



Oconto County

Land & Water Conservation
Department

2021 Annual Report

Department Overview

The Oconto County Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD) receives the department authority under Chapter 92 WI State Statues. 92.06 is the creation of the Land Conservation Committee and 92.09 references staff.

92.06 Land Conservation Committees.

(1) CREATION; MEMBERSHIP.

(a) Creation. Each county board shall create a land conservation committee.

(b) Membership.

1. The county board shall appoint to the land conservation committee at least 2 persons who are members of the committee on agriculture and extension education created under s. [59.56 \(3\) \(b\)](#).
2. The county board shall appoint to the land conservation committee a person who is the chairperson of the county farm service agency committee created under [16 USC 590h](#) (b) or other county farm service agency committee member designated by the chairperson of the county farm service agency committee.
3. The county board may appoint to the land conservation committee any number of members who are also members of the county board.
4. The county board may appoint to the land conservation committee up to 2 members who are not members of the county board.

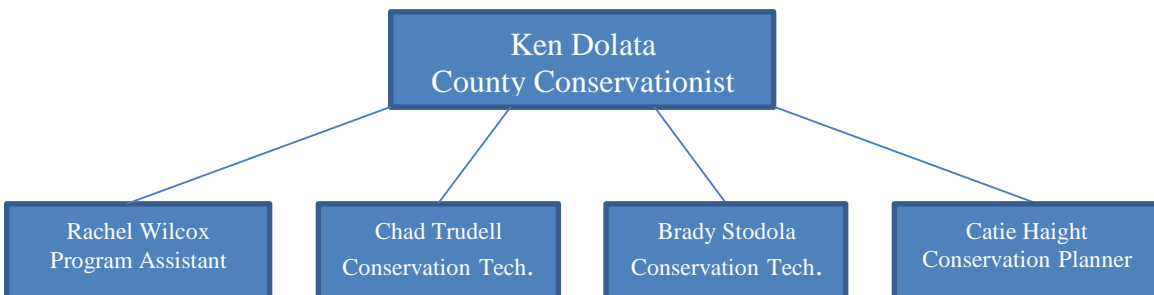
92.09 Land conservation committee staff. The land conservation committee may employ county soil and water conservation staff, subject to the approval of the county board. The county soil and water conservation staff is responsible for the administration of the county soil and water conservation program and may exercise the powers granted to the land conservation committee.

The department reports to the Land & Water Conservation Committee, listed is the members of the current committee.

Dennis Kroll – Chair
Leonard Wahl – Vice Chair
Lowell Kamke
Bart Schindel
John Matravers
Doug Allen – USDA Farm Service Representative

Mission Statement - “To serve landowners of Oconto County to manage, protect, and improve land and water resources through cooperation with federal, state, and private agencies, and secure funding to provide technical and monetary assistance to achieve sound environmental practices to permanently benefit our land and water resources.”

Land & Water Conservation Department Organizational Chart



Financial Overview

2021 Revenues: \$636,574

The LWCD revenues come from various avenues including Federal, State and private entities. In 2021 we received our primary funding from the following:

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative - \$4,721
- USDA Collaboration Grant / Planner - \$57,220
- USDA Demo Farm Network - \$42,596
- WDNR Lake Study - \$15,137
- Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection - \$217,985
- WDNR Targeted Resource Management Program - \$225,000
- WDNR Wildlife Damage - \$4,219
- US Fish & Wildlife Service - \$67,746
- Ag Waste Permits and Other - \$1,950

2021 Expenses: \$855,352

The LWCD expenses are comprised of 3 primary categories:

- Staff Cost: \$376,000
- Operating Cost: \$37,248
- Program Cost: \$442,104

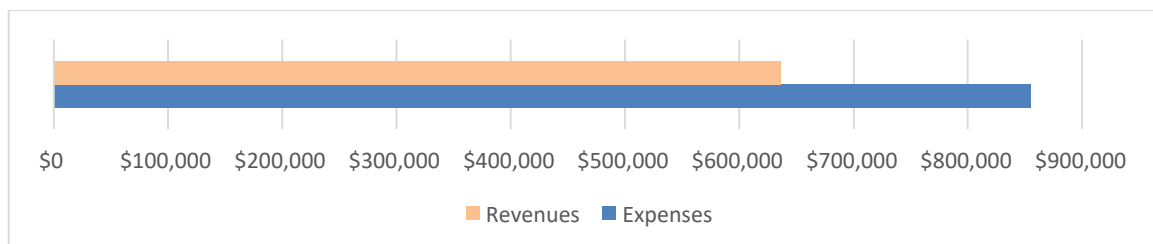
2021 Other Funds:

Oconto County LWCD provides technical assistance to landowners applying for federal funding through USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service CSP and EQIP program. The assistance helps move landowners to a high ranking category which greatly improves the chances of receiving their grant. In 2021 Oconto County landowners received \$1,276,000.

