

Capacity Building Grant to Assist Nonprofit Conservation Organizations

Report to the Wisconsin Legislature Fiscal Year 2014 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014)

Gathering Waters: Wisconsin’s Alliance for Land Trusts (GW or Gathering Waters, in this report) is proud to present the accomplishments achieved through this grant in fiscal year 2014 (FY14) to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Wisconsin State Legislature. Now more than ever, land trusts (a.k.a. nonprofit conservation organizations, or NCOs) are playing a role in critical private-public partnerships. This grant funding helps us strengthen the land trust community to reach mutual goals with the State of Wisconsin for the benefit of the public.

In addition to the donations received from individuals, corporations, land trusts, and private foundations, our land trust capacity-building work and outreach efforts would not have been possible without funding through the state grant managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The following report outlines our activities to strengthen the quality and durability of land conservation by providing guidance and technical assistance to Wisconsin NCOs.

Table of Contents:

I. Project Description.....	pg. 2
A. How We Identified and Addressed Our Goals	
B. How We Assessed Our Progress	
C. Activities Directed to Our Goals	
D. Indicators of Project Success	
II. Compliance with Statute.....	pg. 13
III. Addendums.....	pg. 13
A. Conservation Capacity Grants – Accompaniment to Form 9800-316	
B. Fiscal Year 2014-15 Grant Application Narrative	
C. Assistance to Nonprofit Conservation Organizations Grant Contract – Fiscal Year 2014-2015	
D. Gathering Waters’ Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2014, including evidence of matching funds	
E. Gathering Waters’ Board of Directors for Fiscal Year 2014	

I. Project Description

This report documents the activities and achievements of Gathering Waters garnered through the support of the Wisconsin DNR Statewide Support for Non-Profit Conservation Organizations grant for fiscal years 2014-2015. We used the grant funding, as proposed, and in accordance with statutory requirements, to support our direct technical assistance to land trusts and our outreach efforts. As directed by our contract, this report is an accounting of activities carried out during FY14 solely.

During the grant period, our *direct technical assistance work* focused on the successful implementation of our Wisconsin Land Trust Excellence and Advancement Program (LEAP) – a program based on Land Trust Standards & Practices, national guidelines for the responsible operation of land trusts. This innovative partnership with the Land Trust Alliance, our national counterpart, allows us to provide a variety of enhanced tools and services to Wisconsin’s land trusts. Now a signature program of GW, LEAP provides Wisconsin land trusts with tailored training, consultation, technical assistance, and other support they need to become more effective at protecting land and ensuring organizational sustainability. We aim to build land trusts’ organizational capacities and to help ensure that they are permanently protecting and stewarding land of regional and statewide importance. LEAP also facilitates collaboration among land trusts to address regional conservation issues (e.g., strategic habitat protection in the Lake Michigan basin and shared services to ensure organizational sustainability).

Additionally, during the grant period, through our *outreach work* we endeavored to help land trusts become well-known and valued community institutions and to see them strongly supported and sought out as conservation leaders. We believe that strong relationships among land trusts, other community institutions, and the people whom they serve will yield additional acres protected beyond what land trusts can achieve working alone. During the grant period, we utilized our expanding outreach toolbox to increase individual and community support for private, voluntary land conservation in Wisconsin.

Gathering Waters’ outreach work focused on maintaining a statewide communication network for land trusts and others working to conserve private lands. In addition, we worked to increase the capacities of Wisconsin land trusts by planning, initiating, and managing outreach and communications activities. This work aims to broaden the base of support for conservation by demonstrating the direct value of this conservation to people in their communities, in language that is clear, concise, and engaging.

Thanks to the support of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, in fiscal year 2014 we have made significant progress on the following seven goals listed in our grant proposal:

- Strengthen each individual land trust's operations and develop their expertise to improve the quality of land conservation and ensure its permanence.
- Facilitate relationships among land trusts in order to enhance and strengthen Wisconsin's land trust community.
- Educate land trusts on the national Land Trust Accreditation process and prepare land trusts to pursue Accreditation.
- Advance strategic, collaborative conservation so that the highest priority land and water resources in Wisconsin are protected.
- Effectively communicate timely news and capacity-building opportunities to Wisconsin's 50+ land trusts and the people and organizations that support them; build a network of well-informed and connected institutions.
- Create and effectively communicate outreach messages and activities that broaden the base of support for private land conservation and build the capacities of Wisconsin's land trusts.
- Provide enhanced support and training to land trusts to help them better engage with their communities and build support for their work.

