


Wisconsin Counties Association

2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



8:00 – 9:00 AM

**County Land Water Conservation Districts:
Professional, Proven and Pioneering**



LAND & WATER CONSERVATION DEPTS: PROFESSIONAL, PROVEN, AND PIONEERING

Matt Krueger – WI Land+Water

Ben Pierce, Chris Arrowood – Langlade Co.

Cedric Schnitzler – Monroe Co.

Sept. 23, 2024



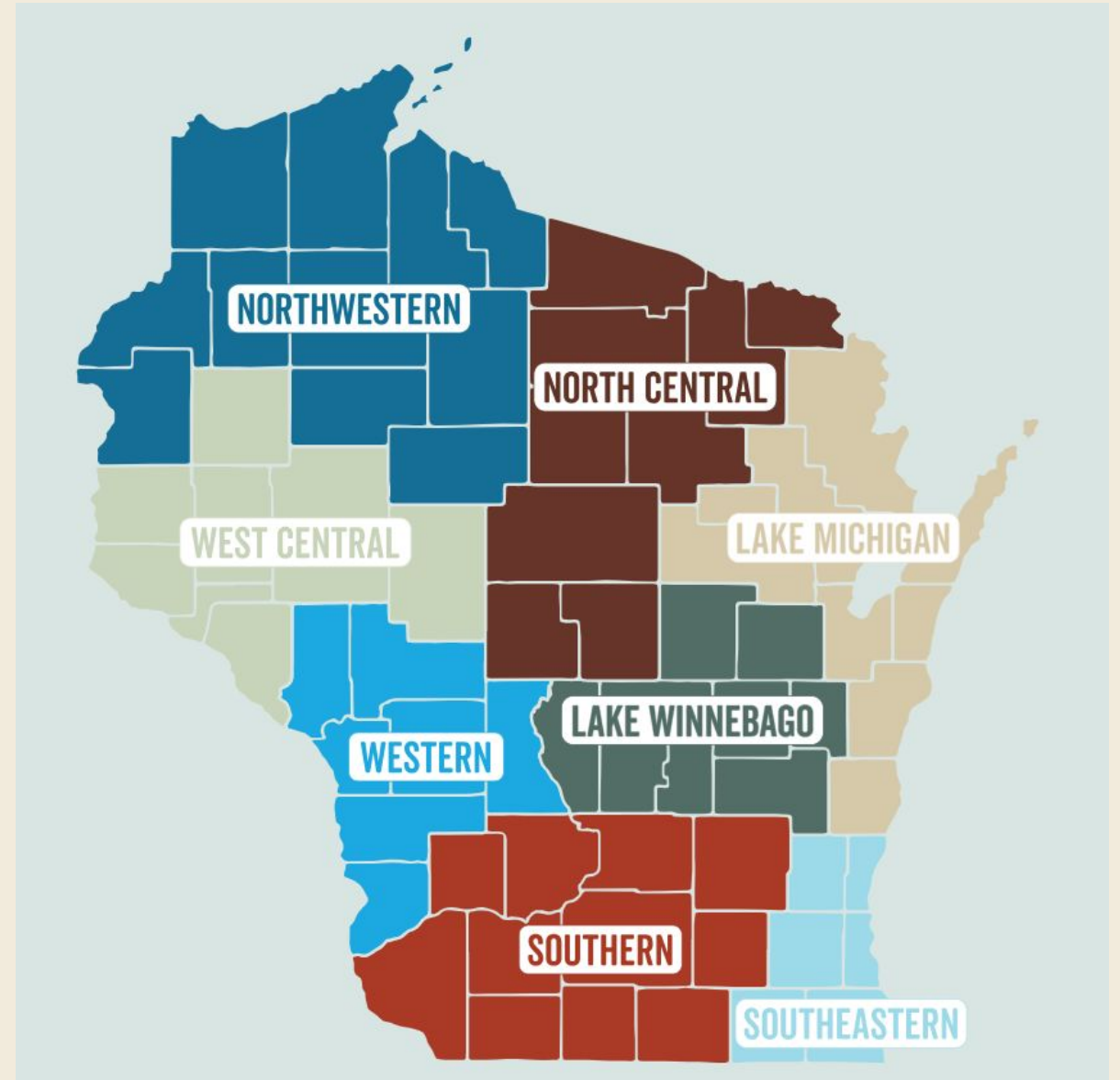


OUTLINE

- 1) Brief intro to WI Land+Water
- 2) Critical facts about LWCDs
- 3) LWCDs are valuable assets to counties
 - 1) Langlade County
 - 2) Monroe County
- 4) Questions and discussion

