

A scenic photograph of a calm lake under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A wooden dock extends from the right side into the water, with a green and white pontoon boat moored at its end. The water reflects the sky and the surrounding green trees on the far shore.

THE WONDERFUL WATERS OF WISCONSIN

AN **ACTION PLAN** TO PROTECT
WISCONSIN'S HEALTHY WATERSHEDS
& HIGH-QUALITY WATERS

THE WONDERFUL WATERS OF WISCONSIN

The *mission* of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is to protect and enhance our natural resources, including our air, land and water; our wildlife, fish and forests; and the ecosystems that sustain all life for all people to enjoy.

The DNR's Water Resource Program plays a lead role in fulfilling this mission when it comes to the state waters.

Historically, much of the program's emphasis has been to *restore* polluted waters as required by the federal Clean Water Act. Evidence is mounting, however, that actively *protecting* healthy water resources is a wise public investment, and the shift towards protection efforts is growing nationally.

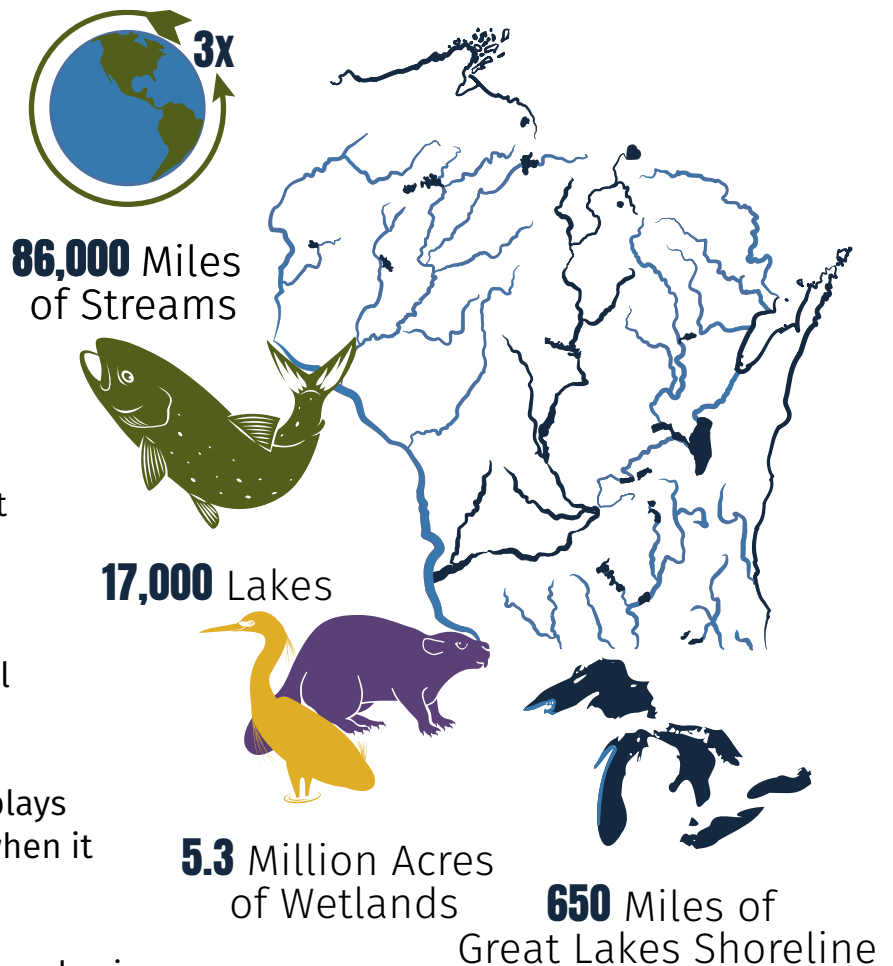
The Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters Action Plan builds off our spring 2021 Kickoff Strategy and partner engagement process. The Plan lays the foundation for greater balance between restoration and protection, all the while emphasizing and celebrating the wonderful waters of Wisconsin. The DNR has a central role to play, but protecting our healthy waters is a mission shared by many. As such, the Action Plan relies on continued collaboration amongst partners to implement aspirational actions through 2030 to achieve shared goals.

Healthy Watershed: an area draining to a stream, lake or wetland where natural land cover supports the dynamic processes, habitat size and connectivity, and water quality conditions able to support healthy biological communities. (adapted from EPA epa.gov/hwp)

High-Quality Waters: lakes, streams and rivers with at least two of the following attributes:

- unique or rare resource
- attaining state water quality standards
- good-to-excellent biotic integrity.

Also included are unique wetlands and those with least disturbed reference conditions.





FACT: many of Wisconsin’s water resources can be protected from pollution. The amount of water on our landscape alone is remarkable: nearly **17,000 lakes, 650 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, about 86,000 stream and river miles** — enough to circle the planet more than three times, and **5.3 million acres** of remaining wetlands. Most waterbodies that have been monitored and assessed for Clean Water Act purposes are attaining water quality standards. Unfortunately, we often hear about the negative impacts to waterbodies. Problems like blue-green algae blooms, declining fish populations and a continued trend of lost wetlands need not be the norm.