A. How We Identified and Addressed Our Goals

As Wisconsin's land trust community has grown in size and sophistication since Gathering Waters' founding, our land trust services have expanded and evolved. For the grant period, we identified needs and goals by:

1. Working closely with our eight-member Wisconsin Land Trust Council to help us better understand the challenges facing the land trust community and to improve communication and coordination among land trusts. The Land Trust Council is an advisory body, representing the diversity of Wisconsin land trusts in scope, size, and geography. The current Council members include Dan Burke, Door County Land Trust; Bryan Pierce, Northwoods Land Trust; Tony Schuster, Chippewa County Land Conservancy; Bur Zeratsky, Green Lake Conservancy; Kevin Thusius, Ice Age Trail Alliance; Bob Fitzwilliam, West Wisconsin Land Trust; Kimberly Gleffe, River Revitalization Foundation (Chair); and Jim Welsh, Natural Heritage Land Trust.
2. Tracking national trends in the land trust movement by partnering with the Land Trust Alliance, sitting on the planning committee and presenting at the Midwest Land Conservation Conference, presenting at the national Land Trust Alliance conference, and sitting on the National Leadership Council of Land Trusts.

3. Working closely with agency staff at the Wisconsin DNR, Wisconsin DATCP, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, and USDA-NRCS to assist with facilitating helpful partnerships with NCOs.
4. Interacting regularly with executive directors, board members, and supporters of Wisconsin's 50 land trusts.
5. Drawing upon the input and guidance of Gathering Waters' board of directors, comprising representative members of nonprofit conservation organizations from around the state. In FY14, under the leadership of the board and with extensive input from the land trust community, we pursued a comprehensive strategic planning process in which we examined our strengths, weaknesses, impending challenges, and opportunities.

After identifying our goals through these channels, we developed work plans in which we defined our strategies, partners, timelines, budgets, and benchmarks.

B. How We Assessed Our Progress

Throughout this fiscal year, as we have done previously, we used a variety of metrics and data collection methods to assess our progress. Qualitatively, we tracked and responded to regular feedback from our Land Trust Council, daily direct contact with members of the land trust community, and participant evaluations of training opportunities. Quantitatively, we measured the effectiveness and impact of our direct technical assistance work and our outreach efforts against the indicators outlined in section D, Indicators of Success, below.

C. Activities Directed to Our Goals

Per our proposal, we undertook the following activities in order to pursue the goals identified in the Project Description section, above:

Provide universal and customized services through LEAP to Wisconsin land trusts

During FY14 we provided services universally accessible to all Wisconsin land trusts virtually (through webinars and teleconferences) as well as in person to maximize inclusive and timely learning. As a complement to our universal services we also provided a suite of customized services including guided Land Trust Standards and Practices assessments, implementation plans, coaching and mentoring, and grants to address specific organizational priorities identified. Where land trusts were not prepared for the full suite of Standards and Practices we also offered special services, grants, and mentoring to meet specific organizational priorities or needs.

Advance Wisconsin's land trusts toward full implementation of Land Trust Standards and Practices

We worked with eight land trusts in FY14 who committed to and executed an implementation plan to fulfill Land Trust Standards and Practices--the measure of a land trust's ability to operate in an ethical, legal and technically sound manner--with Gathering Waters' support. Gathering Waters staff conducted three guided Land Trust Standards and Practices assessments as part of our LEAP customized services to Driftless Area Land Conservancy, Madison Audubon Society, and Kinnickinnic River Land Trust.

Guide land trusts towards national Land Trust Accreditation.

Though not all are accredited yet, we assisted seven land trusts with preparation for Accreditation including guided assessments, liaising between the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and land trusts, clarifying questions specific to the Accreditation process, and assisting with the application preparation checklist itself.

