



2020 ANNUAL REPORT





Dear Wetland Enthusiast,

During the past year, we've all faced some big challenges. Throughout this time, it has been hard to stay positive.

What keeps me going is knowing that, despite the challenges, **committed people are doing important things for each other and for their communities** and that nature continues to provide solace to us all.

I am so proud of all that Wisconsin Wetlands Association has accomplished for our communities and for our wetlands in the past year. As you'll read in this report, our work has not slowed down at all.

Your contributions make this work possible. We know that the road ahead will bring challenges, but, together, we'll continue to do good things for the wetlands we so dearly love and the communities they support.

Alison Peña, *Board Chair*

A handwritten signature of Alison Peña in cursive script.

Fixing Wisconsin's waters Focusing on hydrologic restoration

All across Wisconsin, communities face challenges related to water: more frequent, severe, and damaging flooding, polluted waterways, fish and wildlife population declines, and more. A root cause shared by these challenges is degraded hydrology.

To fix our waters, we need to address and reverse this root cause rather than merely addressing symptoms. We need to restore how water moves through our watersheds. Unfortunately, watershed-based hydrologic restoration is not an approach that is widely practiced in our state—*yet*. Read on to hear about some of the ways WWA is promoting hydrologic restoration throughout our work.

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Association
Wisconsin Public Service



Act 157, which provides \$150,000 for wetland flood storage demonstration projects in Ashland County, passed both houses with unanimous support and was signed by Governor Evers on March 3, 2020.

Advancing wetland conservation policies and practices

WWA made remarkable strides on the policy front in 2020.

We secured funding to help Lake Superior basin partners evaluate nature-based opportunities to reduce flood risks and damages. We also secured a state budget appropriation for natural flood management demonstration projects in Ashland County.

With your support, legislation simplifying permit review and creating a hydrologic restoration advisory council passed the State Assembly with unanimous support. While the pandemic prevented a Senate vote, work on this legislation set the stage for ongoing collaborations to move these issues forward.

Our work is helping policymakers understand how wetlands benefit their communities. Because of our strengthened relationships with legislative offices, decision-makers across the state see wetlands as solutions and now approach us to help solve water-related challenges.

Rep. Tranel (second from right) was among the legislators who joined us in the field to hear how wetlands can be solutions to our communities' water issues.

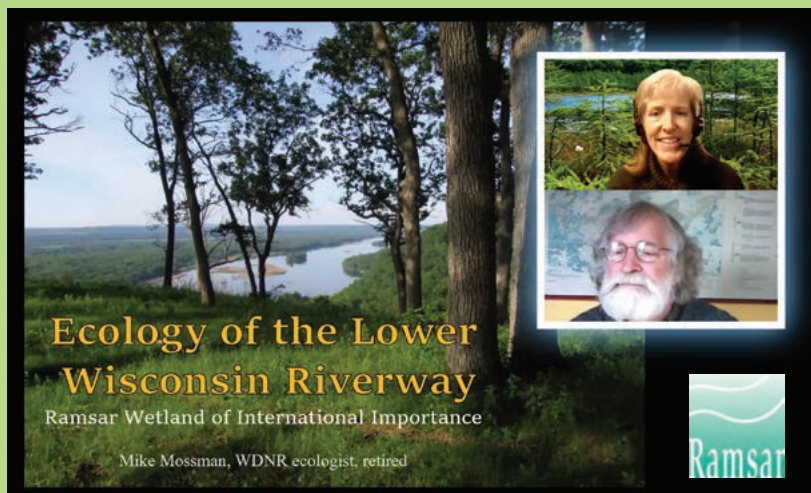


Adapting programs and communications in the face of COVID-19

To bring more hope and positivity into the world during the pandemic, WWA developed new virtual wetland programming to help everyone cooped up at home stay connected with the outside world and with each other—all while learning about and sharing our love for wetlands.