FACT: people, fish and wildlife all depend on clean water, and the public knows it. Repeated bipartisan research shows **voters believe it’s “very important” to protect our drinking water** (87 percent) and prevent pesticides and fertilizers from running off into streams and rivers (68 percent). Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of American voters say that protecting wildlife habitat should be a very important conservation goal. The same research shows there is widespread and increasing agreement that “protecting land (i.e. watersheds) around rivers, lakes and streams will keep pollution from flowing into these waters” and that loss of fish and wildlife habitat has become more problematic.¹



FACT: healthy water resources are an asset. Not only do high-quality waterbodies tend to have higher real estate values and thus contribute more to the tax base, but it also costs less to protect them than to restore polluted water. Our lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands generate major recreational and economic interest; **anglers and waterfowl hunters spend \$1.5 billion annually in Wisconsin.** With numbers like that, it’s no wonder Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth has increased almost twice as fast as the total GDP growth rate.²

FACT: high-quality waters are a Wisconsin way of life. A 2016 statewide recreational survey showed the top three concerns about the future of outdoor recreation in Wisconsin were water-related, with the primary concern being “assuring clean air and water in Wisconsin.”³ More than 90 percent of recently surveyed Wisconsin voters identified river and stream water quality and drinking water source protection as “very” or “extremely important” – further evidence that **we expect the best of our water resources.**⁴

1 Weigel, L and Metz, D. (October 2018). The Language of Conservation: Updated Recommendations on How to Communicate Effectively to Build Support for Conservation. fishwildlife.org/application/files/9315/4082/5043/2018_Language_of_Conservation_Memo.pdf

2 Headwaters Economics. (2020). Outdoor recreation: A Top Driver of Wisconsin’s Economy. <https://www.industry.travelwisconsin.com/outdoor-rec-office/>

3 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. (2016). Outside in Wisconsin: Results of the 2016 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) Survey. dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fl/PropertyPlanning/Scorp

4 Weigel, L., Hahne, K. and Metz D. (August 2020). Key Findings from a Survey of Wisconsin Voters. wpr.org/sites/default/files/knsp_tncpolling_august2020.pdf



A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH

A guiding principle of the HWHQW Action Plan is that watershed scale protection is essential for high-quality waters to thrive. Tasked with **answering the big question of “where are the healthy waters of Wisconsin,”** a DNR Healthy Waters Team completed a peer-reviewed modeling and assessment project.

Predictive modeling is necessary because Wisconsin’s tremendous amount of water resources makes it nearly impossible – both in time and cost – to directly monitor everything. The data and information generated provides a foundation for planning, implementing and evaluating the Plan.

MODELING & ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The Healthy Waters Team studied protection efforts across the country and within Wisconsin over several years. They learned there are great examples of protection activities and projects, but comprehensive statewide water resource protection programs are rare.

Working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), other DNR programs and partners, the team identified key attributes of healthy watersheds and high-quality waters and used the EPA's Preliminary Healthy Watershed Assessment (PHWA) and Recovery Potential Screening (RPS) tools (epa.gov/rps) to model healthy watersheds.

The modeled watersheds are 15-60 square miles (HUC12 scale). The results can be sorted statewide and by major drainage basin, which allows for statewide representation and identification of the healthiest watersheds relative to the scale sorted.

- Attributes for watershed health modeling fall into six categories: landscape condition, hydrology, geomorphology, habitat, water quality and biology.

Healthy Watersheds are the gateway for high-quality water protections in this strategy. About 30 percent of lakes, rivers and streams have been monitored for Clean Water Act purposes, for which wetlands are not included. High-quality waters are scored using existing datasets, including waterbody classification information and monitoring data.

- Attributes for high-quality waters fall into three categories: unique and rare natural communities, attaining water quality standards and good-to-excellent biotic integrity.

A technical report that provides the full details and results of the modeling and assessment effort is available online at <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/SurfaceWater/HQW.html>

Watershed Protection Priorities

The 30% healthiest watersheds in the state and in each major drainage basin are the geographic protection priorities for this statewide Plan.



Vulnerability and Opportunity

Like people, watersheds and waterbodies are stressed, but there also opportunities to keep them healthy. The modeling tool enables us to better understand the stressors threatening water resources and identify opportunities to protect watershed health. The least stressed, or least vulnerable, watersheds with the most opportunities can help to further prioritize management actions through a final Protection Potential Index. We will evaluate the options for using the vulnerability, opportunity, and protection potential features of the model in the coming years.

We used past and projected trend data for the stressors and mostly other DNR program geographic priorities for the opportunities. This approach helps us to understand vulnerability through time and to integrate across DNR programs to leverage resources to get the most bang for our protection buck.

Vulnerability:

- Shoreland, Wetland & Watershed Habitat Alterations – past
- Loss of Wetland Services – past
- Watershed Land Use, including Urban and Agriculture – past and projected
- Climate Change - projected

Opportunity:

- DNR Forestry Ecological Landscape Priorities
- DNR Wildlife Conservation Opportunity Areas
- DNR Fisheries Brook Trout Environmental Resilience Reserves
- DNR Protection-based watersheds within approved TMDL areas
- Local lake, river & watershed organizations
- Freshwater fishing demand

