State of Wisconsin
Land and Water Conservation Board

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Advisory Committee on Research
Agenda

September 2, 2025

The Advisory Committee on Research (Committee) to the Land and Water Conservation Board (LWCB) will meet on September 2, 2025 at 9:00 am via Microsoft Teams. To attend the meeting, click the following hyperlink to register to the Teams meeting and receive the access link. The agenda for the meeting is shown below.

AGENDA ITEMS AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

9:00 AM	1	Meeting Called to Order – **Ron Grasshoff, Committee Chair** a. Roll Call b. Open meeting notice c. Approval of meeting agenda d. Approval of May 6, 2025 meeting minutes
9:10 AM	2	Public appearances **Ron Schoepp, River Alliance Board Member and SSWIG Producer Led Group Member**
9:15 AM	3	Reflection on Previous Board Presentations (Jeff Messmann's Wake Boating and the Environment, DNR Joe Bennell's Update on Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, Dr. Evan Larson's Tree-ring Perspectives on the Long-Term Dynamics of Water Resources in Wisconsin) **Ron Grasshoff, Chair**
9:40 AM	4	Workplan Review and Discuss Engagement Strategy for Future Presentations (WI Land & Water and DNR's Climate Change and LWRM Plans, Dani Heilser's Intro to PWLWP Grant Program) **Ron Grashoff, Chair**
9:50 AM	5	Member updates with possible discussion
9:55 AM	6	Planning for the next Advisory Committee Meeting - **Ron Grasshoff, Chair**
10:00 AM	7	Adjourn

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH
MEETING MINUTES

May 6, 2025
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Item #1 Call to Order – Roll call, open meeting notice, approval of agenda, approval of March 4, 2025 Committee meeting minutes.

Call to Order

The Advisory Committee on Research ("Committee") to the Land and Water Conservation Board ("LWCB" or "Board") met via videoconference on May 6, 2025. The meeting was preceded by public notice as required by Wis. Stat. § 19.84. The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Ron Grasshoff at **9:02 am**.

Committee Members Present

Members: Ron Grasshoff, Brian McGraw, Monte Osterman, and Tim Anderson. A quorum was present.

Committee Advisors Present

Advisors: Dr. Francisco Arriaga and Amber Radatz.

Approval of Agenda

Motion
Osterman motioned to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Grasshoff, and the motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Motion
Osterman motioned to approve the draft minutes of the March 4, 2025 meeting minutes as presented, seconded by Anderson, and the motion carried unanimously, with the following correction below. Pending the correction, the approved minutes shall be posted as the official meeting record for publication on the LWCB website.

On page 2, Item #3, within the following sentence: "It was noted by the advisors that it may be beyond Hadachek's research as the question is more **feared** towards social science….", "feared" should be replaced with the word "geared'.

Item #2 Reflect on Previous Presentation, Jeff Hadachek (slides provided)

Ron Grasshoff, Chair, lead the discussion focused on reflecting on Jeff Hadachek's April presentation to the LWCB that focused on externalities and socioeconomics revolving around the Producer-led Watershed Protection Groups (PLWPG).

Grasshoff mentioned (from an Environmental Economics source) that externalities in industry are addressed through the regulatory process (i.e. water pollution via the Clean Water Act) while in agriculture the focus is on incentives. Grasshoff mentioned the social impact of the PLWPG Program. The 2020 -2023 PLWPG Impact Report ("Report") describes that the strength of PLWPG is the relationship of farmers helping farmers, which builds confidence in the average farmer to mentor and encourage each other to trying new things. Often there is a fear of stigma or peer-pressure within the farmer community to adopt new practices that are different from the status quo. Peer mentoring between farmers encourages them to try new farming practices. On accessing the benefits vs costs of PLWPGs, Grasshoff thinks these groups have a strong future in promoting conservation practices. Committee members agreed that Jeff Hadachek's research focusing PLWP groups is an important pathway toward understanding how social factors have potential to address land and water issues from some current agricultural may exacerbate.

Dr. Francisco Arriaga agreed with Grasshoff's sentiment, reflecting that producer-leg groups have engagement at different levels, neighbor to neighbor, neighbor to government/municipal agency worker and more. This multi-stakeholder interaction allows farmers to become more comfortable speaking and talking about farming and conservation issues, which could lead to new engagement with other communities and even legislature to share farmer's needs.