2021 NRCS Program Total = \$1,276,000

I feel it is important to note that part of the LWCD's mission is to help acquire funding for the people of Oconto County. The program funds listed above goes primarily to landowners and municipalities for conservation projects consisting mainly of state and federal funding acquired by the department.

Overall the LWCD is very efficient in fulfilling its mission and goals while trying to minimize the cost to the taxpayers. In 2021 for every \$1 of county levy spent the LWCD received \$0.75 in state and federal funds.



2021 Accomplishments

Animal Waste Ordinance – 9 permits were issued for 3 animal waste storages (8.7 million gallons of storage), 6 waste transfer systems, 4 animal housing units and 3 animal waste storage abandonment.

Animal Waste Storage Designed & Constructed – 3 units totaling 8.7 million gallons.

Animal Waste Transfer Systems Designed & Constructed – 6 transfer systems.

Animal Waste Storage Abandonment – 3 abandoned.

Nutrient Management Planning – 2,062 new acres planned.

Farmers Nutrient Management Education Training – 1 class.

Cover Crops – 928 acres planted.

No-till Cropping – 975 acres planted.

Clean Water Diversions – 5 installed.

Stream Crossings – 6 installed.

Well Decommissioning – 2 wells.

USDA NRCS Contracts for Farm Practices – Completed 33 contracts.

Green Bay West Shore Demonstration Farm Network – 3 Field Days.

Shoreline Protection Riprap – 250 lin.ft. installed.

Shoreline Protection Bio-engineering – 410 lin.ft. installed.

Riparian Buffers – 1830 sq.ft. installed.

Rain Gardens – 1 installed.

Wildlife Wetland Habitat – 2 installed – 1.3 acres.

Healthy Waters Cost Share Program – 4 applications awarded.

AIS Control by County & Partners – 2,000 lbs. of European Frogbit removed.

County Wide Lake Study – 6 new lake studies started, 6 Lake Mgmt. Plans finished.

Lake Level Monitoring Program – 5 lakes with gauging stations monitored.

Youth Education Program – 2 presentations.

2021 Challenges

2021 challenges followed in the footsteps of 2020 with the COVID pandemic creating most of our issues in conducting day to day business. As you may know the Land & Water Conservation Department is co-located with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service in the USDA field office. Being located in the USDA field office our department had to follow COVID protocol for work schedules which resulted in numerous occasions where the office could only have partial staff in the office with the other staff working from home. While we managed through this it does create its own challenges working with landowners and staff.

Staff shuffling was a challenge for 2021 but something that we could overcome. The contractor and material shortage was by far a more concerning challenge. A portion of our service is to design and inspect conservation practices being constructed. Due again to COVID we experienced a contractor shortage such as excavators, concrete contractors etc. When contractors could be hired there was the issue of material shortages for projects. This created setbacks for projects which in turn required our department to file for project funds extensions or cancelation of contracts.

6 years into our County Wide Lake Study program we had to change our practice of holding public in person meetings with individual lake groups. While we are still holding virtual meetings with lake groups I feel you do not get the same interaction as meeting in person.

A Glance Looking Forward

Looking forward hopefully our COVID challenges are behind us and do not rear up its ugly head again. Currently the department is working on a 9 Key Element Watershed plan for the North Branch of the Little River that gets certified by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Once the watershed plan is approved it opens up greater funding opportunities from state and federal agencies to help correct water quality issues within the watershed.

The department has worked with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program and the Fox River Trustee Council in being awarded over \$1 million over the last 10 years for our fish passage and habitat program that focus on the tributaries and wetlands on the west shore of Green Bay. Our current funding expires in 2022 so we have been working with the Fox River Trustee Council in applying for a grant to continue the project for another 3-5 years.

2021 was the first year of our Demonstration Farm Network which showcases new conservation practices, on selected farms, to improve water quality and soil health throughout the county. The first year was a great success and we are hoping the program continues to expand in the coming years.

In closing, the Land & Water Conservation Department is here to protect the natural resources of Oconto County. It is in my opinion this is being accomplished in an efficient and effective manner through dedicated and educated staff.

Respectfully, Ken Dolata County Conservationist