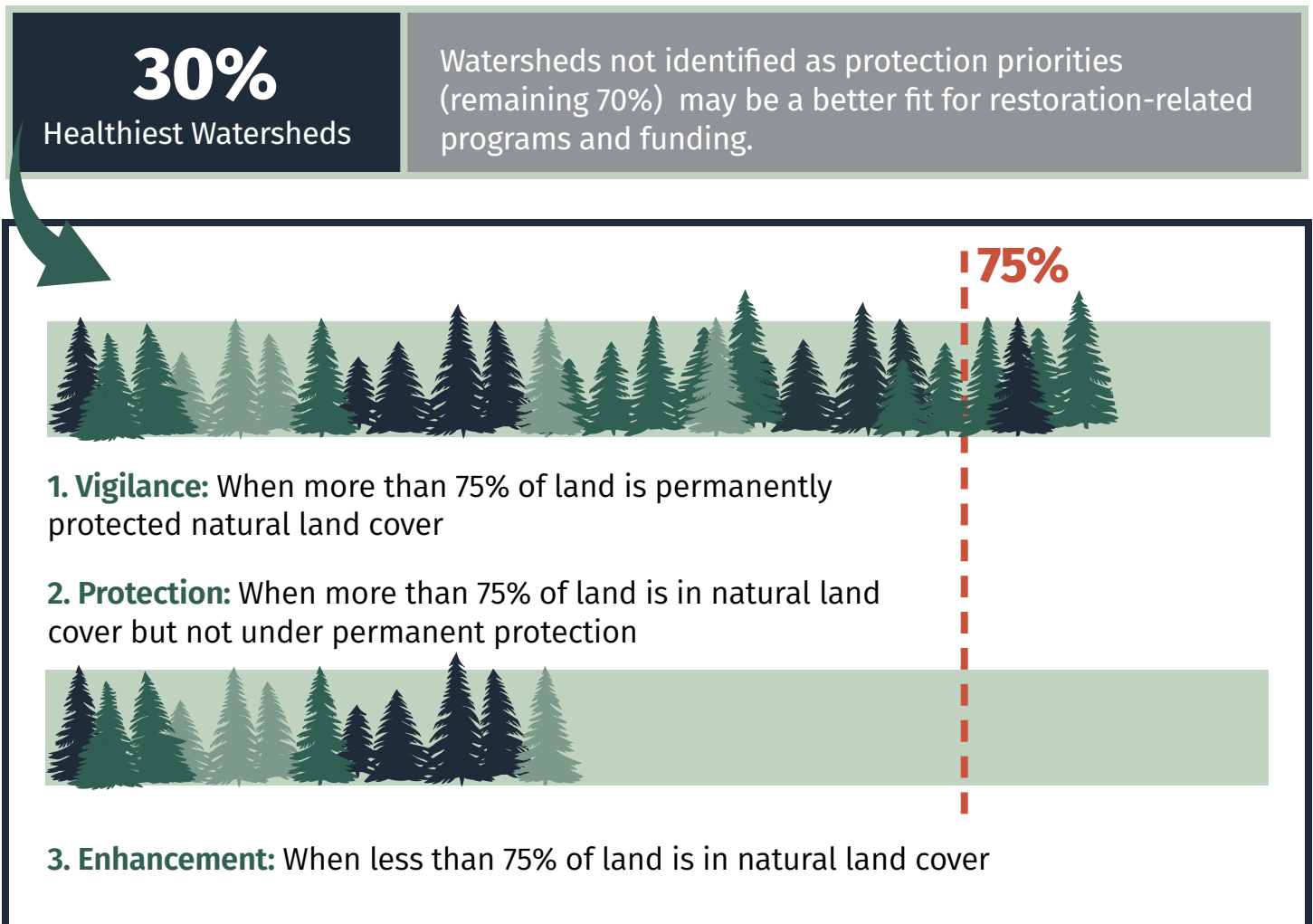


BROAD PROTECTION STRATEGIES

There are multiple ways the Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters modeling and assessment results and action plan could be used. Other programs and statewide partners could use the modeling and assessment results and HWHQW priorities for planning and implementation, as is. Local partners like tribes, counties, and lake and river groups may choose to customize the stressor and opportunity indicator results to identify their own priorities.

Before making detailed plans for protection, it will be important to categorize the overall management strategy of the effort. Vigilance, protection, enhancement and restoration are four broad protection strategies.

For the healthiest watersheds, choose the right Protection Strategy:



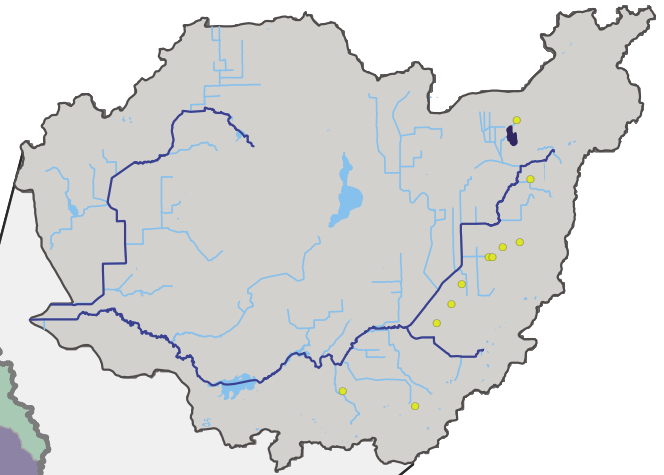
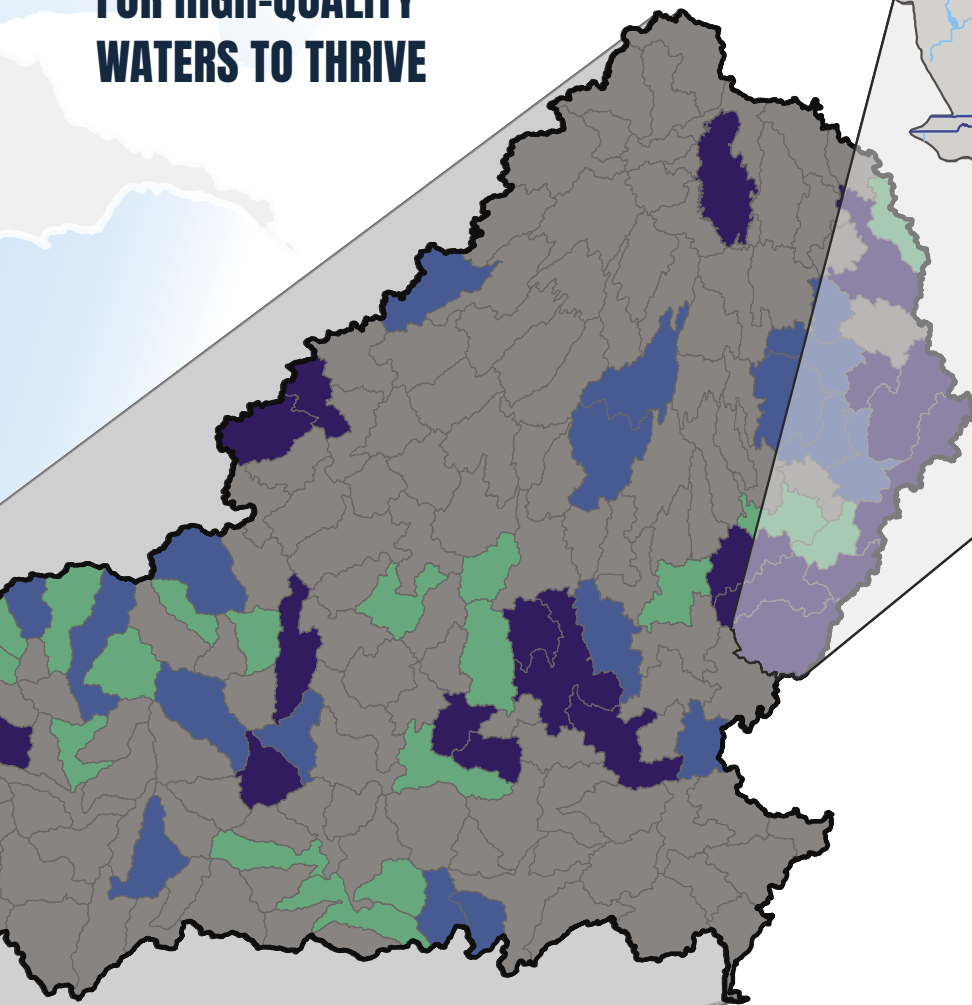


WATERSHED PROTECTION PRIORITIES



Healthy Watersheds: The watershed health protection priorities can be sorted at two scales: statewide (left) and major drainage basin (center). In this example, a particular Rock River Basin watershed was not rated in the healthiest category at a statewide scale, but is one of the healthiest watersheds within the basin. After healthy watersheds are prioritized at multiple scales, the monitored high-quality waters within them are also targeted for protection planning.

WATERSHED SCALE PROTECTION IS ESSENTIAL FOR HIGH-QUALITY WATERS TO THRIVE



High-Quality Waters:

Monitored waterbodies meeting specific criteria are high-quality waters. Three streams, 1 lake, and 11 wetlands in this watershed are high-quality.

MULTIPLE USES FOR MODELING & ASSESSMENT RESULTS

The final modeling and assessment results are available on the [DNR's Watershed Restoration & Protection Viewer](#). They will be packaged with fixed watershed health scores, but flexible stressors and opportunities. There may be local stressors like large-scale land use changes or opportunities like a highly effective local organization that are not included in statewide modeling efforts, and the EPA modeling tool (epa.gov/rps) enables partners to adapt the information for local needs.

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS

Wisconsin's current effort to create a comprehensive statewide program is unique in its broad scale and requires continued engagement meaningful engagement of partners in planning and future implementation. These partnerships – federal, state, regional and local – will be keys to success. The rationale for cooperation is compelling – the better we can protect water resources now, the more likely it is that future generations can continue to enjoy and benefit from them.



PLANNING TOGETHER TO HELP PROTECT WISCONSIN'S WATER RESOURCES

The 2021 Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters (HWHQW) Kickoff Strategy was a first step towards greater balance between restoration and protection, all the while emphasizing and celebrating the wonderful waters of Wisconsin. Next, we brought partners together to identify actions to take to achieve common goals. A partner engagement process occurred in April – June 2021. The DNR's Healthy Waters Team reviewed discussion session input and wrote a *Partner Discussion Group Summary* that pulls together participants' responses to the questions asked during the sessions and highlights common ideas and themes to consider moving forward.

Questions we asked:

- What is your organization or group currently doing to protect water resources?
- How might the results of the HWHQW assessment be useful to you?

Collectively, what can we do to...

- Increase capacity to provide technical assistance?
- Increase utilization of funding for protection?
- Leverage & adapt existing program tools to achieve results?
- Increase external awareness?

8 VIRTUAL DISCUSSION GROUPS

164 PARTICIPANTS*

93 ORGANIZATIONS

89 PAGES OF NOTES

*The *Participant List* includes all individuals who signed into a virtual discussion group via Zoom, regardless how long they remained. The time, effort, and candid conversations with participants were greatly appreciated and serve as the foundation of the Action Plan.

HWHQW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

We've fine-tuned the strategy described in the original Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters Kick-Off. Partner feedback and consideration of how we'll evaluate progress through time have resulted in a clearer strategic framework. The HWHQW Strategic Framework articulates a vision of what we want to achieve.

INTENT: Alongside ongoing restoration efforts, prioritize healthy watersheds and the high-quality lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands within them for protection so those water resources can continue to support healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and recreational use.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Use a science-based approach to identify statewide protection priorities.
- Empower partners to identify local priorities.
- Emphasize the protection and promotion of Wisconsin's healthy watersheds and high-quality waters in a way that complements long-standing restoration work.

