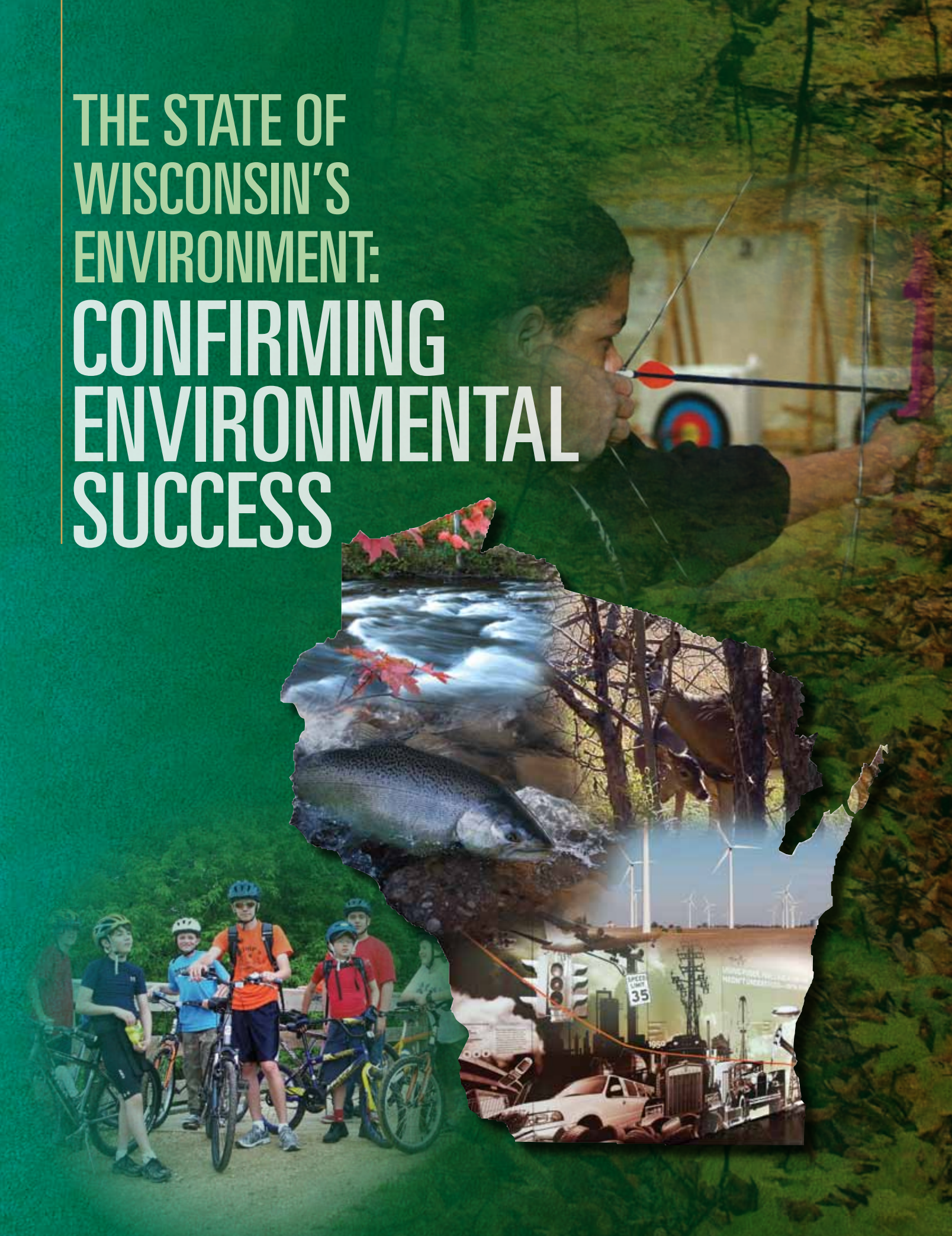
THE STATE OF WISCONSIN'S ENVIRONMENT: CONFIRMING ENVIRONMENTAL SUCCESS



A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Matthew J. Frank

Photos by Kathleen Wolski

As Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, I am pleased to share some of our successes from the past two years.

