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February 14, 2014

Lavane Hessler – CF/2
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

RE: Capacity grant report

Dear Lavane,

Please accept the enclosed materials as our report on the second year of our 2012-13 Capacity Grant. This report follows the format of our proposal. Program materials are attached here and an accounting of grant expenditures will be sent next week. I will also send you our audited financial statement as soon as it becomes available.

We spent a great deal of staff resources planning and launching two large initiatives in 2013 – the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund (endowment for managing state-owned conservation lands) and the Great Wisconsin Birdathon (spend-down funds for statewide bird conservation programs). Major program support went to managing State Natural Areas, our 20th annual field trip program, and the launch of the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program. Internally, two new staff members were hired and we transitioned from having an in-house Finance Officer to contracting with a financial services firm.

The Foundation invested \$518,000 in conservation programs and organizations in 2013: \$447,000 to partner organizations and \$71,000 for our Field Trip Program.

We continue to work diligently to further our goals and objectives for supporting:

1. Management of state-owned conservation lands,
2. Monitoring and management of Species of Concern, and
3. Environmental education.

Capacity Grant monies support staff members primarily responsible for achieving these goals.

The annual return on the Natural Resources Foundation's Capacity Grant is substantial. We are extremely grateful for the stability this funding provides our organization.

Please call me at 261-4381 with questions regarding this report.

Sincerely,

Barb Barzen
Coordinator for Grants and Programs

Report to Department of Natural Resources on 2013 Capacity Grant

Highlights of 2013 for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin include:

- provided \$518,560 in direct support to conservation programs statewide,
- ran the first online Great Wisconsin Birdathon as an alternative funding source for bird conservation in state,
- debuted the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund as an alternative source of revenue for managing state-owned conservation lands,
- coordinated 122 field trips statewide and planned 150 field trips for 2014, and
- supported management activities on 2,000 acres of State Natural Area properties.

Following are accomplishments achieved with support from a 2013 Capacity Grant of \$84,100, as outlined in our 2012-13 proposal:

Support Management of State-owned Conservation Lands

Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund

February 2012 legislation enabled the Foundation and DNR to partner in establishing and promoting an endowment fund that will support management of state-owned conservation lands. Each year, 5% of the fund's investment revenue will support management of State Natural Areas, Wildlife Areas, Fisheries Areas, and Parks. In 2013, the Foundation worked with a marketing firm and DNR administrators to flesh out the mechanics and promotional plan for this initiative.

The result was the roll-out of the Cherish Wisconsin Outdoors Fund on September 28. Since that date, more than 500 donors have contributed upwards of \$15,000 to the Fund through small, voluntary donations when purchasing their hunting or fishing licenses, and through direct donations at www.cherishwisconsin.org.

Capacity Grant funding supported staff time spent on developing the Fund's structure and marketing tools.

State Natural Areas:

The Foundation provided \$73,225 in support toward managing 12 State Natural Areas (SNAs). Altogether, approximately 2,000 acres of high quality habitat were maintained or restored as a result of this funding. Partners in these efforts include the We Energies Foundation, American Transmission Company, Friends of Cedarburg Bog, John C. Bock Foundation, Waste Management Inc., Xcel Energy Foundation, and individual donors.

Forests, parks, trails, and wildlife areas:

The Foundation provided \$35,821 in support toward improvement of trails, campsites, and wildlife habitat. Much of this was for managing wildlife areas within the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. The

late Paul Brandt, long-time DNR wildlife biologist, left a large bequest that is now an endowment that will support this work along the Lower Wisconsin River forever.

Support Species of Greatest Conservation Need

The Foundation provided \$128,307 in support for this program area in 2013 -- 90% for bird conservation and 10% for bats and other species.

Bird Conservation

Bird conservation remains our central focus for supporting rare species. After piloting the Great Wisconsin Birdathon in 2012, raising \$21,000, we designed and promoted an online Birdathon in 2013 (WIBirdathon.org) that raised \$56,000 from 850 donors and 155 birders. Following that May month-long event, proceeds were split among seven bird conservation projects and programs that are deemed priorities by the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative. Planning then began for the 2014 Great Wisconsin Birdathon, with a goal of raising \$75,000. Partners include DNR, the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, and Madison Audubon Society.

Bird conservation programs currently supported by the Foundation are described in the attached Bird Protection Fund program summary.

Conservation of other rare and declining species

The Foundation fosters conservation of other rare and declining species by helping to develop citizen science programs and resources used by land managers. In 2013, we supported the development of a 2014 Citizen Science in the Classroom Workshop for educators that will instruct teachers in how to collect and submit field data on various Species of Concern that will be pooled with other data and utilized by resource managers. Getting educators and students across the state involved in species monitoring will increase the depth and breadth of information collected on rare species while giving students valuable hands-on experiences with the scientific process and ecology. Citizen science is especially important for monitoring bats as white-nosed syndrome creeps closer Wisconsin. We continue to support bat monitoring efforts and the annual Wisconsin Bat Festival.

Support and Foster Conservation Education

Field Trip Program

The Foundation's greatest strength is connecting people to Wisconsin's natural resources through experiential and philanthropic opportunities. Our greatest asset for doing this is our Field Trip Program.

In 2013, the Foundation offered 122 field trips (150 total sessions) which were featured in the April issue of *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. The full schedule of 2013 field trips is attached.

Core trips had 3,241 attendees in 2013 from 872 households (average of 37 trips per household). The Field Trip Program also attracted 116 new Foundation memberships.

The last three months of 2013 were spent planning 150 field trips for 2014. Half will be new trips and roughly half will be led by DNR professionals. See the attached list. This increase in the number of trips

will provide an additional 500 spaces for participants and help meet the insatiable demand for these experiences. This program is greatly valued by both conservation professionals and the public alike. Through media attention and word-of-mouth, its educational value reaches far more than the 3,000 people who attend the trips, making it a very effective outreach tool for the DNR and partner conservation organizations.

Wisconsin Master Naturalist

The Foundation provided \$20,838 in support for the Wisconsin Master Naturalist Program's first full year of providing volunteer training sessions and a comprehensive website. The UW-Extension's Environmental Resources Center coordinates the program, with help from a 20-member Steering committee comprised of representatives from many organizations and agencies, including our Foundation. Two volunteer training sessions and two instructor training session were completed at Wehr Nature Center in Milwaukee, Riveredge Nature Center in Saukville, UW-Stevens Point, and UW-Madison that trained 39 volunteer naturalists and 31 instructors. The program's work-horse website went live in June. Six volunteer trainings and three instructor trainings are currently planned for 2014.