KEY OUTCOME: 100% of priority healthy watersheds and high-quality waters remain so through 2030.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Increase capacity to provide technical assistance
2. Leverage and adapt existing program tools to achieve results
3. Increase utilization of funding for protection
4. Increase external awareness of the HWHQW initiative and the places prioritized for protection

Where the strategic framework ends, the HWHQW Action Plan picks up. Read on to learn about the recommended actions that will help us implement the strategy through 2030 to achieve our objectives.

HWHQW ACTIONS

How to read this section:

ACTION ITEMS: The following 25 recommended actions, organized by the HWHQW Strategic Framework objectives, will help protect the Wonderful Waters of Wisconsin.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: For each Action Item, several strategies for success are listed. These are finer scale implementation details or ideas, often drawn directly from partner group feedback.

GENERAL READINESS: Some actions are more ready for implementation than others. Some actions are ready **NOW** and could be implemented within 1-2 years. Other actions are better described as ready **NEXT** – within 3-5 years – and might build off other earlier actions or need other resources to go ahead. Lastly, actions that are very ambitious or need substantial investment, including legislative or executive support, are **FOR THE FUTURE**, likely more than 5 years out.

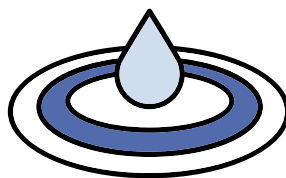
Readiness also depends on other DNR program and external partner interest in collaborating on actions that take more expertise and time. Specifically, there will likely be a need for the following work groups:

- Technical assistance/BMPs,
- Funding, and
- Communications.

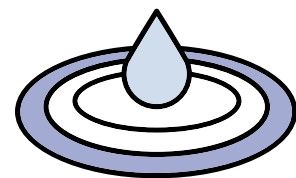
The ripple icon visualizes the readiness of each action. Each ripple spreading out from the water drop indicates the relative readiness. The closer the colored ripple is to the drop, the more ready it is to be implemented.



NOW
(1-2 YEARS)




NEXT
(3-5 YEARS)



FOR THE FUTURE
(5 YEARS+)

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS: The intent is for the HWHQW Action Plan to be implemented in partnership across the state. Different agencies, organizations and individuals are positioned to take different kinds of action – and no single group can do it all. A bolded check mark under a partner group indicates where leadership might come from on the specific action.

Take note of the partner group that each icon represents.

	Businesses, including Agriculture & Tourism
	Fish, Wildlife & Habitat Conservation Organizations
	Lake, River & Watershed Management Organizations and Lake Leaders
	Local, State & Federal & Tribal Government (other than DNR)
DNR	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



ACTION ITEMS BY OBJECTIVE

Objective One: Increase Capacity to Provide Technical Assistance

- 1A** Make HQHQW Modeling & Assessment Results and Maps Available Online
- 1B** Bring Internal and External Partners Together to Protect Healthy Watersheds and High-Quality Waters
- 1C** Train Other Programs and Partners How to use HWHQW Modeling & Assessment Results and Integrate with Action Plan Implementation
- 1D** Create a HWHQW Toolkit with a Menu of Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- 1E** Develop and Maintain a Water Resource Protection Info-Hub
- 1F** Promote and Provide Technical Assistance to Non-Traditional Groups and Partners

Objective Two: Leverage and Adapt Existing Program Tools to Achieve Results

- 2A** Plan for Protection with Clear Strategies and Actions
- 2B** Integrate Other Conservation Planning Tools into HWHQW Protection Efforts
- 2C** Integrate with Applicable Climate-Related Actions and Programs
- 2D** Evaluate Water Resources Monitoring Strategy
- 2E** Continue to Learn from Protection Planning and Implementation Efforts Beyond Wisconsin
- 2F** Partner for Increased Shoreland Protection
- 2G** Evaluate Existing DNR Resource Designations and Update Where Needed

Objective Three: Increase Utilization of Funding for Protection

- 3A** Develop and Maintain a Catalog of Water Resource Protection Funding Opportunities
- 3B** Evaluate and Improve Current DNR Funding Opportunities
- 3C** Pilot Protection Funding in Priority Watersheds
- 3D** Support the Private Sector in Efforts to Fund Water Resource Protection
- 3E** Develop a Fundraising Toolbox
- 3F** Explore Incentives for Increased Water Resources Protection Funding

Objective Four: Increase External Awareness

- 4A** Improve Our Understanding of Water Resources Protection Through Social Science
- 4B** Promote, Record, and Share Water Resources Protection Stories
- 4C** Go Where People Are to Make it Happen
- 4D** Develop and Implement HWHQW Communications Plan
- 4E** Wonderful Waters of Wisconsin Day!
- 4F** Expand Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation and Youth Education

OBJECTIVE ONE



Increase Capacity to Provide Technical Assistance


Technical assistance includes providing support to understand how to use the modeling and assessment results in complimentary planning efforts as well as support to implement best practices to protect water resources.

