

Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department Annual Report 2022

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.

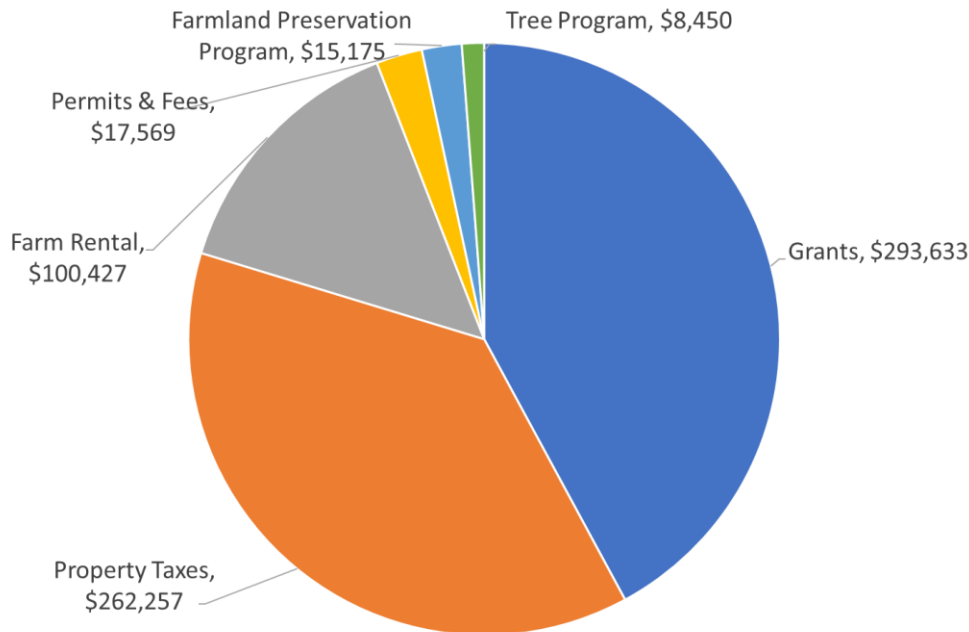
2022 Land and Water Conservation Committee Members

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), Josh Butteris (Resource Conservationist - through 7/2022), Dave Hoffmann (Resource Conservationist - started 9/2022), Sam Peterson (Resource Conservationist - started 2/2023), Marisa Wieder (Water Resources Management Specialist), and Kim Liakopoulos (Administrative Specialist)

2022 Department Funding



Land and Water Resources Management Plan

This plan is required by the Department Agricultural, Trade and Consumer Protection for the LWCD to be eligible to receive staffing grants 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 3 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

Cover Crop and Pasture Establishment Cost-Share Program

The cover crop and pasture establishment cost-share programs are funded by the Multi-Discharger Variance Program in conjunction with the WI Department of Natural Resources and phosphorus point sources. In 2022, contracts were signed to fund the following:

- 1,915.9 acres of cover crops
- 33.9 acres of pasture establishment

Jefferson County Soil Builders

The LWCD is the fiscal manager and collaborator for the Jefferson County Soil Builder 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 2022, the following was achieved:

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

Farmland Preservation Program

The Wisconsin Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) offers farm owners a tax credit for protecting soil and water resources. Landowners receive credit on their Wisconsin income taxes in exchange for compliance with the state conservation standards. LWCD works with landowners and producers to ensure they meet the requirements of the program. The tax credit is calculated as a flat, per acre rate. In Jefferson County, most landowners receive \$7.50 per acre. Landowners located in an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) can sign a 15-year agreement with the state and receive \$10.00 per acre. An AEA is created when landowners join to 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.

- 583 total FPP participants covering a total of 106,525 acres
- 6 AEA agreements covering 802.5 acres
- \$800,946 total tax relief
- Developed new FPP landowner database

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 for 1,062 landowners covering 109,160 acres
- Received and investigated three manure complaints, one was found to be noncompliant and corrective action is under way with assistance from the DNR

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.

- 25 farms in Jefferson County have livestock siting conditional use permits
- In 2022, there were no new permits or amendments to 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 each year to account for crop rotation and changes in fertilization. LWCD offers classes to teach farmers how to write and update their plans.

