storage leak. The DATCP engineers have determined there is no contamination under the concrete pad where the storage was located. The storage has been properly closed. Turville-Heitz, Hoffman, Peterson and Strupp attended the Dane County Southern Area Association Tour August 12, 2026. Strupp has successfully completed a reclassification of his LWCD position. Strupp is now the Lead Resource Conservationist for the department.

9. Discussion on County Farm Lease:
Cicero discussed the County Farm lease and possible changes due to upcoming farmland development. The committee is in favor of extending the current farm lease verses putting it out to bid.
10. Discussion on Department Role in Livestock Siting Applications and Amendments:
Cicero and Strupp gave a presentation on livestock siting and answered committee questions.
11. Discussion on Producer-Led Groups: Jefferson County Soil Builders (JCSB) and Rock River Regenerative Graziers (R3G): Cicero discussed the JCSB field day August 25, 2026. Schultz talked about a pasture walk R3G hosted August 18, 2026, and about an upcoming R3G meeting and pasture walk on September 24, 2026.
12. Discussion and Possible Action on Notices of Noncompliance - Farmland Preservation Program (FPP):
There were no notices.
13. Discussion and Possible Action on Cancellation of Notices of Noncompliance - FPP:
There were no cancellations.
14. Discussion and Possible Action on Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easement (PACE) Applications & Baseline Documentation: Hoffman has received one PACE application and has communicated with two additional landowners that have expressed interest in applying.
15. Discussion and Possible Action on Joining American Farmland Trust's Application for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Regional Conservation Partnership Program: Cicero outlined the regional conservation partnership program. Christensen made a motion to join American Farmland Trust's application for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's regional conservation partnership program, Foelker seconded. Motion passed 6/0.
16. Discussion on 2027 Department Budget:
The most recent 2027 budget analysis was distributed and a discussion followed.
17. Review of the Monthly Financial Report:
The most recent statement of revenues and expenditures was distributed.
18. Discussion on Items for the Next Agenda:
Possible agenda items include: Wisconsin Grazing Academy - Sam Peterson
 - Next Scheduled Meeting: September 16, 2026 at 8:30am in Room C2063
19. Adjournment:
Foelker made a motion to adjourn at 10:20am, Skalitzky seconded. Motion passed 6/0.