ACTION 1A **Make HQHQW Modeling & Assessment Results and Maps Available Online**










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Create an interactive mapping tool with a conservation planning feature to include broad protection strategy (i.e. vigilance, protection, enhancement, or restoration) for individual HUC12 watersheds.
- Include database/tabular data.
- Keep data, including shapefiles, open and available for public use.
- Link mapping and database tools to other partner and conservation planning websites.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:


				DNR
				

ACTION 1B **Bring Internal and External Partners Together to Protect Healthy Watersheds and High-Quality Waters**










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Establish formal opportunities or groups to coordinate HWHQW Action Plan implementation – e.g, steering committee, working or advisory groups, annual collaborative meetings.
- Support department-wide awareness and use (where applicable) of HWHQW modelling and assessment results, and the HWHQW Action Plan.
- Work with key programs and partners to develop new watershed protection BMPs.
- Strive for landscape-level integrated ecological management vs. individual property or waterbody scale.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE ONE




ACTION 1C Train Other Programs and Partners How to use HWHQW Modeling & Assessment Results and Integrate with Action Plan Implementation










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Host HWHQW workshops and webinars and consider train-the-trainer approach.
- Focus on multiple groups in geographic priority areas.
- Prioritize training and technical assistance to counties, NRCS, land trusts, and other “boots on the ground” professionals who work directly with landowners.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:


				DNR
				

ACTION 1D Create a HWHQW Toolkit with a Menu of Best Management Practices (BMPs)










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Identify current protection BMPs focused on forestry, Healthy Lakes & Rivers, and runoff control.
- Develop new BMPs, supporting:
 - Permanent land protection,
 - Forested watershed conservation,
 - Natural flood management,
 - And other water resources protection activities, as needed.
- Sort BMPs by geographic area and broad protection strategy.
- Include case studies and stories/testimonials.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE ONE



ACTION 1E **Develop and Maintain a Water Resource Protection Info-Hub**

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Connect local champions and landowners to programs, tools, funding and other resources available to them.
- Compile resources from a wide variety of partners from all over the state.
- Include protection project examples and contacts so that good ideas and lessons learned can be shared.

GENERAL READINESS:

	<p>NEXT (3-5 YEARS)</p>
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				<p>DNR</p>

ACTION 1F **Promote and Provide Technical Assistance to Non-Traditional Groups and Partners**

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Expand the perception of what a “partner” is when it comes to watershed protection.
- Connect with water resource users like anglers, conservation clubs, boaters, and businesses.
- Integrate HWHQW into existing Farmer Led Councils in healthy watershed priority areas.

GENERAL READINESS:

	<p>NEXT (3-5 YEARS)</p>
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				<p>DNR</p>

OBJECTIVE TWO



Leverage and Adapt Existing Program Tools to Achieve Results


Tools include DNR and partner organization programs and policies that can be utilized or synergized for water resources protection purposes AKA the “flip side” of restoring impaired waters.

ACTION 2A Plan for Protection with Clear Strategies and Actions










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Identify partner roles and responsibilities at multiple scales (e.g. statewide and local).
- Integrate HWHQW Action Plan, priorities, and management recommendations into other statewide planning efforts (e.g. 50-year Land Acquisition Plan, Forestry Action Plan, Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan, master planning) and strategies.
- Encourage other programs and partners to integrate HWHQW into regional and local planning efforts, especially geographic priority areas.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:


				DNR
				

ACTION 2B Integrate Other Conservation Planning Tools into HWHQW Protection Efforts










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Specifically integrate Wetlands by Design and the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership Conservation Mapper, into HWHQW and explain how they can complement each other.
- Encourage other programs and partners to utilize updated wetland mapping and functional assessment tools for land use decisions or to adopt them into local ordinances.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE TWO




ACTION 2C Integrate with Applicable Climate-Related Actions and Programs










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Promote use of adaptation and mitigation toolboxes or other resources that are synergistic with HWHQW goals.
- Piggyback key climate change initiatives like the Trillion Tree Pledge on HWHQW efforts.
- Continue to evaluate climate change stressors for inclusion in healthy watershed modeling.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:


				DNR
				

ACTION 2D Evaluate Water Resources Monitoring Strategy










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Verify if current monitoring efforts and parameters are adequately measuring water resource health and adapt accordingly.
- Track and report watershed and waterbody health, including verifying HWHQW monitoring results.
- Integrate volunteer monitoring like WAV and CLMN when able.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE TWO




ACTION 2E Continue to Learn from Protection Planning and Implementation Efforts Beyond Wisconsin










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Work with EPA and other partners to identify water resource protection examples that may be applicable to HWHQW.
- Evaluate other state’s water resources protection successes – e.g. Maine’s alternative protection-based 9-Key-Element Protection Plan template - and develop similar strategies for HWHQW.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

ACTION 2F Partner for Increased Shoreland Protection

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS










- Explore and share examples where counties and towns have increased decision-making authority.
- Work with local governments on efforts to get property owners to voluntarily be more protective than statewide regulations by communicating protection benefits.

Note: Action would require legislative or executive action

GENERAL READINESS:

	FOR THE FUTURE (5 YEARS+)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE TWO



ACTION 2G Evaluate Existing DNR Resource Designations and Update Where Needed

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS










- Evaluate options for adding/updating HWHQW watersheds and waterbodies to existing Department classifications like Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters.
- Bring back Critical Habitat and Sensitive Area Designations, possibly with inclusion of partner-collected data.
- Consider drafting rules that prevent degradation of high-quality waters by non-point-source pollution.

Note: May require legislative or executive action

GENERAL READINESS:

	FOR THE FUTURE (5 YEARS+)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

Nick Collura / Travel Wisconsin



OBJECTIVE THREE



Increase Utilization of Funding for Protection

Funding includes adapting existing financial assistance opportunities like DNR grants as well as evaluating new and innovative possibilities.


ACTION 3A Develop and Maintain a Catalog of Water Resource Protection Funding Opportunities

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS










- Include information about the funding source – e.g., organization, amount available, key dates, and other details.
- Look for national level special projects targeting resource areas based on current need.
- Highlight federal, tribal, and private funding opportunities, some of which land trusts already use, in geographic priority areas.
- Look for indirect opportunities, where water resource protection might not be the primary focus but is synergistic with other program goals.