Brian McGraw shared an anecdote from Richland County that is striving to develop a PWLPG and how farmers are reluctant to do anything different than what their neighbors are doing. In adopting farming practices different from the norm, Brian mentioned farmers tend to try measures away from roads where they will not be noticed by neighbors in case they might fail. Brian mentioned there is a culture within the farming community to "not do anything that's different from another farmer". McGraw connected this anecdote to Jeff Hadachek's presentation and noted that to him, it outlined why these programs are cost-effective in getting practices adopted, that there is opportunity to reducing phosphorus with smaller monetary investment. McGraw then posed this question: could PWLWGs could help break the stigma of trying new conservation practices if they can demonstrate that they can reduce expenses and make farmland more productive?

It was noted by several members it can take a long time for some conservation practices to show results, which can be discouraging to farmers. In particular, Osterman noted that some conservation practices can take 6-12 years to prove that there is an economic and conservation benefit, and that often in the first few years, producers can see a loss of 30-40%, which dissuades many farmers from continuing the conservation practices before they can see positive results in productivity.

In reflecting on the overall benefit of PLWPGs, Osterman shared that he has seen across the country that other states are impressed with Wisconsin's PLWPG Program, have started asking how PLWPGS work and how their own state may incorporate them. The Wisconsin PLWPG Program will be a highlight at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Summer Conservation Forum July 24-30 in Milwaukee. Osterman went on to share that a producer's attitude towards their land and what they can do with it ultimately will shape the outcome of the land's health and the success of conservation practices, which Grasshoff previously noted that this might be a "values issue". Osterman asked the Committee if guiding principles are needed for producer-led groups to promote more success with conservation practices. He additionally asked if values and conservation goals should be a part of the grant application process for producer-led groups or if these values should be determined by the agencies involved (DATCP, DNR, potentially even LWCB) and if they should create a list of guiding principles that producer-led groups would adhere to or strive towards. Osterman shared a concern about producers needing further guidance and if there should be more oversight on evaluating the results of PLWPG conservation practice implementation. Additionally, Osterman discussed a potential

need for there to be a more organized state-wide association of PLWPGs sponsored by DATCP and that he has a desire to see more results from these groups.

Anderson shared that in the request for proposals for PLWPG grants there is the inclusion of some value statements/goals. He also shared that in the results from the Report, that there is a growing number of producer-led groups and that the program is expecting to see the trend continue. Anderson highlighted the importance of these PLWPGs reflecting for themselves on what should be focused on and come next for their groups to ensure continued participation, as regulating the goals for a group could discourage even current producers. Instead, Anderson said it is more valuable for participating agencies to support continued participation in these programs and conservation practices long-term, such as making requests for continuous funding instead of one-time grants.

In response to Osterman's suggestion for a state-wide association of PLWPGs, Anderson noted that there are more regional sections of PLWPGs instead of one state-wide association as different parts of the states have differing soils and thus different needs and require different conservation practices and tools, who rely on DATCP, DNR, UW-Extension technical experts differently.

Radatz shared that the PLWPG structure as it is now has led to building a culture of trust between collaborators and farmers. She noted that these groups have started normalizing conservation between producers and technical experts beyond surface-level regulation and now producers are developing a relationship to see that these technical experts are additionally a resource for technical assistance and aid in carrying out conservation practices that go beyond talking about only regulation for said practices. More formalized groups or developing further goal lists for the producers instead is not likely to make farmers more interested in joining if they have to commit more than what they do voluntarily. Additionally, Radatz noted that the annual grant process helps report what producers are doing and determining the results of their practices. Radatz discussed that there is a need to continue to focus on outcomes, especially water-quality outcomes. Dr. Arriaga additionally echoed that the power of PLWPGs come from these farmers developing their own goals, county by county, and that DATCP funding has structure and guidance built into the program.

Anderson shared the idea for another LWCB presentation to be about producer-led groups to provide an overview of the grants process and how farmers collaborate and their successes and pain points in doing so.

Item #3 Discuss the Focus and Engagement Strategy for Future Presentations

Kirsten Biefeld, DATCP, shared that LWCB Chair Mark Cupp and planners for the LWCB meetings have ideas for educational presentations for upcoming LWCB meeting, including the following which have yet to be confirmed:

- Potential June presenter:
    - Jeff Meessmann, Director of the Last Wilderness Alliance, presenting on wakeboarding issues.
- Potential August presenters:
    - Joe Bennell, DNR., presenting updates on the development of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy.
    - Dr. Evan Larson of UW-Platteville, presenting on current research, especially as it relates to climate change and climate variability.
- Potential October presenter:

    - WI Land + Water in coordination with DNR staff have prepared materials for incorporating climate change into LWRM Plans.
- Potential December presenter:
    - As a result of this meeting, Kirsten Biefeld will reach out to the PLWP Grant Program Manager Dani Heisler to provide an overview of PLWPG and grant processes.