Provide competitive grants to land trusts to address key areas of organizational need such as, but not limited to: filling vital staff positions, accomplishing high priority goals as determined by an organizational assessment, and strategic planning.

In FY2014 we provided grants to seven land trusts. See more about these grant awards in section D, Indicators of Project Success.

Offer training to land trusts' board members on a variety of topics including organizational development and financial oversight.

During FY14 we offered in-person trainings, webinars, and ask-an-expert teleconferences for land trust board members on organizational development and leadership development, among other topics. These trainings are listed in section D, Indicators of Project Success, starting on page 7.

Continue to cultivate a peer mentoring network that promotes best practices and encourages learning, sharing, and a more cohesive land trust community in Wisconsin.

As we reported for FY13, we developed a Wisconsin and Michigan Peer Mentoring Program consisting of four peer groups based on participants' roles: stewardship staff, land protection staff, fund-raisers, and executive and associate directors. During FY14, we continued hosting peer group teleconferences and laid the groundwork for a new program to be implemented in FY15.

Work to strengthen strategic, regional partnerships among land trusts (e.g. the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance and the Blufflands Alliance in the Upper Mississippi River watershed).

In FY14 we continued facilitating the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance as well as our involvement in the new strategic direction of the Blufflands Alliance in the Upper Mississippi watershed. We additionally began to coordinate new regional partnerships in the southeast and northwest corners of the state.

Maintain our statewide communication network for land trusts and other organizations working to conserve private lands.

We maintained our communications network through our eNews, our print newsletter (*CrossCurrents*), our electronic technical bulletin (*Currents*), regular and timely updates to our website (www.gatheringwaters.org), our online resource library, our Facebook page, and the use of our blog (www.wisconsinlandtrusts.org) throughout FY14.

Maintain contact information and a statewide, on-line map that connects landowners with their local land trusts; in addition to acting as a resource for landowners who have questions about their land protection options.

In FY14 we maintained and updated an online map in partnership with Wisconsin DNR. It can be viewed at our website: <http://gatheringwaters.org/about-land-trusts/find-a-local-land-trust/>.

Pursue opportunities with Wisconsin media to tell the story of how our programs and the land trusts we serve protect special places in Wisconsin.

Nearly every weekday in FY14 we captured and amplified news stories and events that tell the story of how our programs and the land trusts we serve protect special places in Wisconsin on our website, Facebook page, and blog. Additionally, during FY14 our executive director appeared on the radio program Big Wild as well as wrote a feature article in the Peninsula Pulse telling the story of land trust work in Wisconsin.

Explore opportunities to partner with organizations outside of the land trust community to build support for private land conservation in Wisconsin and educate a wider audience about land trusts.

In FY14, we partnered with the Wisconsin Wetlands Association to help them develop and publish a handbook for wetland landowners. This handbook will be an important resource for land trusts, local governments and other organizations to help educate landowners about the wetland resources on their properties and opportunities for voluntary management activities. We also presented at and participated in several Wisconsin County Forest Association events, and shared examples of land trusts and County Forests can partner together to achieve mutually-beneficial goals. We successfully partnered with the Friends of John Muir to identify land trust partners with the capacity to help protect Muir's childhood home.

Target services to land trusts that enhance their communications strategies and enable them to better connect with the communities they serve.

In FY14 we gathered numerous land trust success stories from around the state to feature in a special 20th anniversary publication, on our blog and website, in our printed newsletter and annual report, and via Facebook.

Efficiently and effectively utilize a diverse outreach tool box to develop timely and compelling messages that communicate the impact of Wisconsin land trusts and promote private land conservation to varied, targeted audiences, including: media, funders, land trust

professionals, strategic alliances, landowners, and other Wisconsinites interested in protecting Wisconsin's special places.

