
The Winnebago Conservationist

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Our mission is to provide competent, professional services in the planning, design and implementation of programs and projects that help protect, restore, and sustain the natural resources of Winnebago County and the region.

'The Winnebago Conservationist' provides up-to-date details about land and water resource management issues that are of interest to people throughout Winnebago County. We trust this information will be useful to you. If you, or other people you know, did not receive this newsletter directly, but would like to be placed on our mailing list, please call our office. We will be happy to include you in the next mailing.

Coughlin Center Open House

Plan to attend the **James P. Coughlin Center** Open House being held from 1-3 p.m. Sunday, April 26. This is an outstanding facility that residents of the County can certainly be proud of. In addition to our Department, the Coughlin Center houses the County Parks Dept.; the UW- Extension offices; USDA-Farm Service Agency, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the USDA-Rural Development office. The Dept. of Natural Resources wing will be constructed this summer to make it a complete "One Stop" service center. In the 4 months we have been here, the Coughlin Center has enabled each department and agency within it to expand the quality and quantity of services we all provide. Stop in anytime, but remember April 26 for a special get together and to see all that this new facility has to offer.

In Need of Tree Planting Tools & Supplies ?

The Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Department has a the following supplies and tools available for purchase to help you meet your tree planting needs this spring. Call to place an order, or stop in at your convenience. Our hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday.

LIQUA-GEL - maximizes planting survival. A starch polymer powder mixes with water; absorbs several hundred times its own weight in water and slowly releases moisture to treated roots. One 2-ounce bag will treat 500 seedlings or 250 transplants.

Price: \$1.50 per bag

TREE PLANTING BARS - all steel, welded, 'T' handle planting bar with 10" long blade in widths of 3 or 4 inch. *Price: 3" wide blade/ \$19.00; 4" wide blade/ \$22.00*

TUBEX TREE SHELTERS - biodegradable, seamless tree shelter to protect seedlings from animals and scorching winds, and serves as a "mini-greenhouse" to accelerate growth and increase survival. Easy to install. Hardwood mounting stake and top netting included. Effective use - 5 to 7 years. Shelters available in 2 and 3 ft. lengths. *Price each: 2 ft./\$1.10 and; 3 ft./\$1.70. (10% discount on purchases of 50 or more)*

FERTILIZER TABLETS - safe, effective, and even way to fertilize your seedlings, transplants, and rooted cuttings. One 10 gram, non-burning tablet per seedling provides slow release of vital nutrients to foster vigorous growth and increase survival rates for up to 2 years. Blend is 20% nitrogen, 10 % phosphorus, and 5% potash. Buy 50 or 100 tablets per bag. *Price: 50 tablets/\$4.75; 100 tablets/\$9.50*

HARD WOOD LATH - straight, high quality 4 ft long x 1 1/2 inch width x 1/2 inch thick hardwood lath. 50 per bundle. Great for straight row staking, marking individual trees, or as temporary supports for trees and shrubs. One-year effective use (in ground contact). (Note: not intended for use with the Tubex Tube tree shelters) *Price: \$6.00 per bundle*

EQUIPMENT FOR RENT

TREE PLANTER MACHINES - Three 3-point hitch planters available (please call LWCD Office for details). Rental rate: *\$15.00 per 1,000 trees planted.*

BACK PACK SPRAYERS - 5 gal. capacity, easy hand pump operation, with no-drip nozzle. Adjustable shoulder straps and steel support frame. *Rental rate: \$10.00 per day.*

TREE PLANTING BARS - see information above. No rental fee. *Refundable deposit: \$30.00*

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Winnebago County's New Water Quality Improvement Cost-Share Program

Pete Van Airsdale, County Conservationist

Due, in part, to more reductions in federal/ state funding for pollution abatement efforts at the local level, especially in the Wisconsin Priority Watershed - Pollution Abatement Program, a County funded Water Quality Improvement Program has been authorized by the Winnebago County Board, beginning in 1998. This initiative includes a \$100,000 annual allocation in the Land & Water Conservation Department budget to offer cost sharing to landowners for the installation of "Best Management Practices". These practices prevent sediments, nutrients, and other contaminants from being washed into our surface waters.