WI LAND+WATER

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit supporting 450 Land Conservation Committee (LCC) members and 380 Land and Water Conservation Dept (LWCD) staff in Wisconsin.
 - 2024: all 72 counties are members
 - Established in 1953
 - Professional staff of ten (and one intern) based out of Madison office, work statewide
 - Area associations form our structure
 - 2024 Annual Conference – March 5-7, Green Bay
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CRITICAL FACT #1

Wisconsin is a pioneer in locally led land conservation

Wisconsin's Driftless Area, 1937-38



Nation's First “Watershed Project” – Coon Valley, WI



Leopold's “Land Ethic”



CRITICAL FACT #2

Wisconsin is a national innovator in land conservation

Wisconsin is the only state with LWCDs, not “districts”

CHAPTER 92

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION AND ANIMAL WASTE MANAGEMENT

92.02	Legislative intent.	92.11	Regulation of local soil and water resource management practices.
92.025	State soil erosion control goals.	92.115	Municipal soil conservation on private lands.
92.03	Definitions.	92.12	Intergovernmental cooperation.
92.04	Land and water conservation board.	92.13	State and local agencies to cooperate.
92.05	Department.	92.14	Soil and water resource management program.
92.06	Land conservation committees.	92.15	Local regulation of livestock operations.
92.07	Land conservation committee; powers.	92.16	Manure storage facilities.
92.09	Land conservation committee staff.	92.17	Shoreland management.
92.10	Land and water resource management planning program.	92.18	Training and certification.

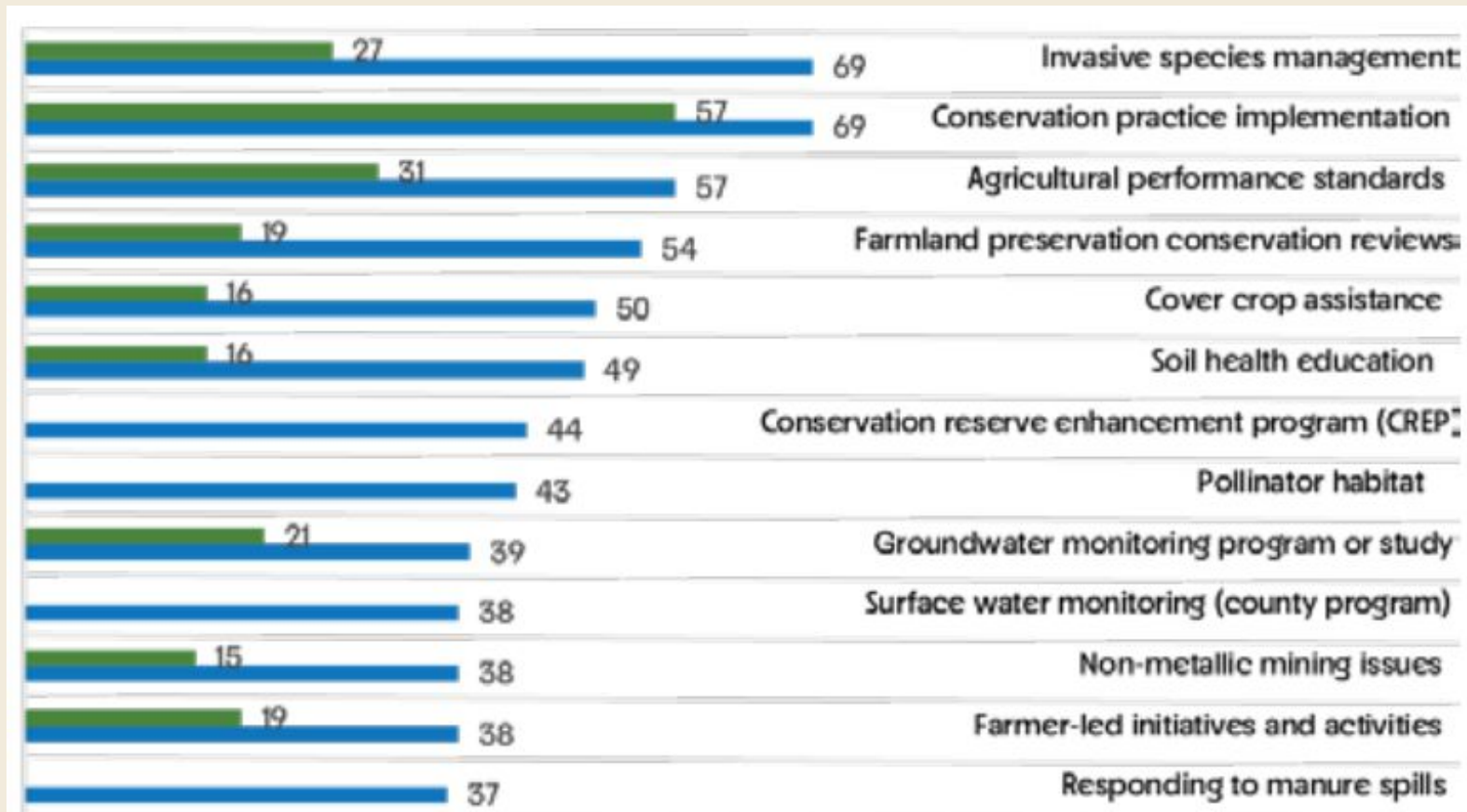
Enacted in 1982, Chap. 92 Wis. Stats. requires all counties create a land conservation committee (LCC) to conserve soil, water, and related natural resources.