Our Wetland Coffee Breaks featured live online presentations about wetland topics, including soils, birds, hydrology, and more. So far, our Wetland Coffee Breaks have attracted more than 850 viewers from across Wisconsin, the nation, and even internationally. Many of these viewers were new to WWA, and many return for multiple presentations.

We are grateful to our many partners who presented at the Wetland Coffee Breaks. If you missed any of these, watch the recordings at wisconsinwetlands.org/wetland-coffee-break.



Ecology of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway

Ramsar Wetland of International Importance

Mike Mossman, WDNR ecologist, retired


To celebrate the designation of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, ecologist Mike Mossman gave a great talk for our Wetland Coffee Break on the ecology of the Riverway. We had to upgrade our Zoom license to accommodate the audience!

Encouraging better wetland policy through engagement

WWA's place-based work provides the guidance, tools, and understanding communities need to apply wetlands as solutions to their water issues.

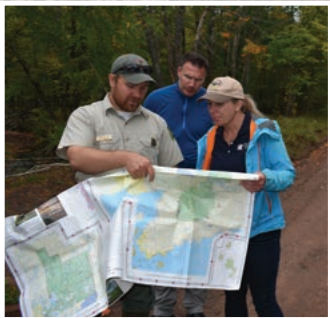
In the Little Plover River watershed, WWA is part of a collaborative effort involving citizens, agricultural and conservation groups, and multiple levels of government promoting watershed health through science-based, voluntary action.

Though the work is just beginning, WWA and partners have already applied wetland restoration, floodplain reconnection, riparian forest management, grassland re-establishment, cropland conversion, high-capacity well removal, and on-farm water conservation to improve infiltration and flow and address other local water concerns. The river's positive response to these initial efforts has exceeded everyone's expectations. People in neighboring watersheds are reaching out to learn how they can replicate this approach to help their community's waters.



Volunteers and partners participate in a pre-pandemic work day, installing brush bundles in the Little Plover River as part of efforts to help improve the channel and reconnect its floodplain.

Getting out in the field to discuss challenges and ideas is not only the best way to find practical, effective solutions, it also strengthens relationships between partners.



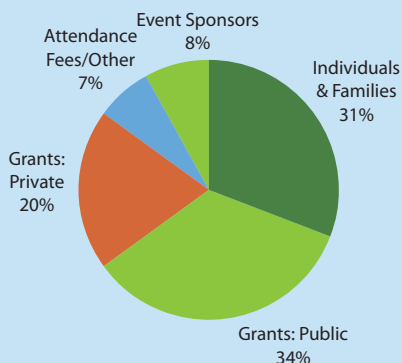
Building partnerships

The Marengo River watershed—like other watersheds across Wisconsin—is struggling with devastating flood damages from severe rain events.

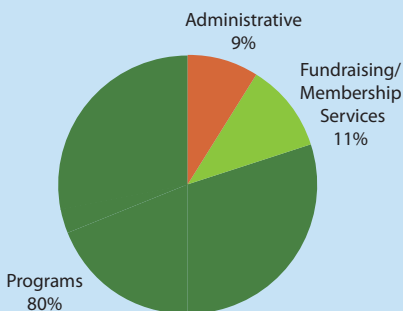
Partners with diverse perspectives and expertise, from geomorphology to road maintenance, are exploring how natural flood management—restoring upper watershed wetlands and floodplain functions—can help reduce future damages and create a more resilient landscape.

WWA has led efforts to secure more than \$450,000 in project funding and is providing project management and technical support. We continue to advocate for additional support from policymakers and state agencies to help establish and improve natural flood management policies and practices. The relationships and the trust we're building are essential to our approach to finding community-led solutions to local water challenges.

Total Revenue: \$712,834



Total Expenses: \$701,450



Wisconsin Wetlands ASSOCIATION

Wisconsin Wetlands Association is dedicated to the protection, restoration, and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education, and advocacy.

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