Landowners interested in this program should contact the Land & Water Conservation Department for an application and specific details.

Eligible Practices – Most of the standard Best Management Practices are eligible for cost share assistance. These include:

- ✓ Barnyard runoff control systems
- ✓ Conservation tillage practices
- ✓ Diversions, drop spillway structures (including rock or sod chutes)
- ✓ Grassed waterways
- ✓ Rock riprap for shoreline and stream bank protection
- ✓ Vegetated buffers and . . . others

Cost-Shares – eligible projects may be cost-shared at a 70% rate, with a maximum allowable \$20,000 per site.

Ranked Issues and Strategies

In the course of four meetings, held in January through March of this year, a Citizens Advisory Committee, comprised of 18 persons from throughout the County, identified and ranked 20 separate **Issues** that have direct, negative impacts on water quality in the Winnebago System. The three highest ranked issues were:

- 1) *Soil erosion and nutrient runoff; including manure runoff, construction site erosion and urban stormwater runoff.*
- 2) *Shoreline and bank erosion in the "Winnebago System".*
- 3) *Poor coordination and communication between rural and urban areas within sub-watersheds.*

The Committee also identified **Actions** that are needed to begin correcting the more serious problems that threaten water quality. These include actions to:

- ◆ *Increase conservation tillage and other soil erosion control practices on crop fields.*
- ◆ *Increase construction of detention/sediment settling basins for stormwater runoff control.*
- ◆ *Review adequacy of urban construction-site erosion control ordinances to improve effective compliance.*
- ◆ *Develop and implement land use planning that minimizes natural resource degradation.*
- ◆ *Increase installation of riprap and other effective practices to prevent shoreline and bank erosion.*
- ◆ *Establish shoreline and streambank vegetated buffer areas.*
- ◆ *Petition U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to adopt a water level management strategy on the "Winnebago Pool" that reduces risks of damage and loss of 'in-lake' emergent vegetation and adjacent wetlands.*
- ◆ *Purchase shoreland/streambank easement acquisitions.*
- ◆ *Develop local government agreements to provide effective, sub-watershed approaches for long-term water resource protection.*

Other Key Recommendations

In addition to specific Cost-Share Program policy recommendations, the CAC recommended the following steps be taken:

- Support a Land & Water Resource issues survey of riparian owners on Lake Butte Morts, Winneconne and Poygan, including owners on the Fox and Wolf rivers. (a similar survey of Lake Winnebago riparian owners was conducted in 1997)
- Establish a \$1,000,000 revolving low-interest loan fund for the installation of BMPs. (This requires County Board approval)
- Conduct rural/urban resource management needs inventories and evaluations within the sub-watersheds of the County.

All recommendations were submitted to and approved by the County Land Conservation Committee 4/2/98.

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Lake Poygan Sportsman's Club Public Meeting – Cane Bed Study

The Lake Poygan Sportsman's Club will host a public meeting on Monday, May 4 at *The Duck Inn* to release the results of a recently completed study of the cane beds on Lake Poygan. This study was sponsored by the Sportsman's Club, and funded by a DNR Wisconsin Lakes Planning Grant that was obtained in May of 1997. The study was conducted by Dr. Tony Gabriel, UW – Oshkosh and Dr. Leo Brodensteiner of Western Washington State University. Topics discussed at the meeting will include information about the cane beds (a.k.a. common reed), as well as possible causes for the rapid declines seen in some of the stands over the past 15 years. Restoration work, possibly slated for this summer, will also be discussed. The meeting will begin at 7 PM.

Lake Poygan Wild Celery Restoration Project

The Lake Poygan Sportsman's Club will conduct its third annual Wild Celery Restoration Project on Saturday, April 25, and Sunday, April 26. Approximately 9,000 wild celery tubers will be removed from local side channels for planting in Lake Poygan itself. Volunteers are needed for bagging and planting on both days, between 8:30 AM and 1:00 PM. The work will be headquartered at Gene's Bait Shop, located at the Boom Bay Resort, (7884 Cutoff Lane) at Boom Bay. This project is part of the implementation of the Winnebago Comprehensive Management Plan, which calls for the planting of at least 40,000 wild celery tubers in Lake Poygan. Successful plantings will provide cover for fish, food for migrating ducks, and nutrient and sediment management for the water column in the lake.