LWCD staff are responsible for the administration of the county soil and water conservation program and may exercise the powers granted to the land conservation committee

CRITICAL FACT #3

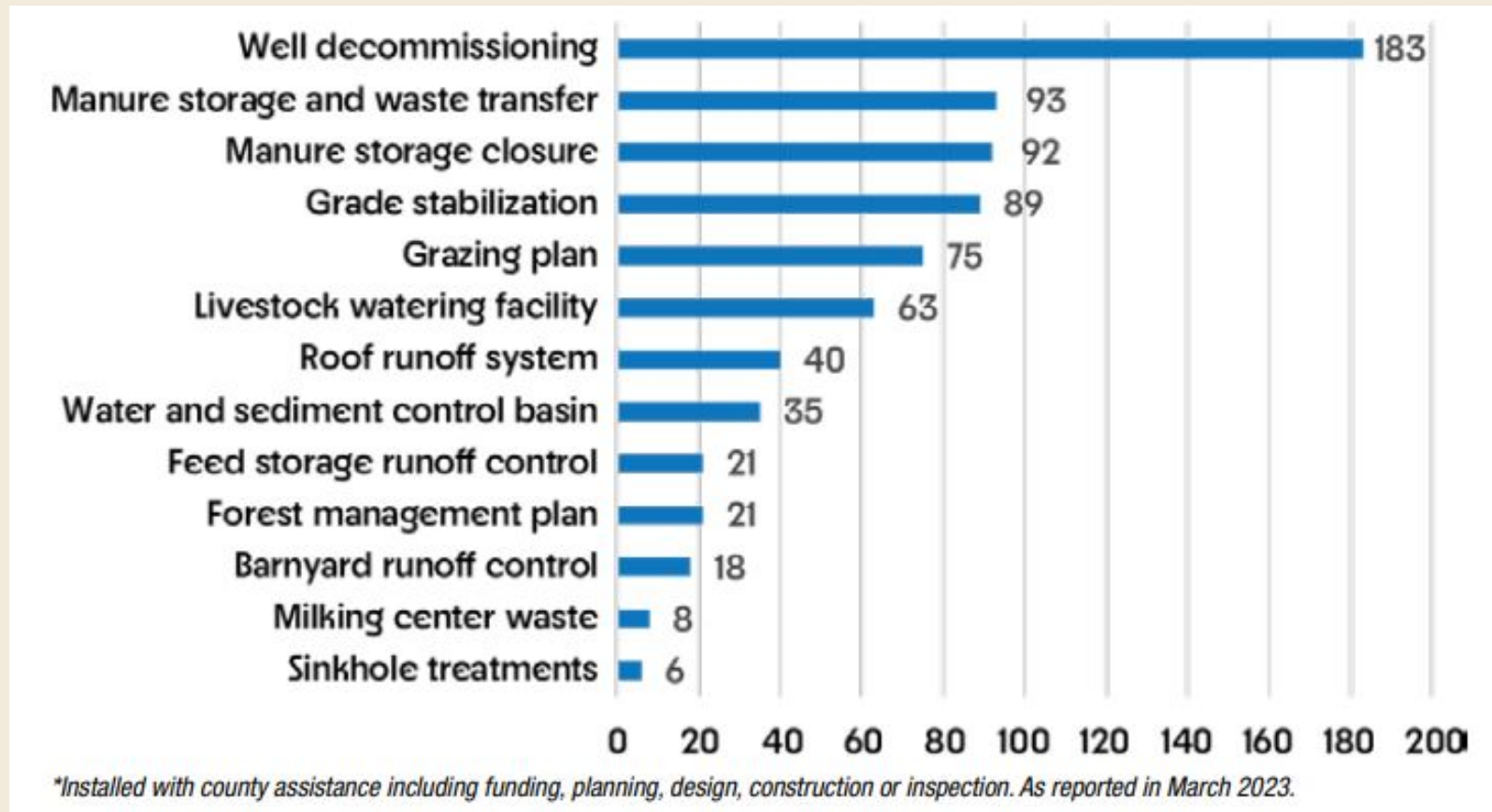
LWCDs address local conservation needs, defined in the land and water resource management plan

