

**LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH
MEETING MINUTES**

**November 4, 2025
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

Item #1 Call to Order – Roll call, open meeting notice, approval of agenda, approval of September 2, 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 November 4, 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 Christopher Clayton. A quorum was present.

Committee Advisors Present

Advisors: Dr. Francisco Arriaga and Amber Radatz.

Approval of Agenda

Motion

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

Approval of Minutes

Motion

Osterman motioned to approve the draft minutes of the September 2, 2025 meeting minutes as presented, seconded by McGraw, and the motion carried unanimously. The approved minutes shall be posted as the official meeting record for publication on the LWCB website.

Item #2 Reflection on Board Educational Presentations from October 2024 - October 2025

Kirsten Biefeld, DATCP shared results from the survey prepared for LWCB members feedback regarding Board Educational Presentations from October 2024 - October 2025.

General highlights:

- There were 6 responses out of the 16 board members and advisors solicited for feedback.
- On average all presentations were rated 4 out of 5 or higher. Farm Sustainability Rewards Project by Wisconsin’s Greenfire and Tree-ring Perspectives on Wisconsin Water Resources by Dr. Evan Larson were rated the lowest with an average of 4; The Zone of interaction: Assessing Water Quality Risk through Soil Sampling - A Participatory Research Project by Chelsea

Zegler and "Wakeboarding Issues" by Jeff Meessmann were rated the highest with a average rating of 4.67.

- Ideas for future presentations were also collected and prepared in a list.
- Themes of comments shared by presentation:
 - The Zone of interaction: Assessing Water Quality Risk through Soil Sampling - A Participatory Research Project by Chelsea Zegler
 - Average rating of 4.67.
 - Respondents viewed it as a good refresher on nutrient discharges and highlighting the importance of best practices to limit nutrient loss.
 - "Farm Sustainability Rewards Project" by Ben Becker
 - Average rating of 4.
 - Comments noted that this was at an early phase of development that may no longer be funded by NRCS, but the concept of rewarding performance rather than traditional cost share programs has potential and increase adoption of NR 151 performance standards, and was relevant to the board.
 - "Balancing On-farm Economic Incentives with Water Quality Benefits" by Jeff Hadachek
 - Average rating of 4.50.
 - Comments described that this presentation affirmed Committee's thoughts that socio-economic factors have a very significant impact on improving the effectiveness of Land and Water programs such as Producer Led Working Groups (PLWGs) and will hopefully help serve as a basis to increase funding and support for PLWGs and similar programs.
 - "Wakeboarding Issues" by Jeff Meessmann
 - Average rating of 4.67.
 - Respondents describe that Meessmann provided a good overview of a very important concern of negative impacts on Wisconsin waters, although at this point there is no clear mechanism for regulation of wakeboarding activities and enforcement.
 - "Tree-ring Perspectives on Wisconsin Water Resources" by Dr. Evan Larson
 - Average rating of 4.
 - Respondents described this as an interesting presentation describing land use practices to maintain and restore endangered ecotype of Oak Savannah, but one comment said it was not especially relevant to the board's work.
 - "Update on Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy" by Joe Bonnell
 - Average rating of 4.17.
 - Respondents describe this presentation as important insight for addressing Gulf Hypoxia and updating Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategies, another comment wished that the presentation was shareable.
 - Planning for a Healthy & Resilient Future: Incorporating Climate and Protection into County Land & Water Planning" by Helena Tiedmann and Jenny Pethan
 - Average rating of 4.17.
 - Respondents described this presentation as relevant because it is a new development in Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) plan writing and establishes an action plan for addressing climate change via resiliency practices in Land and Water Conservation. One comment described the importance of testing and evaluating resiliency practices and continue to develop new approaches. Another comment described that the climate aspect is secondary to the primary concern of reducing nutrient loss to surface water.

Item #3 Workplan Review and Discuss Engagement Strategy for Future Presentations

Ron Grasshoff, Chair, opened discussion regarding workplan goals and future engagement strategies for the Committee. Grasshoff provided an overview of how the Committee was formed: one of the duties of the LWCB as outlined in Wisconsin Statute Chapter 92.04(2)(g) to advise the University of Wisconsin System (UW System) annually on needed research and educational programs relating to soil and water conservation. However, Grasshoff noted that the statute does not provide a clear process on how to identify needs and create recommendations with which to advise the UW System.

Grasshoff gave an overview of the history of the Committee and its formative goal to “create, implement, and oversee a 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 has attempted to accomplish its duties, such as engaging with conservation stakeholders about research and outreach needs via the 2023 [Soil & Water Conservation Research and Educational Needs Survey Report](#), which the results were then used as a basis to develop presentation topics for the Board. As described in Agenda Item #2, the presentations have been useful in advancing the general knowledge of the Board as described as described in Agenda Item #2 but they have not resulted in a more defined process for the Committee to achieve its goal of developing recommendations to advise the UW System on research and outreach needs.