Making Water Quality Improvements at Home

**Brad W. Robole – ARD Watershed Project
Manager**

All homeowners have an impact on the quality of the water in our lakes, rivers, and streams. It doesn't matter whether we live in a large city, a small town or in the country, our day to day activities on the land affect our water.

The runoff from our yards and driveways can be polluted by such things as sediment, fertilizer, grass clippings or even pet wastes.

Individually the impact to water quality is miniscule, but collectively the impact is great. Fortunately, the same holds true for making improvements. While no one homeowner could make changes and expect to see immediate results, if a large number of homeowners made small changes the results could be great.

What can the average homeowner do? Listed below are five things that a homeowner could do to minimize the amount of runoff pollution leaving their property.

1) Reduce the use of fertilizers on the lawn.

Fertilizer carelessly applied on one lawn can be a waste of the homeowner's money but may otherwise seem insignificant. On hundreds or thousands of lawns, however, careless applications can add up to a major problem for local rivers, lakes, and streams.

2) Sweep all grass clippings, soil, and fertilizers off paved surfaces.

Grass clippings, soil particles, and fertilizers contain nitrogen and phosphorus which can cause nuisance weed and algae growth if washed through storm sewers into nearby waterways.

3) If you own waterfront property, establish a vegetated "buffer strip" along the water's edge.

Leaving a 15-25 strip of unmowed turf along shorelines is a good step to reduce runoff of fertilizers, pesticides, and sediment. They also provide areas for wildlife and attract birds, butterflies and small animals.

4) Wash your car on the lawn.

Washing your car on the lawn prevents soapy water, sediment, and other chemicals from running into the nearest storm sewers. Lawns absorb these pollutants as they are broken down by microbial activity in the soil.

5) Bury or flush pet wastes.

Pet waste is one the many little sources of pollution that add up to a big problem for water quality.

For more information on these topics please call or stop in our office. We have free publications available that address each of these subjects.

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“Shorelandscaping” Guide Available for Waterfront Property Owners

**Brad W. Robole – ARD Watershed Project
Manager**

This new 34-page booklet, developed through the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources, is available from the Land & Water Conservation Dept. for a nominal charge. It is an excellent reference for any waterfront (riparian) property owner interested in protecting natural resources. Part 1 includes a general description of pollution problems associated with developing riparian areas. It provides specific information on how to develop natural areas while minimizing risks to water resources. Part 2 outlines steps needed to restore highly developed property back to a more natural state. Persons interested in this publication should stop in or call our office.

Farmland Preservation Program News

**Eric Venden, GIS Manager/Conservation
Planner**

Farmland Preservation Program Tax credits are available for qualified farm owners in Winnebago County. The State program is intended to reduce property taxes on eligible farmland. If you live in the townships of Wolf River, Winchester, Clayton, Neenah, Vinland, Utica, or Nekimi, and have at least 35 acres of land which averages gross profits of \$6,000/yr (or \$18,000 over a 3-year period), and the land is zoned A-1 (exclusive agriculture), you may be eligible for this program. All land enrolled in the Program is required to meet County Soil & Water Conservation standards, based on soil types, erosion factors, crop rotations and management practices (ex. strip-cropping, reduced tillage). The tax credits are credited to the individual's state taxes. The credits are determined based on a combination of personal income and property taxes. Higher income households with lower property taxes receive less credit, whereas lower income and higher property taxes receive more. If you have any questions about the Farmland Preservation Program, feel free to call me at 232-1950 or 727-8642.

Maps, Get Your Maps Here!!!