- 3 classes, 9 pupils

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

LWCD staff 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: 4 purchased easements totaling 778 acres and 5 donated easements totaling 257 acres
- In 2022, there was a significant increase in program interest
- NRCS grant funding secured for a 94 acre acquisition in 2023
- LWCD partnered with American Farmland Trust which resulted in securing NRCS funds for acquisitions for the next 4 years.

Tree Program

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

- 2021/2022 sale offered 9 species with 5,700 trees/shrubs sold
- 2022/2023 sale offered 8 species with 5,700 trees/shrubs sold

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.

- Approximately 10 shoreland visits to provide expert advice and assistance on Lake Koshkonong, Lake Ripley, Rock Lake, and the Rock River.
- Produced maps with weed harvesting information and aquatic plant population data for several water resource groups.
- Reviewed shoreland restoration plans for the Zoning Department, including creating a rain garden implementation plan required as mitigation for a shoreline disturbance.
- Partnered with Rock Lake Improvement Association to implement a planning grant for restoration work on a tributary to Rock Lake.

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 2022, 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

Invasive Species Management

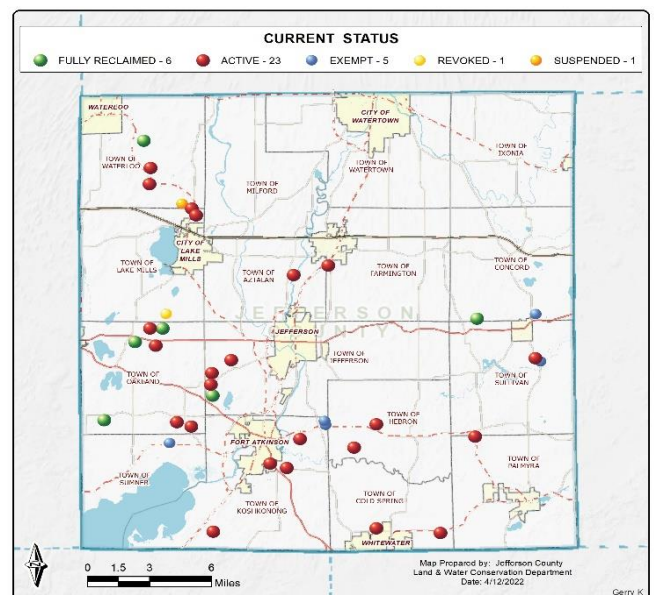
Since 2021, the LWCD receives an annual DNR grant to fund invasive species education, management, and control work. In 2022 the following was accomplished:

- Helped form a citizen volunteer monitoring group in Lake Mills to complete early detection surveys on Rock Lake three times a year.
- Identified new populations of DNR regulated species in the county.
- Implemented programs to educate the public on preventing aquatic invasive species, including assisting the Town and City of Lake Mills with Clean Boats, Clean Waters Program grants.
- Worked on an early detection and response grant to manage a pioneering Phragmites population.
- Partnered with UW-EX, Rock River Coalition, and Lake Koshkonong Wetland Association to create rearing cages for purple loosestrife beetles. The beetles were then released at numerous sites in Jefferson County to help control purple loosestrife populations in the county.
- Produced press releases and social media posts relating to local invasive species education.
- Participated in statewide education events and meetings as the county's aquatic invasive species coordinator.
- Conducted an inventory of aquatic invasive species signs at boat launches.

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 (soon to be open), 3 reclaimed, 2 with revoked permits, and 5 with permit exemptions
- 492.8 acres of open mining land
- 24.8 acres of reclaimed land or interim-reclaimed in 2022
- 11.7 acres of newly exposed mining extractions
- Reviewed one reclamation plan modification and held one public hearing for the modification.



Other Programs and Projects

- Designed a study of the groundwater quality in Jefferson County with the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point as well as Health Department and Planning and Zoning Department.
- Continue to work on the 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 2022, new staff completed a backlog of landowner agreement revisions.
- Worked with the City of Watertown to create a plan and agreement for LWCD to provide technical expertise to assist Watertown in achieving phosphorus reductions in near-by agricultural areas.

- Provided expertise on land and water issues associated with the solar farms and the liquid natural gas plant.
- Developed, customized, and maintained applications for data tracking of LWCD programs. This enables us to do required reporting to State departments.
- 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 and assisted them with mapping, waterway questions, and communications with Jefferson County departments.

Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department
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