During FY14 we communicated the impact of Wisconsin land trusts and promoted private land conservation to our targeted audiences through daily Facebook posts, bi-weekly eNews blasts (electronic newsletter), bi-weekly Currents (technical bulletin), press releases, our website, blog, an edition of *CrossCurrents* (printed newsletter) and annual report. Also, at the end of FY14, we began production of a special video which explains the kinds of benefits land trusts provide to their communities, how Gathering Waters strengthens land trusts, and features three land trust success stories. The three featured stories were also cut to function as stand-alone videos for each of the featured land trusts' use.

D. Indicators of Project Success

Following are outcomes and progress toward our direct services and outreach goals, as evidenced by measurement against the indicators identified in our grant application.

Success Indicator: At least four land trusts will participate actively in the customized services of LEAP during the grant period, advancing their organizations toward full implementation of Land Trust Standards and Practices, and preparing them for Land Trust Accreditation.

During FY14 we worked with 15 land trusts through LEAP. They are:

- *Natural Heritage Land Trust, Madison*
- *The Prairie Enthusiasts (works in WI, IA, MN, IL)*
- *Door County Land Trust, Sturgeon Bay*
- *Glacial Lakes Conservancy, Sheboygan*
- *Baraboo Range Preservation Association, Baraboo*
- *Tall Pines Conservancy, Nashotah*
- *West Wisconsin Land Trust, Menomonie*
- *Geneva Lake Conservancy, Lake Geneva*
- *Madison Audubon Society, Madison*
- *Kinnickinnic River Land Trust, River Falls*
- *Driftless Area Land Conservancy, Dodgeville*
- *Caledonia Conservancy, Racine*
- *Baird Creek Preservation Foundation, Green Bay*
- *Bayfield Regional Conservancy, Bayfield*
- *Northwoods Land Trust, Eagle River*

Success Indicator: Four Wisconsin land trusts will be Accredited (in addition to the existing six) and/or prepared to submit a successful application to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. A land trust's readiness will be determined by the organization's ability to document compliance with Land Trust Standards and Practices, which measure a land trust's ability to operate in an ethical, legal and technically sound manner.

At the end of FY14, there are nine accredited land trusts in Wisconsin. In FY14 the following Wisconsin land trusts were awarded Accreditation status:

- Ozaukee Washington Land Trust
- Northwoods Land Trust
- Ice Age Trail Alliance

During the fiscal year we also worked with Tall Pines Conservancy to apply for accreditation and Kinnickinnic River Land Trust to renew. Each of these land trusts participated in LEAP services, both universal and/or customized, during FY14 (or earlier in some cases) to prepare for their application.

Success Indicator: Ten Wisconsin land trusts will advance measurably through competitive grants which address key areas of organizational need, such as: filling vital staff positions, accomplishing high priority goals as determined by an organizational assessment or in a strategic plan, or completing other activities that strengthen the organization.

We awarded seven cash grants and participated in three other formal coaching and or services activities for land trusts in FY14. Though not an exhaustive list, we worked with the following land trusts to advance the following specific priorities in FY14:

- Board development for Glacial Lakes Conservancy – July-November, 2013
- Continued preparation for collaboration with the Baraboo Range Preservation Association – July, 2012 to September, 2013
- Continued dissemination of land protection and stewardship database for all interested Wisconsin land trusts – throughout FY14.
- External communications support and fund-raising support for West Wisconsin Land Trust – August 2013 to April 2014.
- Trail finder smartphone application and corresponding trail brochure for Bayfield Regional Conservancy – August 2013 to April 2014.

Success Indicator: At least 100 land trust board members and/or staff will receive training on a variety of topics from land transactions to organizational development, and from stewardship funding to leadership development.

There were nearly 140 participants in training opportunities through LEAP in FY14. In addition to our annual Land Trust Retreat, during FY14, we offered the following learning opportunities to all Wisconsin land trusts:

Virtual Learning Opportunities (teleconferences except where indicated):

- Registering to Solicit Charitable Donations: Trickier Than You Think! with Rob Levin on September 6, 2013
- Building Bridges toward Permanent Protection: FarmAbility with Tom Nelson and Brian Bourdages on November 1, 2013