- **Youth Outreach** – We have an obligation and an opportunity to engage and educate our youth. They are tomorrow's environmental stewards. With that in mind, DNR worked with groups and legislative partners to provide and promote mentored hunt programs. The Archery in the Schools Program also continues to grow and was featured at the Wisconsin State Fair this year where it was enthusiastically received. Another fair highlight was Milwaukee-area high school student involvement in the DNR's pilot Student Career Mentoring Program, which gives urban teens opportunities to learn about environmental issues and natural resources careers. Annually, DNR staff and partners teach more than 25,000 people in hunter education courses. They also teach fishing skills and aquatic biology to more than 21,000 youth and reach thousands through outdoor skills courses at nature and education centers and state parks.
- **Great Lakes Restoration** – Wisconsin stepped up to tap federal funding to protect and restore the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) is a $475 million federal program, and 50 Wisconsin projects were finalists for GLRI funding. These grants represent collaborations among DNR, local governments, tribes and others to turn great ideas to action. In recent years, environmental efforts on the Great Lakes have included advancing ballast water controls, slowing the introduction of invasive species and providing support for The Great Lakes Compact. The Compact sets a system for conserving water quality and quantity as well as considering water diversions out of the watershed. It is a visionary partnership and an unprecedented international agreement.
- **Sustainability** – Sustainability in other areas of environmental protection is critical as well. Staff is using science and deploying real solutions to environmental challenges. Wisconsin's Green Tier program encourages businesses to move beyond regulatory compliance to promote superior environmental performance. Wisconsin Act 30, passed in the 2009-2010 legislation period, made Green Tier a permanent program and removed the 2009 sunset date in the original bill. Participation in this program is voluntary and the Westfield School District recently became Wisconsin's first primary and secondary school district to enroll in the program. The district's history of environmental education, coupled with its use of donated biodiesel fuel to help meet district transportation needs, makes it an excellent example.
- **Renewable Energy** – To ensure America's energy security, now and into the future, we must have a robust, diverse and sustainable biofuels industry to complement energy conservation measures. We have the opportunity to redirect the $16 billion Wisconsin spends annually on fossil fuels toward energy efficiency and home grown energy — solar, wind, geothermal, energy storage and bioenergy from our forests, agricultural lands and waste streams such as cow manure. Developing this capacity can make Wisconsin's existing manufacturing base more globally competitive, create new opportunities to grow Wisconsin's economy and strengthen our rural communities and agricultural economy while improving environmental protection.
- **Climate Change** – The DNR has teamed up with Polar Bears International to encourage Wisconsinites to plant and care for trees in their communities because trees reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide. The DNR's Remediation and Redevelopment Program has embarked on two new brownfield initiatives that can combat climate change. The Wisconsin Initiative for Sustainable Cleanups emphasizes using sustainable technologies in site cleanups to save energy, limit waste and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Wisconsin Plant Recovery Initiative helps communities clean up and restore industrial and commercial facilities that have recently shut their doors. The DNR's Waste and Materials Management Program sets plans and deadlines to collect landfill gases and reduce methane emissions from buried wastes.

That's just a snapshot. Read on to learn more about successes in these areas and others. While we celebrate the progress we have made over the past several years, we realize there is more work to be done. We know that there are many groups and organizations working on the salient environmental issues of our day. Returning to the past is not an option. We must continue to secure a healthy environment for Wisconsin's future.

Matthew J. Frank, Secretary
Department of Natural Resources

WHERE WE ARE ON TRACK

We are pleased to report these real improvements in our air, water and land; corresponding reduction of health risks to Wisconsin citizens from environmental exposure; and benefits for fish and wildlife. While this list of accomplishments is not complete, it shows the importance of partnerships, science-based decision-making, sharing responsibility, building on common values and a sense of environmental stewardship. You can take pride in Wisconsin's efforts to make the environment healthier for today and for the future.

Julie Steinhoff

Brook Burling

Tom Sheffy

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program enters its third decade

More than 580,000 acres have been preserved for public use over Stewardship's first 20 years; better than 90 percent is open for public uses like hunting, hiking and nature study. Purchases include new properties, improvements and trail links. The legislature bolstered the commitment to Stewardship by raising the bonding authority from $60 million to $86 million annually for the 10-year period that began July 1, 2010.

