

CONSERVATION, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
AGENDA

DATE: Tuesday, May 18, 2021
TIME: 9:00 a.m.
LOCATION: Wood County Courthouse, Room 114

1. Call meeting to order.
 2. Declaration of Quorum.
 3. Public Comments (*brief comments/statement regarding committee business*)
 4. Review Correspondence.
 5. Review and approve support letter for conservation funding & water quality funding proposals to Joint Finance Committee.
 6. Schedule any additional meetings if necessary
 7. Adjourn
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Join by phone

+1-408-418-9388 United States Toll
Meeting number (access code): 187 391 7108

Join by WebEx App or Web

<https://woodcountywi.webex.com/woodcountywi/j.php?MTID=maaa9ca1e84049c2cc6bfb46d2f212125>

Meeting number (access code): 187 391 7108
Meeting password: CEED0518



Joint Finance Committee
Members

Dear Joint Finance Committee Member,

My name is Shane Wucherpennig and I am the County Conservationist/Director of the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department in Wood County, WI. I am writing on behalf of myself and The Wood County Land Conservation Committee to request your support for Support for what was Senate Bill 723 proposed in 2020 (Or its current form in the 2021-2023 Biennium), which would Increase Funding for Local Conservation Efforts. Also listed further down are some proposals listed in the governor's budget proposal earlier. The following bullet points will help explain what we do and how the State of Wisconsin's Local Land & Water Conservation Departments protect, improve, and manage land and water resources in the state and how crucial state funding is supporting our role in coordinating and implementing local conservation standards.

- The County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) is the local delivery mechanism for a wide range of Wisconsin's natural resource management programs including non-point pollution control, farmland preservation, reclamation of non-metallic mines, invasive species control, woodland management, lakes protection, and more
- LWCD professionals work as trusted, technical advisors to support producer-led watershed groups, assist waterfront property owners, help farmers develop and implement nutrient management plans, and respond to natural disasters like floods, and spend years building the trust to be able to successfully do so.
- The conservation practices that LWCD professionals help landowners apply to farm fields, forests, and shorelines have numerous water quality benefits, including: preventing soil erosion and promoting soil health, increasing infiltration into groundwater aquifers, protecting drinking water supply, reducing surface runoff and flood severity, and more.
- The State of Wisconsin codifies the counties' role in coordinating and implementing local conservation standards in Wis. Stats Chap. 92, and defines a state-supported staffing goal for every LWCD of an average of three positions at 100, 70, and 50 percent support.
- The State of Wisconsin has not ensured baseline support of counties by meeting this funding goal since its inception, and current state-funded LWCD staff number 40% fewer than they did 20 years ago.
- The return on investment in county LWCDs is high—on top of the valuable, cost-effective services they provide to local communities, they also multiply several times over the impact of state funding by leveraging federal and private grant dollars into more conservation on the land, and more dollars into local economies.
- Supporting county LWCDs was the top priority voiced by Wisconsinites at statewide Water Quality Task Force hearings held in 2020 and elsewhere over the past year by farm, conservation, environmental and local government groups alike, including Wisconsin Counties Association, Dairy Business Association, Wisconsin Corn Growers, Wisconsin Farm Bureau, and Wisconsin Farmers Union.
- Increase conservation funding to provide approximately \$11 million to support the county LWCDs, resulting in more conservation on the landscape, and better protection of water quality.

I ask you to support the increase in funding for Local Conservation Efforts in the State of Wisconsin and these items below from the governor's budget related to water quality and conservation.

- \$1 million for collection and disposal of firefighting foam with PFAS
- Well compensation grant program funding and eligibility requirements changes - \$2 million
- PAH ban
- County conservation staff funding – about \$11 million, including:
 - Grants to counties for county conservation staff
 - Grants to counties for climate change resiliency
- Producer-led watershed grants: \$500k
- Conservation grant program (grazing education, regenerative agriculture): \$640k
- Alliance for Water Stewardship certification reimbursement: \$312k
- Nitrogen optimization pilot program: \$500k
- POWTS: \$840k

Thank you for your consideration & support. Please contact me with any additional questions you may have.

Respectfully Yours,

Shane Wucherpennig

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