Note: May require legislative or executive action

GENERAL READINESS:

	NOW (1-2 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				



OBJECTIVE THREE




ACTION 3B Evaluate and Improve Current DNR Funding Opportunities

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS










- Balance current Clean Water Act federal funding sources to DNR – e.g. 319 Grants and the State Revolving Fund – that are used primarily for restoration and regulatory purposes with eligible protection activities.
- Evaluate options for leveraging other federal funding opportunities - e.g. USFS Landscape Scale Restoration funding.
- Identify and address barriers for water resources protection projects. Look for opportunities to increase flexibility, such as:
 - Consolidating categories so planning and implementation can occur within a single grant project;
 - Expanding timelines for protection; and,
 - Expanding eligibility for certain activities, including long-term project management.
- Work with other programs to integrate funding priorities for healthiest watersheds and evaluate future priorities for headwater and upstream watersheds and water resources.
- Work with partners who can advocate for more and different funding strategies.

Note: May require legislative or executive action

GENERAL READINESS:

	<p>NEXT (3-5 YEARS)</p>
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				<p>DNR</p>
				

OBJECTIVE THREE




ACTION 3C Pilot Protection Funding in Priority Watersheds










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Partner with counties and other eligible grantees in geographic priority areas to explore funding for staffing and BMPs to implement HWHQW.
- Pilot watershed-scale protection projects with partners and apply lessons learned to statewide program.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:


				DNR
				

ACTION 3D Support the Private Sector in Efforts to Fund Water Resource Protection










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Continue to partner with Sustainability and Business Support to engage businesses.
- Explore public/private opportunities to fund water resources protection and promotion of the statewide and local geographic priorities.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE THREE



ACTION 3E Develop a Fundraising Toolbox

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Partner with lake organizations and other groups to better understand and share grass-roots and “old fashioned” fundraising efforts.
- Consolidate fundraising examples into a toolbox for broader use.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR

ACTION 3F Explore Incentives for Increased Water Resources Protection Funding

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Support incentives that can be applied at various levels – from simple to complex.
- Support a variety of sources for incentives – public dollars and resources, as well as private sector incentives that might influence behavior in positive ways.

Note: May require legislative or executive action

GENERAL READINESS:

	FOR THE FUTURE (5 YEARS+)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR

OBJECTIVE FOUR



Increase External Awareness


External awareness includes promoting the HWHQW program and actions, as well as the places we seek to protect.

ACTION 4A Improve Our Understanding of Water Resources Protection Through Social Science










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Conduct a social survey of the public opinion of Wisconsin’s water resources.
- Complete economic analyses to better understand true values of healthy watersheds and high-quality waterbodies in terms of the services provided to people.
- Use a Community Based Social Marketing approach to understand the barriers and benefits to water resources protection actions.

GENERAL READINESS:

	<p>NEXT (3-5 YEARS)</p>
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:


				DNR
				

ACTION 4B Promote, Record, and Share Water Resources Protection Stories










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Use approachable and relatable narratives, including testimonials and field trips/tours, and keep people in the picture.
- Explore themes of monitoring and assessment results, projects, people and places to inform future messaging and communications.

GENERAL READINESS:

	<p>NEXT (3-5 YEARS)</p>
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

OBJECTIVE FOUR



ACTION 4C Go Where People Are to Make it Happen

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Use community-based management and place-making in local communities to advance water resources protection.
- Pilot place-based approaches in watersheds with substantial local capacity and other management opportunities.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR

ACTION 4D Develop and Implement HWHQW Communications Plan

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Establish a brand strategy to follow.
- Map out annual campaign, including news release templates for distribution, events/conferences, and a social media strategy, with an emphasis on celebrating protection and pride for these places.
- Create signs highlighting HWHQW areas, projects, and monitoring sites. Include link or QR code to program so people can learn more. Consider signs for cooperators.
- Partner with media to implement communication plan at local level to educate and motivate local communities and property owners.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
--	-----------------------------

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR

OBJECTIVE FOUR




ACTION 4E Wonderful Waters of Wisconsin Day!










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Designate a specific day or weekend to promote HWHQW or add HWHWQ to other designated water-related days, like AIS Snapshot Day and BioBlitz events.
- Collaborate with the Department of Tourism, WEDC – Office of Rural Prosperity and local Chambers of Commerce to promote the Day.
- Invite elected officials, community leaders, and local volunteer champions to participate together.

GENERAL READINESS:

	NEXT (3-5 YEARS)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

ACTION 4F Expand Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation and Youth Education










STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Create publicly accessible database/map with DNR properties and all public access points, including platted accesses.
- Explore including HWHQW into hunting/fishing Go Wild web app and develop SWDV app for handheld devices.
- Partner with groups who have established youth outreach programs and expand curriculum to include water resources protection themes

GENERAL READINESS:

	FOR THE FUTURE (5 YEARS+)
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LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS:

				DNR
				

ACTION ITEMS BY READINESS

Objective One: Increase Capacity to Provide Technical Assistance

Objective Two: Leverage and Adapt Existing Program Tools to Achieve Results

Objective Three: Increase Utilization of Funding for Protection

Objective Four: Increase External Awareness



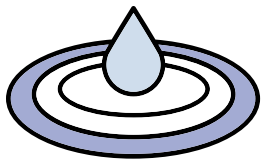
READY NOW (1-2 YEARS)

- 1A** Make HQHQW Modeling & Assessment Results and Maps Available Online
- 1B** Bring Internal and External Partners Together to Protect Healthy Watersheds and High-Quality Waters
- 1C** Train Other Programs and Partners How to use HWHQW Modeling & Assessment Results and Integrate with Action Plan Implementation
- 2A** Plan for Protection with Clear Strategies and Actions
- 2B** Integrate Other Conservation Planning Tools into HWHQW Protection Efforts
- 2C** Integrate with Applicable Climate-Related Actions and Programs
- 3A** Develop and Maintain a Catalog of Water Resource Protection Funding Opportunities