DNR File Photo

Forty years for cleaner air

This year, Wisconsin residents have good reason to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Clean Air Act. A mercury pollutant rule has the state's major utilities on track to reduce their mercury emissions and multiple pollutants including nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide. Businesses, home owners, local governments, commuters and others are committed to become more energy efficient to further reduce emissions and benefit from the savings. This year a pilot program allows individuals to specify counties for which they want to receive air quality notices instead of receiving statewide notices.

Shoreline protection rules receive significant public input

Earlier this year, state shoreland development rules were updated to better protect lakes and rivers, while allowing property owners more flexibility on their land. These improvements were made after more than 30 public hearings, more than 70,000 public comments and hundreds of hours of research. The final rules offer a workable set of guidelines that allow property renovations, guide new development and encourage buffers and naturalized shorelines for better habitat and pollution prevention.

E-Cycle gets the waste out

It is now easier for people to recycle or donate unwanted electronics. E-Cycle Wisconsin provides a list of collection sites across the state. Wisconsin's electronics recycling law, passed in October 2009, bans the disposal of a wide range of consumer electronics in state landfills and incinerators and creates a statewide electronics recycling program under which electronics manufacturers pay to recycle a certain amount of electronics. This year we celebrated 20 years of recycling law in Wisconsin.

New Hunting Mentorship Program is a hit

This law allows people interested in experiencing hunting, including those age 10 and older, to hunt under controlled conditions and under the close supervision of a mentor. By working together, many statewide conservation organizations, the DNR and legislators have made this the safest mentored hunting law in the country. This law gives seasoned hunters a chance to give something back — to do for someone today what someone else did for them years ago — introduce them to the hunting experience.

Port of Milwaukee

Ken Schreiber

DNR File Photo

Ballast water exchange requirements

Wisconsin has started regulating oceangoing ships arriving in its Great Lakes waters to stop the flow of invasive species in ballast water. Wisconsin is also pushing treatment technology that will provide the greatest level of protection possible against releasing aquatic invasives from ballast water. Starting January 1, 2012, oceangoing ships must treat their ballast water to reduce, contain and make harmless live plants, animals and organisms. Wisconsin, other Great Lakes states, the federal government and the shipping industry have jointly supported the Great Ships Initiative, a research effort designed to find the most cost-effective treatment technology for freshwater shipping on the Great Lakes.

DNR File Photo

Lake Delton restoration and fisheries recovery

Heavy rain in June, 2008, caused a catastrophic breach of Lake Delton. The lake was gone, along with people's homes and the community's economic heart. The lake's fishery was flushed into the Wisconsin River or left stranded on the lakebed. A momentous effort by many rebuilt the lake in record time. The lake has refilled. Thanks to local businesses and sports clubs, forage fish have been stocked to provide a food base for game fish such as walleye and smallmouth bass. Fish populations are exploding and walleye are doing exceptionally well. Along with the lake and the fish, Lake Delton area businesses are back.

Phosphorus rules tackle a long-standing problem

Wisconsin is respected nationally for its efforts to reduce pollution. The state took another major step in that direction this year when the Natural Resources Board and then the legislature approved new rules to reduce phosphorus and other nutrients in state waters. The end result should be cleaner water, improved public health, and healthier fisheries and wildlife.

DNR File Photo

Vigilance to identify and control invasive species

Surveys at Wisconsin boat landings in summer 2010 show that 96 percent of people say they are following a new law to prevent the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil and other aquatic invasives. We've set up a comprehensive program to identify and then curb new invasive species *before* they can get a foothold in Wisconsin. Local groups across the state have taken advantage of a tripling of grant funding opportunities to set up local programs to control invasives and stop their spread by many innovative means. Web users can find statewide data by county on boat inspection efforts, boater compliance and special projects to prevent or control invasive species.

Contaminated site cleanup

Thanks to the federal Recovery and Reinvestment Act, major industrial corridors in Milwaukee, Marinette, Mauston and many smaller contaminated sites across the state are on their way to becoming productive business sites. Putting these properties back into productive use returns them to the tax base, brings jobs to populated areas, and helps conserve land for recreation and green space.

Web redesign

Our customers told us our website needed improving, so we are working to better meet your needs. For starters, we have improved our search engine to help people find the information they need. We have been removing outdated information and are providing features like real-time news updates and links allowing you to easily subscribe to specific information.

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