- *Coping With Conflicts of Interest: You Know It's a Conflict, but Is It a Problem? with Sylvia Bates on December 6, 2013*
- *Pursuing Sustainability with Steve Zimmerman on January 30, 2014 (webinar)*
- *Good Housekeeping Rules for Databases with Caleb Pourchot and Andy Weaver on March 7, 2014*
- *Before the Capital Campaign with Mary Foley on May 2, 2014*
- *Making the Media Work for You with Ben Raines on June 6, 2014*

In-Person Opportunities:

- *Strategic Conservation Planning: Just Add Water with Ole Amundsen and Anne Murphy on November 5, 2013*
- *The Engaged Board with David Allen and Peter McKeever on March 19 (Ashland), March 20 (River Falls), and March 21 (Rhineland)*

Success Indicator: Three peer-to-peer mentoring gatherings will be held to facilitate learning, sharing, and the development of a cohesive land trust community on the individual level in the areas of executive leadership, stewardship, and fund-raising.

The peer mentoring program has become a mainstay program for Gathering Waters. During FY14 we held numerous teleconferences for each of the peer groups and planned for a resurgence of the program in FY15 (to include more peer gatherings and potential travel reimbursements). In FY14 we hosted the following teleconferences for Wisconsin and Michigan land trust peers:

- *Fund-raisers teleconferences: October 17, 2013; February 27, 2014*
- *Stewardship teleconferences: February 18, 2014, April 29, 2014*
- *Executive director and associate director teleconferences: December 23, 2013; April 23, 2014*
- *Land protection teleconferences: January 14, 2014; March 5, 2014, May 14, 2014*

Success Indicator: Strategic partnerships among land trusts will be enhanced and land trusts' connections to other community institutions will be strengthened (e.g., we will host quarterly meetings for the land trusts in the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance).

We are committed, now more than ever, to connecting land trusts with their communities. Throughout FY14 we continued to facilitate the Lake Michigan Shorelands Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of 10 land trusts operating in the Lake Michigan basin of Wisconsin who work together to pursue strategic and collaborative conservation throughout the watershed. Meetings were held on September 6, 2013, January 22, 2014, and April 23, 2014. Throughout the year we welcomed representatives from agency and non-profit partners including: Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Wisconsin DNR, Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership, Conservation Resource Alliance, and The Nature Conservancy.

We also assisted the Blufflands Alliance, a coalition of six land trusts in the Upper Mississippi watershed, with implementing a new strategic direction for their collaborative work.

Building on our work initiated in FY13, we continued to pursue potential collaboration opportunities among the land trusts in northwestern Wisconsin. At our Wisconsin Land Trust Retreat in August 2013 we facilitated a discussion about shared services in the areas of conservation easement monitoring, creation of financial reports for board and staff, and legal support for transactions. We also integrated potential collaboration conversations into each of our trainings in northern Wisconsin in March, 2014. We will continue to pursue this potential collaboration in the next fiscal year and beyond.

We also facilitated the creation of Wisconsin's first collaborative land restoration effort in southeast Wisconsin at the end of FY13; brought Will Allen, nationally-recognized community leader and urban gardener, to our annual barn dance event; and awarded the Rod Nilsestuen Award for Working Lands Preservation to two deserving champions of working lands preservation; all in an effort to enhance new connections for Wisconsin land trusts.

Success Indicator: Individualized circuit-rider trainings on a variety of board-related subjects, including governance, financial stability, and fund-raising, will be implemented with at least five land trusts.

We have learned that the potential for training to be most effective and transformational organization-wide is increased when the majority of board and staff members are present. For this reason, we designed a training series to bring training to a land trust, identifying a host and accommodating their schedule and needs, as well as inviting nearby land trust board members to participate. In March 2014 we launched a "Circuit Rider Series," offering training in three locations on three separate days with over 50 attendees in total. The following Wisconsin land trusts were represented:

- *West Wisconsin Land Trust*
- *Bayfield Regional Conservancy*
- *Kinnickinnic River Land Trust*
- *Standing Cedars Community Land Conservancy*
- *Northwoods Land Trust*
- *North Central Conservancy Trust*
- *Couderay Waters Regional Land Conservancy*
- *The Prairie Enthusiasts*

Success Indicator: The internet traffic directed to our website, blog, and Facebook, will be tracked and used to hone our communication methods.

