



ATC: Environmental stewardship fund makes a million dollar difference for conservation in Wisconsin

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(Madison, WI) How far will a million dollars go toward conservation in Wisconsin? Thanks to the support of American Transmission Co., one Madison-based non-profit can answer that question. The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin announced this week that contributions to the ATC Environmental Stewardship Fund have resulted in more than one million dollars worth of conservation projects over the past four years. Since 2006, ATC has contributed \$300,000 annually to the fund.

“It’s an incredible gift,” noted Charlie Luthin, executive director of the Foundation. “ATC’s support has made many public and non-profit conservation projects in Wisconsin possible,” he said. The fund is managed by the Foundation. Since its inception over 50 projects totaling more than \$1.2 million have been approved by the Foundation’s board of directors.

According to Rita Hayen, ATC’s environmental manager, the fund recognizes areas of environmental stewardship that are important to preserving Wisconsin’s valuable natural resources. These include management of State Natural Areas, support for conservation education, protection of threatened and endangered species, and encouragement of community conservation initiatives. “I believe that environmental protection and enhancement can and should coexist with business goals, and that businesses need to get more involved in the larger issue of resource protection and global solutions,” Hayen said.

For more than 20 years, the Natural Resources Foundation has worked with citizens, businesses, non-profits and the government to promote the protection and enjoyment of Wisconsin’s public lands, waters and wildlife. “The Foundation’s work is well-respected, science-based, and they value public education. These were important criteria for ATC as we identified a partner to administer this fund,” Hayen added.

“ATC told us to make strategic use of the funding,” Luthin noted. “It was very important to them that their gifts would make a difference from the outset and we’ve honored that,” he said. The Fund has supported non-profit and government projects at the city, state and federal level. Everything from the care and maintenance of State Natural Areas and the protection of, and research on, some of our most endangered species (including Karner Blue butterflies, Kirtland’s warblers and rare bats) have been funded.

The ATC Environmental Stewardship Fund has also supported diverse education projects, including the Wisconsin Outdoor Education Expo, targeted programs at nature centers around the state, and the Foundation's own Wisconsin Conservation Corps, a "boots-on-the-ground" AmeriCorps program for young conservation professionals.

Hayen explained why this is significant to her company. "This is important to ATC – our employees live in the communities where we work, and we value these resources like everyone else. They are important to all of our employees, and continue to be vital to the quality of life in Wisconsin," she said.

"The environmental challenges that Wisconsin faces are significant and it is clear than no single entity - be they individual, non-profit, government or corporate - can solve these problems alone," Luthin added. We are truly grateful for the significant support that ATC provides. The success of this partnership shows that when diverse groups work together, we can restore and protect Wisconsin's gifts of nature for all," Luthin concluded.

ED NOTE: A complete list of projects supported by the ATC Environmental Stewardship Fund are available on the Foundation's Web site – <http://www.wisconservation.org>. Royalty-free photos representing funded projects are also available to illustrate this story. Please contact Jeffrey Potter, director of communications, for more information at 608-261-4392.

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The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. For more than twenty years, the Foundation has worked with citizens, businesses, non-profits and the government to promote the protection and enjoyment of Wisconsin's public lands, waters and wildlife. Learn more and donate online at <http://www.wisconservation.org>.

American Transmission Co. owns and operates the high-voltage electric transmission system serving portions of Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and Illinois. Its 9,350 miles of transmission lines and 510 substations move electricity from where it's generated to communities where it is used to help to keep the lights on and businesses running. ATC is designated as a Green Tier company by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for demonstrating superior environmental performance and continual improvement. For more information, visit: <http://www.atcllc.com>



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