Item #4 Review Workplan

Ron Grasshoff, Chair, asked for the workplan to be updated so that Jeff Hadachek's presentation included the Committee's reflection highlights:

- How to get producer-leg groups to reflect more on externalities, how to support the groups and ensure their longevity.

Item #5 Member Updates with Possible Discussion

- Ron Grasshoff provided an update regarding the Farm Sustainability Rewards program which had a presentation during the LWCB February meeting.
    - The NRCS manager of account involving the grant that would fund the program has been laid off, and Greenfire and Clean Wisconsin haven't received monthly payments, which likely means the program will not continue without this funding.

Item #6 Planning for the next Advisory Committee meeting

The Committee should expect the following at the next meeting:

- Reflecting on the June LWCB educational presentation
- Discuss the Focus and Engagement Strategy for Future Presentations

Item #7 Adjourn

Motion

Osterman motioned to adjourn, seconded by McGraw, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:12am.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kirsten Biefeld, Bureau of Land and Water Resources
Division of Agricultural Resource Management
WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

LWCB Advisory Committee on Research Workplan

Updated: 1/7/25 | Key: Updated since last meeting

Committee Purpose:

The LWCB Advisory Committee on Research purpose shall be to create, implement and oversee the process for the State of Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Board to advise the University of Wisconsin System on research and outreach needs relating to soil & water conservation. The Committee will provide oversight of a sustainable, lasting process which involves all Board members and advisor organizations as part of the normal agenda of the Board.

Topic	Goal	Action	Timeline	Person(s) Assigned	Status	Notes
Frequency and Distribution of Survey	Develop and use survey to receive input from stakeholders to understand gaps in L&W resource management to advise UW System	1. Baseline Survey of Needs	1. Survey completed in June 2023		1. Completed and distributed	
		2. distribution of survey report and survey to establish contacts within UW System	2. Distribution Survey Feb-March 2024	Kirsten Biefeld, Ron Grasshoff, Amber Radatz	2. Reached out to 20-30 contacts, have had 13 responses, 4 individuals wanting to present	
		3. Propose to conduct survey every 4-5 years	3. Next Survey in 2026, potentially			start thinking on this next year, if this makes sense after we have a couple of board presentations
Educational Opportunities	**UW Engagement:** Annual meeting between LWCB and UW partners to review what work has been done, and UW partners utilizing survey results in grant opportunities	1. use distribution survey contact list to invite participants to an online reflection form	Annually			
		2. host hybrid meeting between communities	Annually? Long-term			
	Outside Partners Engagement: work with partners outside of UW-Wisconsin System and current LWCB partners to further address gaps found in survey	1. Reach out to Matt Kreugar with WI L&W to discuss potential Phosphorus training modules based on Chelsea Zegler's Presentation	2025	Ron Grasshoff, Kirsten Biefeld		This action was determined at the 1/7/25 committee meeting
	LWCB Educaton: Educational opportunities aimed to help board make recommendations to UW System	1. prepare list of potential presenters and topics to LWCB board chair	Suggest up to 3 presentations to the board per year	Have committee decide on potential presenter. Kirsten Biefeld and Ron Grasshoff suggest these presenters to the board meeting planners	At January 7 meeting, developed questions for Greenfire and determined next presentation will be April LWCB meeting, potentially combined presentation between Paul Mitchell and Jeff Hadachek	Include a standard list of questions for presenters: what's next for their research, how their research advances the needs of county conservation departments, how the board can support their work, and to discuss the economic and social impacts of their work.
		2. develop and update Past Presenters list: keep a list of presentation notes, presenter, contact information, and future goals related to presentation reflection	ongoing	Kirsten Biefeld	Started developing on 1/7	
Advising and Recommendations	LWCB creates recommendations to UW System based on educational opportunities		annually? Bi-annually, switching off with survey period?	TBD		**Revisit this item after we have a board presentation completed.** After each presentation, at the next committee meeting, discuss what can we offer them i.e. support/participation in their work. How do we avoid a continuous line of presenters without a clear end point?