COUNTY CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN 2022*



* 2022 Wisconsin Report on Soil and Water Conservation

CONSERVATION PRACTICES INSTALLED IN 2022*



CONSERVATION IN ACTION: LA CROSSE COUNTY



Before: degraded, eroding banks



After: sculpted banks, floodplain connection

County LWRM Plan:

- Every county must have one
- ID's
 - Conservation challenges
 - Priority work areas
 - Solutions

Land & Water Resource Management Plan

2020 - 2029

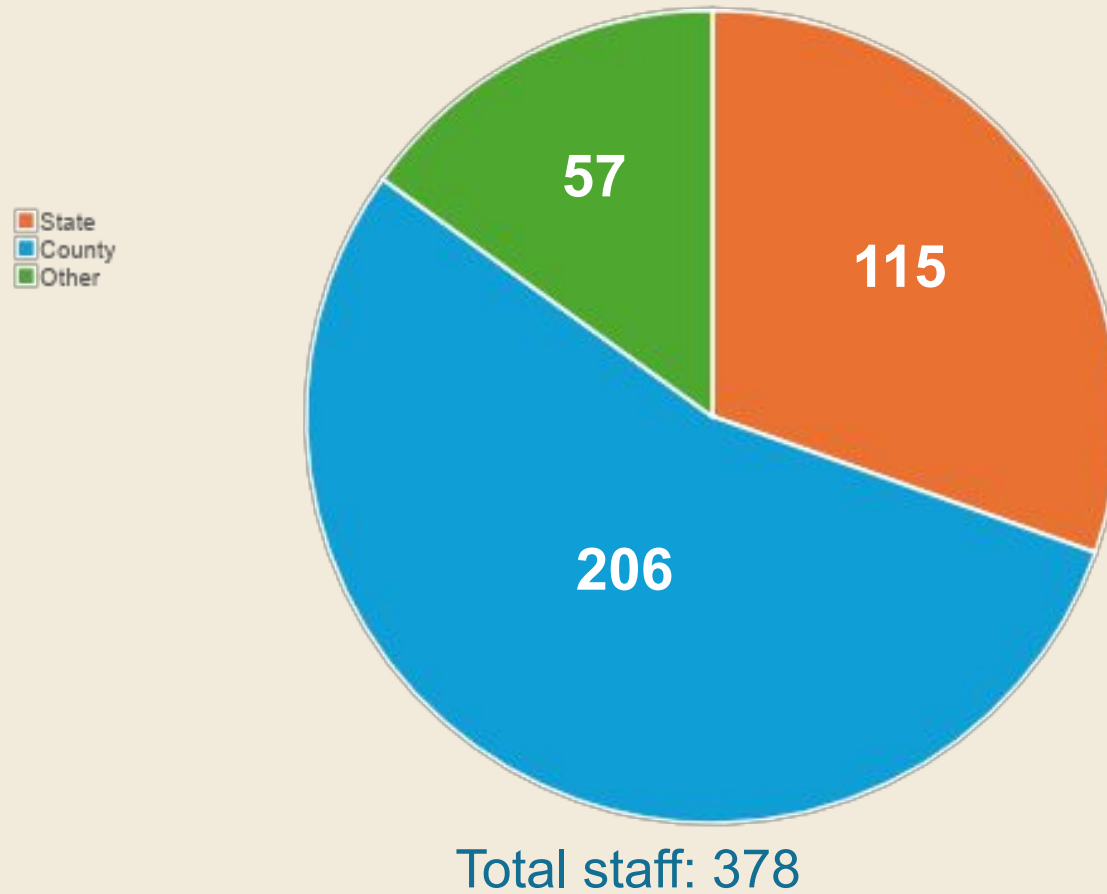


LA CROSSE COUNTY
Exceptional services. Extraordinary place.

CRITICAL FACT #4

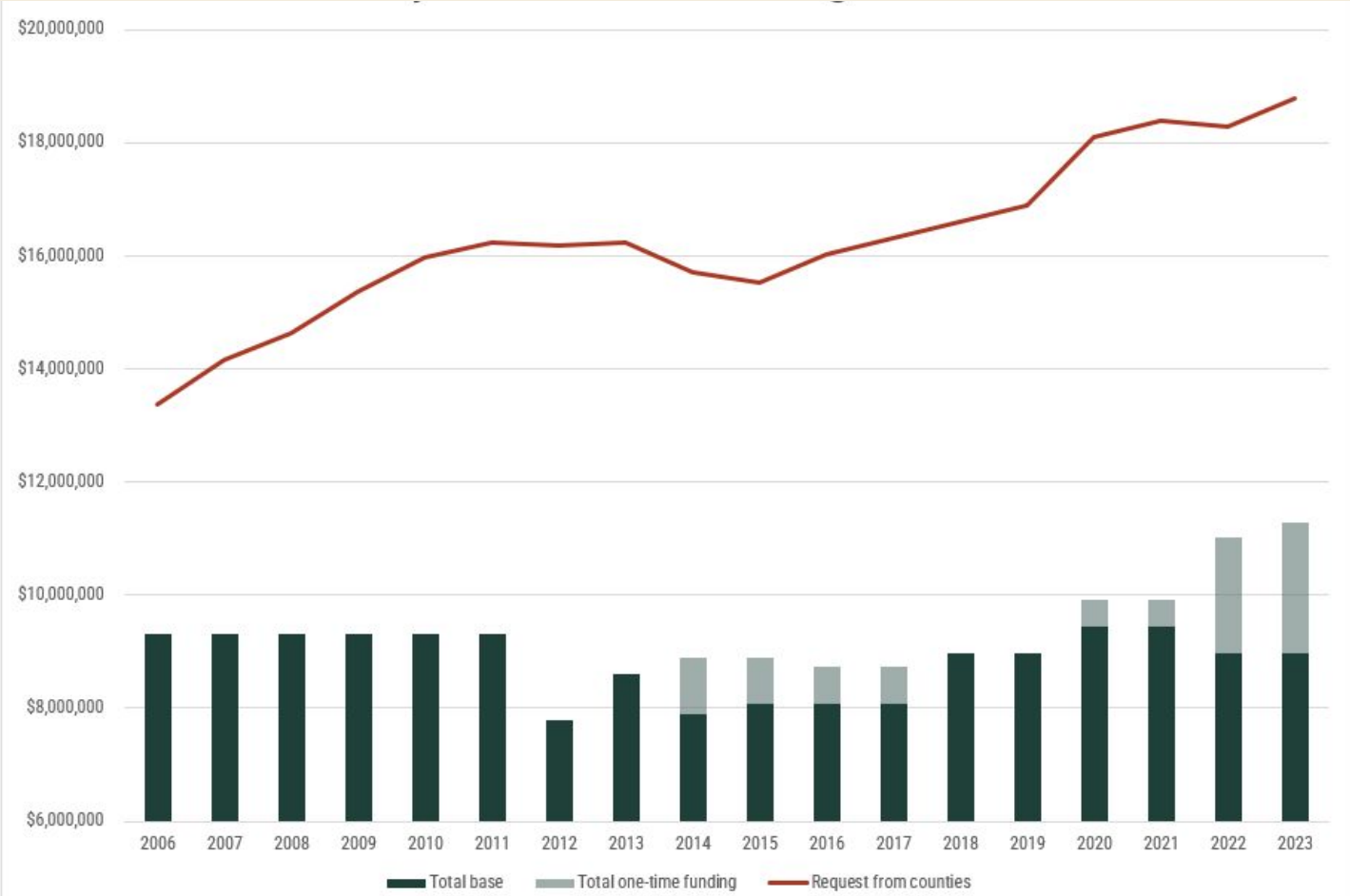
LWCD staff are supported in part by state (DATCP) funds,
but more funding is needed.