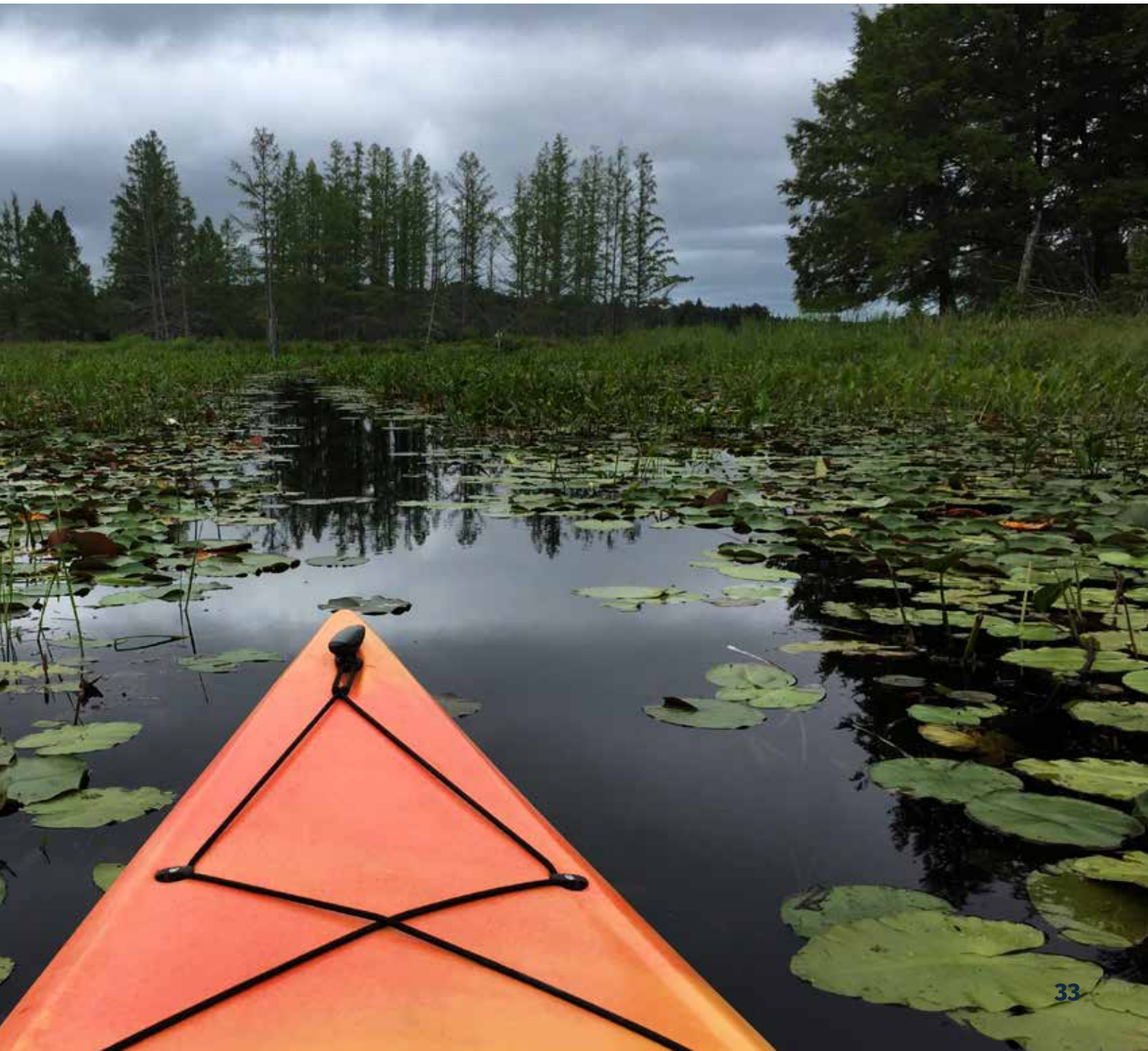
READY NEXT (3-5 YEARS)

- 1D** Create a HWHQW Toolkit with a Menu of Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- 1E** Develop and Maintain a Water Resource Protection Info-Hub
- 2D** Evaluate Water Resources Monitoring Strategy
- 2E** Continue to Learn from Protection Planning and Implementation Efforts Beyond Wisconsin
- 3B** Evaluate and Improve Current DNR Funding Opportunities
- 3C** Pilot Protection Funding in Priority Watersheds
- 3D** Support the Private Sector in Efforts to Fund Water Resource Protection
- 3E** Develop a Fundraising Toolbox
- 4A** Improve Our Understanding of Water Resources Protection Through Social Science
- 4B** Promote, Record, and Share Water Resources Protection Stories
- 4C** Go Where People Are to Make it Happen
- 4D** Develop and Implement HWHQW Communications Plan
- 4E** Wonderful Waters of Wisconsin Day!



FOR THE FUTURE (5 YEARS+)

- 1F** Promote and Provide Technical Assistance to Non-Traditional Groups and Partners
- 2F** Partner for Increased Shoreland Protection
- 2G** Evaluate Existing DNR Resource Designations and Update Where Needed
- 3F** Explore Incentives for Increased Water Resources Protection Funding
- 4F** Expand Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation and Youth Education



WITH GRATITUDE

The Healthy Waters Team appreciates the contributions and collaboration of its many partners and looks forward to expanding partnerships to promote and protect Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters.

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