Monte Ostermann noted that since Chapter 92 was written, there have been great leaps in soil and water conservation research and there is not a defined process in which to pivot to new issues seen today, such as PFAS (polyfluoroalkyl substances), microplastics, proliferation of CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations), and the switch from majority of farms being small family farms to a majority being large, corporate farms. Ostermann suggested the potential of updating a portion of the statute, however Chris Clayton noted that that the rule making process is a long, resource-intensive process.

Amber Radatz identified one avenue for identifying needs for research and outreach could result from asking counties to share these concerns during LWRM plan updates and reviews that occur during board meetings. Radatz suggested that one or two questions could be adapted from the 2023 [Soil & Water Conservation Research and Educational Needs Survey Report](#) so that counties can directly share challenges they face with implementation of soil and water conservation practices. The Committee agreed that this is a feasible avenue for receiving feedback from the counties that should be followed up on.

The Committee discussed another avenue to solicit county feedback could be to partner with WI Land+Water Association and hold a break-out event at the Annual WI Land+Water Conference in which County Conservationists and other land professionals could provide feedback on their needs. Osterman will reach out to have a discussion with Matt Krueger and the Professional Improvement Committee to discuss the possibility of this break-out session during the 2026 Annual Conference. If this outreach event is not able to occur in 2026, Committee members discussed that planning and implementation for this coordinated event could occur throughout 2026 for the 2027 conference. Additionally, it was proposed that a similar session requesting feedback on research and outreach needs could be proposed at the annual County Conservation Meeting. Osterman also presented the idea that a County Conservationist could be brought on to the Committee as an advisor.

The Committee inquired about a formal process for providing recommendations to the UW System. Dr. Arriaga noted that a formal process to advise the UW System would be formal recommendations sent from the Board to the deans of UW Madison, UW-Extension, and other key players.

Clayton noted that DATCP resources are undergoing review and currently there is limited staff time to support Committee activities. If there is not yet a definitive process and procedures for the Committee bridge between the educational presentations over the past year and providing recommendations to the UW System on research priorities, it may be prudent to evaluate existing systems in place that could accomplish this goal in place of regular Committee meetings.

Dr. Arriaga shared that the Committee has served a helpful role with the 2023 [Soil & Water Conservation Research and Educational Needs Survey Report](#) and that it should be continued on a regular basis (such as the 5-year cycle suggested in the 2024 Committee Workplan) for the Board to stay informed on current trends and gaps in research and outreach needs. Additionally, Committee members also saw value in continuing to provide suggestions for Board education presentation as agenda items to maintain the Board's awareness of relevant research topics, such as Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program updates, social methods of conservation practice adoption, and other identified needs with research and outreach gaps that the Committee could stress the importance of to the Board overall. Additionally, more UW staff could be considered to the Board with additional professional development topics for both Board members and County Land Professionals.

Committee members proposed that the Committee meet less frequently, but that meetings have a longer duration with a tight agenda and operate with the following goals:

- The Committee could continue suggesting presentations to the Board for general awareness of ongoing research and outreach
- The Committee suggests that the Board incorporate questions regarding research and outreach needs a County face during LWRM plan updates and review. Input from the counties will be reviewed during Committee meetings and prepare recommendations to advise the UW System.
- Identify potential outreach avenues to identify research and outreach needs of stakeholders, namely County Land Professionals.

Chair Grasshoff suggested that future meeting frequency and duration, as well as outlining a potential process for the Committee to identify research and outreach needs in order to advise the UW System and opportunities for Board outreach and partnership should be discussed further at the next Committee meeting.

Item #5 Member Updates with Possible Discussion

- Amber Radatz shared that the [WI Water and Soil Health Conference](#) Dec 16-17 at the Kalahari Resort & Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells, WI

Item #6 Planning for the next Advisory Committee meeting

The Committee should expect the following at the next meeting: January 6, 2026

- Determine future Committee meeting frequency/duration
- Discussion for process to meet Committee charge (making recommendations to the Universities of Wisconsin System). Current ideas include:
 - o Suggesting the Board include questions for counties during their LWRM plan updates and review sessions to identify research/outreach needs to formulate formal recommendations to the UW System.
 - o Suggesting break-out sessions in which County Land Professionals can provide feedback on research and outreach needs during partner conferences, such as the Annual WI Land+Water Conference and the annual County Conservation Meeting.

- Continuing to request stakeholder input via Soil & Water Conservation Research and Educational Needs Survey Report every 5 years
- Continuing to Recommend Board Education Presentations
- Inviting a County Conservationist to participate on the Committee as an advisor.
- Suggesting new language in which to update Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 92.

Item #7 Adjourn

Motion

Osterman motioned to adjourn, seconded by McGraw, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:26.

Respectfully submitted by,

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