Throughout the fiscal year we used web analytics and click-through data to inform our online strategies, timing, and messages. During FY14, 96% of our internet traffic came from the United States, with 64% from Wisconsin solely. We learned that nearly half of our traffic comes organically from search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo) while another quarter comes from the direct entry of our web address. The remaining quarter of total traffic comes through referrals from Facebook, our blog,

the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at UW-Madison site, and wisconsinfarmland.org (which we also manage).

By tracking this data over the course of the year, we were able to tell what types or styles of messaging on our Facebook and blog were more effective at getting folks to visit our website. We also learned that referrals to our site were coming from sources we had not previously considered to be particularly helpful with driving traffic to our site. This insight has allowed us to consider new ways of utilizing those and similar sources more fully.

Success Indicator: *Currents*, our technical bulletin for land trusts, will be published at least bi-monthly; our print newsletter, *CrossCurrents*, will be published annually; and we will produce an annual report that documents our overall organizational progress.

In fiscal year 2014, we published 20 editions of Currents to approximately 850 land trust practitioners around the state. We produced one print newsletter and developed our fiscal year 2013 report.

Success Indicator: The open and click-through rates for our electronic communications to the land trust community will be assessed and used to enhance our outreach tools as well as the content of our messages.

During FY14, we sent out 22 editions of eNews – our periodic e-newsletter sharing conservation news, relevant policy and program updates, and training opportunities to 2,500+ subscribers – and increased our open rates from approximately 21% at the start of the year to just under 32% by the end. For Currents, a longer-standing Gathering Waters technical e-newsletter aimed at a land trust practitioner audience, our open rates went from around 26% to 32% throughout fiscal year 2014.

During fiscal year 2014, average daily hits to our blog remained steady at 18 from the first month of the fiscal year to the last. We posted 46 total blog posts in our 2014 fiscal year with a rising number of hits. Our blog increases awareness of land trusts and their work around Wisconsin, while engaging the community in our work. We also noted that traffic to our blog came to us from referrals from Facebook, our own website (www.gatheringwaters.org), and through search engines such as google.com. We have used this information to harness our content and frequency of posts.

Our Facebook fan base is ever expanding; gaining 3,276 new likes during our FY14, we have learned how to attract new supporters and spread news and events to friends of supporters. Facebook has proved to be our most successful medium, with the potential to reach as many as 580,000 people with one post. With brief messages that link to articles, events, videos, and pictures, we were able to share 413 stories with our supporters and their friends during FY14.

In FY14, we also featured 168 land trust events on our website and shared 105 news articles garnering 1782 unique views.

By tracking the click through rates for our various forms of electronic communication over the course of the year, we were able to get a better sense for what types or styles of messaging were more or less effective in growing our audience, capturing their attention and engaging them.

Success Indicator: Ten new land trust stories will be created and published on our homepage, which highlight conservation success stories from around Wisconsin.

During fiscal years 2014 we published 8 land trust stories to the homepage at our website: www.gatheringwaters.org. Building on our work in previous fiscal years, and with our 20th anniversary as a center point, we targeted our web presence as a key venue to share land trust stories in new and compelling ways. For example, we posted 46 compelling and insightful land trust stories to our blog: www.wisconsinlandtrusts.org and shared daily land trust stories via Facebook (more than tripling our following).

Success Indicator: At least 20 land trust members will participate in our annual land trust retreat.

We hosted 45 board and staff members of 20 land trusts at our fiscal year 2014 retreat. Each year we invite our participants to come together to learn from each other and industry experts in order to promote continuous learning and improvement as well as build community and enthusiasm for our work. Topics discussed at our FY14 Retreat included complicated land transactions, evaluating capacity & good conservation planning, conservation financing, and financial reporting for the board & public, among others.

Success Indicator: Media stories that feature the work of Wisconsin land trusts and GW will be tracked and promoted.

In FY2014 we captured and promoted 105 media stories featuring the work of land trusts on our website. We additionally aggregated 190 stories for features in our blog, newsletter, and in other publications.