COUNTY CONSERVATION STAFFING SUPPORT, BY SOURCE (2021)*



* 2023 Legislative Fiscal Bureau Info Paper #74 – Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement

ACTUAL FUNDING VS. COUNTY NEED



County need,
per 92.14(6)(b)

Actual funding

- ▶ Approve
 - ▶ Increasing the 50% Conservation Technician to 100%.
 - ▶ Increasing the 50% Assistant Code Administrator to 100%.
 - ▶ Increasing the 61% Office Assistant to 100%.
 - ▶ Create a 100% Conservation Specialist.
- ▶ Cost:
 - ▶ \$125,000 2023 budget amendment.
 - ▶ \$200,000/year on-going obligation.

At current staffing levels:

1. We aren't meeting our Land & Water Resource Management Plan Goals.
 - ▶ The grants we've used to support the department have become too competitive to rely on.
 - ▶ Services have been cut to a bare minimum.
2. We are unable to secure and process grants to benefit the community.
3. Comparable-sized Land Conservation programs average 5.0 to 5.3 FTE staff to manage workload, Langlade County 1.65 current; 3.15 proposed.
4. Land Records & Regulations Staffing levels were reduce in 2021 with retirements and workloads have been unbalanced.

Missed Grant Opportunities

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- ▶ We don't have enough staff to process grant paperwork. (applications or deliverables)
 - ▶ SEG NMP: \$2.3 million available to the community
 - ▶ SEG NMFE: \$25-35,000/year
 - ▶ SEG Innovation: \$50,000/year.
 - ▶ DNR Surface Water Grants: \$40,000/year

Meeting Land & Water Resource Management Plan Goals

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1. Protect and improve surface and groundwater.
 - ▶ 0.81 FTE/1474 hrs.
2. Mitigate Invasive species impacts.
 - ▶ 0.09 FTE/ 163 hrs.
3. Promote working forests and farms.
 - ▶ 0.60 FTE/ 1092 hrs.
4. Promote stewardship of the land and water through public education.
 - ▶ 0.06 FTE/ 109 hrs.
5. Protect public health from unwanted chemical waste.
 - ▶ 0.06 FTE 109 hrs.
6. Improve forest silviculture for multiple uses.
 - ▶ 0.01 FTE/ 18 hrs.
7. Manage wildlife conflicts.
 - ▶ 0.02 FTE/ 36 hrs.

Dedication

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- ▶ Average County 5.0 FTE's
- ▶ Langlade County is asking our Land Conservation Staff to show up every day and give:

Year	Staff	Workload	
2022	2.65	189%	Highest Staff Levels Ever
2023	1.90	263%	
2024	1.65	303%	
Proposed	3.15	159%	

The Value of Land Conservation Departments *Monroe County – LCD*



*Cedric Schnitzler – Monroe County BOD Chair, NR&E Chair
WI County Association Conference*



Monroe County



Size - 581,300 acres

Population 46,274

Land use:

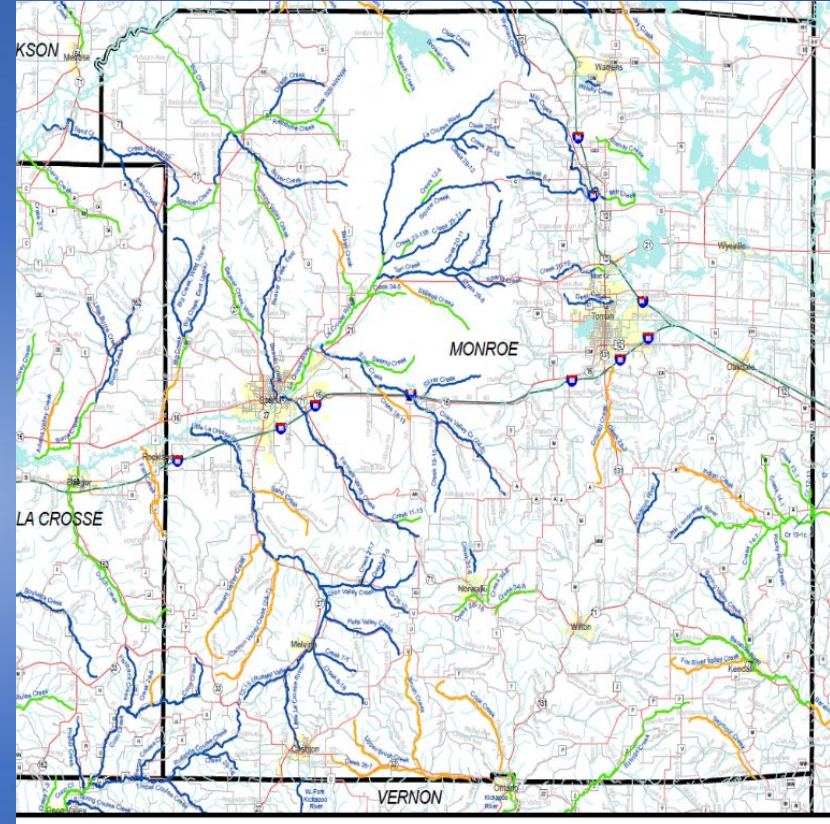
- Fort McCoy -60,000 acres
- Central Wisconsin Conservation Area
(16,000 acres in Monroe Co.)
- cranberries 3,654 acres
- woodland 273,000 acres
- cropland 185,800 acres
- wetlands 56,000 acres
- 5 Watershed Basins



Cold Water Streams



Trout Streams
Class I - 92 miles
Class II - 114 miles



The Origin of 4 Rivers

La Crosse River
Kickapoo River
Baraboo River
Lemonweir River

Recreational Opportunities



Environmental Challenges



1990-1999 - \$33,000

2000-2009 - \$1,793,000

2010-2019 - \$33,153,000

Land Conservation Department Priorities:

- Soil & Water Resource Mgt. (SWRM) Program
- Farmland Preservation Program
- NR151 Implementation
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- Land Use Planning/Grants
- Non-Metallic Mining Ordinance
- Manure Storage Ordinance
- CAFO's
- Complaints/Violation Response
- Adaptive Mgt./Phosphorous Trading w/Municipalities
- PL566 Flood Control Dams
- Tri-Creek Property Mgt.
- County Cost Share
- Climate Change Task Force
- CWD Task Force
- Ag Advisory Committee
- Wildlife Abatement Program
- Tree Sales
- Private Well Testing
- School Programs
- Land Stewardship Recognition



Maintain & Implement Traditional Conservation Practices



Soil Health: the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans.

Soil Health Principles:

- Minimize soil disturbance
- Soil armor - keep the soil covered
- Maximize diversity of plants in the rotation – 4 crop types
- Maintain living roots in the soil - cover crops
- Integrate livestock



Manage Runoff



Grade Stabilization Structures - Dams



Flood Plain Management

Wetland Restoration



Stream Capacity

Secure Long Term Funding to Implement Objectives

Staff

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PARTNERING FOR AGROFORESTRY

- Two planting dates (April, May)
- Over 30 volunteers
- 1100 trees planted along the contours over the 30 acre pasture, converting to a silvopasture management system.
- Over 50 years of growth, the trees have a potential to sequester 2,747 CO₂e. Equivalent to 600 cars off the road for a year!
- Gretebeck's are a pilot farm for Organic Valley inseting program incentives.




Partners

Project Partners






Questions??