Eric Venden, GIS Manager/Conservation Planner

Maps of almost any size and scale, containing numerous “layers” of information, are just a phone call away. Imagine a map depicting buildings, crop field boundaries, rivers, and streams for farm planning, or a map of your parcel of land showing buildings, nearby roads, and contour information (elevations) to show surface drainage patterns. This map making service, via computer technology, dubbed Geographic Information Systems (GIS), is available upon request through the Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department. Call Eric Venden at 232-1950 or 727-8642, for more information and a pricing schedule.

Caring for That Grassed Waterway Keith Schroeder, Conservation Technician

Landowners have installed hundreds of grassed waterways on their farms throughout Winnebago County for many years. The Waterways are usually installed in bare soil drainage ways that have experienced some nasty erosion. When installed and maintained, those waterways are extremely effective in stopping gully erosion and keeping sediment out of downstream surface waters, and they can be doing the job for 10-20 years. The key word here is “**maintained**”.

Here are a few tips on maintaining those grassed waterways:

- ✓ Inspect the waterway frequently, especially after heavy rains. Fill in and seed or sod all eroded areas and gullies as soon as possible.
- ✓ Mow the waterway at once a season to control weeds and brush (mow after bird nesting is done)
- ✓ Keep destructive herbicides away from the waterway.
- ✓ Don't use the waterway channel as a field road.
- ✓ Keep livestock and field equipment out of the grass waterway when it is wet and soft.
- ✓ Keep the side slopes and channel in good vegetative cover. Be careful with plowing and other tillage. Keep the same width as when it was built.

Even with the best maintenance, all waterways eventually need to be re-built. When it gets to this point, contact staff at the Land & Water Conservation Dept. for assistance in getting that valuable waterway working again. Call 232-1950 or 727-8642.

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Automated Designs Now Available for Your Conservation Practices

Marvin Levine, Watershed Project Technician

The Land and Water Conservation Department now has an AutoCAD (computer aided design) system available to assist landowners in the planning and design of conservation practices. These include barnyard runoff control systems, manure storage facilities, wetland restorations, shoreline and streambank erosion control projects, etc.

This is an important service that enables our department to do more in less time. With a site survey as the starting point, many types of drawings can be made, including topographic maps, plan views, detail views, cross sections, and profiles. These are high quality, colored design drawings and maps. The system can display alternate design possibilities on screen or on paper, much more quickly than the old "by-hand" methods we were using. Landowners can view on screen design layouts or side-by-side alternate layouts of their projects to see how they fit their site. That helps to answer a lot of questions right up front, concerning layout before construction begins, and it increases the landowner's confidence in their decisions.

Landowners are encouraged to stop by the office and see how this service may be of help in planning and designing conservation projects they have in mind. Call Marv or Keith at 232-1950.

Possible Help for Landowners from the USDA EQIP

Marvin Levine, Watershed Project Technician

The Federal Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), provided through the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, is meant to help eligible farmers establish conservation practices to protect natural resources on their land. EQIP provides technical and cost-sharing assistance for many types of conservation practices, including manure management, filter or buffer strips, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, and well abandonment. Cost-sharing is offered at up to 75% of project cost for most practices, with a maximum of \$10,000 per year and \$50,000 per contract. As is the case with most programs, eligibility is the big "if". Not everyone qualifies, however, farmers in Winnebago County with serious natural resource concerns are still encouraged to apply.

The signup period for EQIP is March 2 through May 15, 1998. The program is open to anyone who

is producing an agricultural commodity on agricultural land, including cropland, pasture, forest, or other lands. After the signup period all applicants are submitted for a statewide ranking, based on environmental benefits, costs and other factors. Ranking will be in one of four categories:

- (1) Soil erosion and sediment
- (2) Water quality degradation from animal waste
- (3) Wildlife habitat
- (4) Sealing abandoned wells

Projects will compete for funding with others in the same group. Projects that have the greatest environmental value in each category will be funded. For more information, call the NRCS office at 424-0329 or the County Land & Water Conservation Department at 232-1950.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

"SPREAD THE WEALTH"

Tom Davies, Agronomist

Everyday in Winnebago County, livestock and dairy producers alike are faced with the job of handling manure. Some operations have long-term storage, some have short-term storage and some must haul daily to the field. Whatever scenario describes your situation, a Nutrient Management Plan is a great tool to have in your Crop Production Plan. Nutrient Management enables producers to get the greatest economic return from the plantfood being produced on the farm, while protecting their land's natural resources. Nutrient Management can substantially reduce the amount of commercial fertilizer required to grow your crops.

