



## 2015 Wisconsin Conservation Report: Technology, Partnerships Protect Soil and Water

Release Date: 9/22/16

Media Contact:

Donna Gilson

608-224-5130 [donna.gilson@wi.gov](mailto:donna.gilson@wi.gov)

Bill Cosh, Communications Director

608-224-5020 [William2.Cosh@wi.gov](mailto:William2.Cosh@wi.gov)

MADISON – Keeping Wisconsin's land and water healthy requires balancing time at the computer and in meetings with time in the field. That's the focus of the latest Wisconsin Land and Water Annual Report.

The report details activities from 2015, and highlights the increasing role of computer modeling and databases in preventing the soil erosion and runoff that can decrease productivity and pollute both surface and groundwater. The report also highlights the strong partnerships among state, federal and local agencies and landowners who are working on conservation.

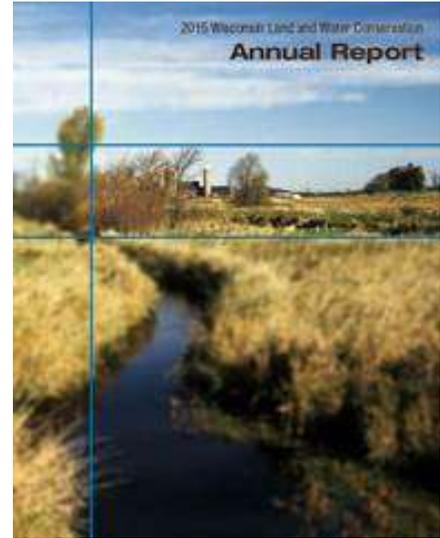
"Successful conservation efforts are never just about getting the right conservation practice in the right place. Success requires balancing competing demands for funding and staff time, collaboration between agencies with diverse missions, accounting for farmers' need to make a profit, and dealing with plain old human nature," the report's introduction says.

The report will be presented to the Land and Water Conservation Board at its regular meeting Oct. 4, and is now available online at <http://datcps.wi.gov> under "Publications." It is a joint effort of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Conservation efforts in Wisconsin are a cooperative effort involving landowners working with DATCP and DNR, as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, county conservation departments, and nongovernmental agencies. The report includes tables listing the many projects undertaken or completed in 2015.

The report features stories of successful conservation projects that hinge on technology and partnerships:

**Waupaca County** – After adopting its first farmland preservation zoning ordinance in 2015, enabling farmers there to collect tax credits under the state's Farmland Preservation Program, Waupaca County's nutrient management specialist began walking their fields. To participate, landowners also need to comply with conservation standards. One of the farms he visited was owned by County Supervisor Gary Schoen, who was involved in passing the ordinance. There he found a serious erosion problem spanning fields owned by three landowners. The solution was a new water and sediment control basin designed to keep soil on the fields and out of nearby School Section Lake – and the result is a striking example of state and local programs working together.



-more-

## REPORT – ADD ONE

**Outagamie County** – Outagamie County is one of 33 in Wisconsin that approved "9 Key Element Plans" in 2015, a system developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to assess causes of nonpoint source pollution and set priorities to restore and protect water quality. The county is using its plan to address nonpoint pollution in the Plum and Kankapot creek watersheds, and is now applying it to other watersheds. The plan is key to obtaining state and federal funding for these projects as well.

**Columbia County** – Faced with the complexities of programs relying on various types of land records, the county found help through a high-tech solution. Columbia County Land and Water Conservation's records were not tied to the county's land records electronically. Finding owners versus operators for purposes of checking conservation compliance for Farmland Preservation Program participation, for example, was problematic. That was where they started building a web-based program that tied their conservation records to county land records so that ownership, tax parcels, and conservation practices can be linked.

**Lafayette County** -- Lafayette County was updating its Land and Water Resource Management Plan, and needed to know where to focus limited resources – but all the survey data used to map cropland and erosion had been lost. So they turned to a computer modeling program that evaluates cropland's vulnerability to erosion, and factors in watershed information and existing conservation practices. The result allowed them to narrow 29,000 parcels of land down to 800 priority parcels.

**Marathon County** – A farmer who wanted to raise her daughters on a dairy farm and the county grazing specialist joined forces near Stratford to convert row-cropped land to pastureland for a herd of about 50 Jerseys. Biweekly visits from the grazing specialist in the beginning kept things on track, and the now-thriving farm is helping restore soil health. Marathon County Land Conservation Services offers six field days every year in the Big Eau Pleine Watershed, taking University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point students to farms that demonstrate that there are methods available to produce high-quality meat or milk and still protect the environment.

**Barron County** – A six-year effort to keep barnyard runoff out of a trout stream, Tuscobia Lake and ultimately, Rice Lake, wrapped up in 2015 with the completion of a system that allows cattle to feed on reinforced areas. That was phase two of a project that began six years earlier – the first phase was installing almost a mile of fencing to protect an eroding stream bank in a pasture. Financial assistance from the Rice Lake, Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District helped build the fence, with matching funds from DATCP's Soil and Water Resource Management program. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources stepped in with a Targeted Runoff Management Grant to help build the barnyard system last year.

###