Success Indicator: The number of landowners who call our office to ask about their land protection options will be tracked and used to better understand how people are seeking information about private land conservation in Wisconsin.

In FY14 we initiated an effort to better track and analyze the inquiries we receive from the public, using our internal database as a tool. In FY15, we will query these data to improve our public face and the methods of communication we produce for those interested in private land conservation in Wisconsin.

Success Indicator: At least one universally-available training regarding community engagement will be developed, and three land trusts will receive customized, one-on-one

assistance to enhance their outreach work to better communicate their relevance and build support for their work.

We will address these activities in FY2015.

Success Indicator: The number of new partners outside the land trust community working with us to build support for private land conservation will increase.

In FY14 we successfully increased the number of new partners outside of the land trust community, including working with the Wisconsin Wetlands Association to develop and promote their wetland landowner handbook, facilitating partnerships between local land trusts and the Wisconsin County Forest Association, and successfully partnered with the Friends of John Muir to identify land trust partners with the capacity to help protect Muir's childhood home.

II. Compliance with Statute

Per the contract terms, we acknowledge progress in the completion of the following Description of Work:

As we've reported, the Land Trust Excellence & Advancement Program is the centerpiece for our programming for NCOs. Through LEAP, we provided technical assistance to NCOs, especially in the areas of management, receiving federal tax exemptions, conservation easement monitoring, and real estate transactions. We additionally assisted NCOs in acquiring property for conservation purposes and in managing property acquired for conservation purposes. Through our LEAP universal services program we conducted conferences, workshops, webinars, and teleconferences on the topics described above. And, through our LEAP customized services program, we provided technical assistance grants to NCOs.

Though we stand at the ready to assist with the establishment of NCOs, we did not need to pursue the objective to establish new NCOs directly during FY14. Additionally, the need did not arise during this grant period to acquire a property for conservation purposes where no other NCO exists that is willing to assist or is capable of effectively assisting in the transfer of a property or that can adequately manage the property after it is acquired.

III. Addendums

A. Conservation Capacity Grants – Accompaniment to Form 8700-316

Attached

B. Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Grant Application Narrative

Attached

C. Assistance to Nonprofit Conservation Organizations Grant Contract – Fiscal Year 2014-2015

Attached

D. Gathering Waters' financial report for Fiscal Year 2014, including evidence of matching funds

Gathering Waters has leveraged the state's investment many times over with private and government grants as well as individual donations. In the process, we have made substantial progress toward our mutual goal of protecting Wisconsin's special places. Our 2014 audited financials are included with this report.

Additionally, GW received several grants in FY14 that could serve as matching funds for this work, including \$100,000 from the Joyce Foundation, \$20,000 from the Forest County Potawatomi Foundation, and \$7,500 from the WeEnergies Foundation.

E. Gathering Waters' Board of Directors for Fiscal Year 2014

Gathering Waters is governed by an active and committed Board of Directors. Our bylaws mandate that at least half of our Directors are representatives of nonprofit conservation organizations. Their names and organizational affiliations (for those representing nonprofit conservation organizations) are listed below, as of FY14:

President: Rita Hayen, River Hills (Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin)

Vice President: Thomas Mitchell, Madison

Treasurer: Eric Schumann, Racine (Caledonia Conservancy)

Secretary: Terry Hatch, Mahomet, IL (Northwoods Land Trust)

Past President: Chris Hughes, Middleton (Natural Heritage Land Trust)

Bill Berry, Stevens Point

Susan Buchanan, Nashotah (Tall Pines Conservancy)

Jeff Crawford, Potawatomi Nation, Milwaukee

Kristine Euclide, Madison (Natural Heritage Land Trust)

Kimberly Gleffe, Milwaukee (River Revitalization Foundation)

Randall Lawton, De Pere (Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust)

Penny Leder, Clintonville

Bill Lunney, Madison (The Nature Conservancy)

Tia Nelson, Madison

Ben Niemann, Hayward (Couderay Waters Regional Land Trust)

Rebecca Smith, Middleton (The Nature Conservancy)

Roy Thilly, Bailey's Harbor (The Ridges Sanctuary)