Taking credit for the natural plantfood provided in manure and legume crops is a practice that many producers have been doing in one form or another for years. We are not reinventing the wheel! What Nutrient Management Planning does is fine tune this practice based on sound soil tests, University of Wisconsin fertilizer recommendations, and a common sense approach to conserving the natural resources of your land. Your Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department can provide the information needed for Nutrient Management Planning and help keep more of those hard-earned dollars in your pocket! For information on Nutrient Management Planning Contact Tom Davies at your Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department. 920-232-1950 or 920-727-8642

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New Watershed's Offer Early Tillage Sign-up

Greg Baneck, FDL/PWR Watersheds Project Manager

Landowner's who farm in the Pine/Willow/Poygan South or the Fond du Lac River/Winnebago West Watersheds will now be able to sign-up for conservation tillage cost sharing through the Watershed program.

Both watershed projects, shaded in the map below, were approved in December by the Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Board, however, due to supposed shortfalls in the State Watershed Program's budget, neither project received money for cost-sharing best management practices for this year. In the meantime, this provides an excellent opportunity for landowner's to sign up any eligible acreage in preparation for the start of cost sharing. Once implementation funds are available, cost share agreements will become active from that date for the next six years, and landowners will be able to receive payment when they hit 30% residue after planting.

Through the program, all tillable land is inventoried and ranked based on sediment delivery to surface water. Fields that deliver high amounts of sediment to nearby surface water, will be eligible for the program.

The cost-share rate for residue management is \$18.50 per acre. To qualify, croplands must be covered with at least 30% residue after planting. Give us a call before or after you plant your crops and we'll gladly stop out to measure your residue and answer any questions you might have.

If you live in one of the new watershed projects and want more information about land eligibility and cost sharing, contact Greg Baneck or Tom Davies at the Land and Water Conservation Department (920) 232-1950.

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What'ya Do Anyhow?

Pete Van Airsdale, Winnebago County Conservationist

The roots of the Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Department go back some 50 years, to November 7, 1947. It was then that the County was established, by County Board resolution, as a 'Soil & Water Conservation District'. George Framberger came into the County as the first U.S. Soil Conservation Service staffer to help get things started, along with Vern Peroutky, UW-Extension Service Ag Agent, who was already here. Others, including Don Tripp, Elmo Merry, and Bill DiVall, played important roles in subsequent years to build a strong foundation for many of the programs and services that the County Land Conservation Committee (the Committee of jurisdiction) and our Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD) are responsible for today. Our legislative roots have always been vested in Chapter 92 ss. (More history details in an upcoming issue).

The LWCD has a staff of 8 County employees, including 7 professionals, 1 Secretary; plus 1 to 2 seasonal technicians. We work closely with federal and state agencies, including WI DNR, WI Dept. of Ag, Trade & Consumer Protection, UW-Extension, USDA agencies, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. We provide technical and financial services in a number of ways. Some of these are:

- Land management planning and project design for individual landowners. This includes lands that are being cropped, tree planting, upland wildlife habitat development, wetland restorations, etc.
- Review of erosion control and stormwater management plans for large and small-scale urban development projects.
- Design, cost estimating, layout, and construction supervision of "best management" practices built for land and water resource improvements.
- Secure and manage state and federal grants for County Soil and Water Resource Management initiatives and the State Priority Watershed Pollution Abatement work.
- Secure and make available, equipment, tools, and supplies that assist landowners in meeting their objectives in installing best management practices, including planting of protective vegetation on critical sites, tree planting, wildlife habitat development, etc.

Our focus is on the land and water resources of this County. We are here to serve you in that regard.

Land Conservation Committee

Land & Water Conservation Department Staff