



CHAPTER 8. WHO CAN HELP FACILITATE MY RESTORATION WORK?

Since wetlands are widely deemed valuable, many federal, state, and private programs exist to assist landowners in protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetlands and associated uplands. Experienced wetland specialists are available throughout the state to assist you. Evaluate each program carefully to determine which, if any, suits the goals of your site. These programs offer landowners technical assistance and advice, help with the regulatory process, and can sometimes provide funding. Appendix B lists the major federal and state agency contacts in Wisconsin.

Federal Programs



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If you want to know how your project will look when it's complete, visit a few wetlands restored under the state or federal program you're interested in.

At no time in history have the incentives for wetland restoration been so attractive. As a result of the 2002 Farm Bill passed by Congress, considerable sums of money are now available to landowners as payment for enrolling in various wetland restoration programs. We provide descriptions of the major Farm Bill programs, however, keep in mind that there are other programs that include wetlands as a component of more comprehensive farm conservation programs that are not described in this handbook. We encourage you to contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices in your county for current and more detailed information about wetland and wildlife conservation incentive programs, as **these programs change often!**



Most applicable federal programs help fund wetland restoration activities that restore hydrology using methods such as ditch plugs, drain tile breaks, scrapes, and berms. Generally, the programs rely on an existing seed bank or colonization of plants from neighboring wetlands and do not feature seeding or planting of wetland vegetation. Some programs, however, do include warm-season (native prairie) plantings in upland buffer zones.

Although the financial incentives under federal conservation programs have never been better, it should be noted that your property taxes may rise as a result of enrolling in one of these federal programs, especially WRP and possibly other programs, due to Wisconsin's agricultural "use value" taxation system. We encourage you to ask the appropriate agency staff about this before you enroll your property in any program.

Conservation Reserve Program



The **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)** is one of the primary and popular conservation programs authorized under the Federal Farm Bill. CRP provides incentives for farmers to take highly erodible cropland, cropped wetlands, or land contributing to a serious water quality problem out of crop production for periods of 10 to 15 years. The CRP program was re-authorized through 2007 in the 2002 Farm Bill.

Local officers of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) administer the CRP program in Wisconsin. To enroll in the program, your project site must meet various requirements. Key criteria include:

- A commodity crop has been grown on the site in at least 4 of the 6 year period, 1996-2001. If hay was planted on the site during this period, it is considered a commodity crop and is likely eligible for CRP.
- You have owned the land for the last 12 months.

Applications are accepted on a continuous basis. The program provides landowners with technical assistance in designing, obtaining permits for, and constructing a restored wetland. In addition, landowners receive an annual rental payment while the land is in the reserve program, though the landowner is required to share up to 50 percent of the costs of restoration. Other incentives are permitted.

Congress created a new program under CRP called the **Farmable Wetland Pilot Program (FWP)** that is now available in Wisconsin. This cost-share program, created in 2001, was authorized for all states following passage of the 2002 Farm Bill. This program targets small farmed wetland acreage (5-10 acres) with a cropping history of 3 out of the past 10 years. A buffer, limited to three times the wetland acreage enrolled or 150 feet wide (whichever is greater) is allowable under FWP. Contact your USDA Service Center for more information on this program.

The **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)** is a state-sponsored special provision of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CREP is a partnership of the Farm Services Agency (FSA), Natural



"The wetland restoration project was land that I was farming, but it was a wet area and hard to plant and harvest some years. I just decided that given the opportunity and cost-sharing from the [Farm Service Administration] I would revert it back for wildlife. There are ducks and killdeer wandering around all over. Next year I hope to place 100 acres into the Wetland Reserve Program."

—Steve Querin-Schultz,
Dane County farmer who
restored 3.5 acres of wetland.

Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), and local land conservation departments (LCD). Landowners receive incentive and cost share payments for installing specific long-term conservation practices. Wetland restoration is one of the targeted practices eligible under CREP. Restorable sites must be located within the designated Statewide CREP Priority Areas. Eligible sites are manipulated wetlands where all man-made alterations can be reversed. The wetland to be restored must be a cropped wetland and must be hydrologically connected to a permanent water body, stream, or located in a field which will be restored to grassland in the special “Grassland Priority Areas”. A “filter strip” buffer is required along waterways under CREP. The maximum acreage allowed for enrollment in CREP is 40 acres, which includes the restored wetland and adjacent buffer. Fifteen-year contracts or permanent easements are available, with greater financial incentives being offered for permanent easements. Contact your local USDA Service Center for further information on this program.

*Landowner, Sandy Quayle,
with drain tile probe.*



Art Kitchen



“We are more than satisfied with our wetland restoration. We worked out the finances and went ahead. Now it’s Nature’s turn and we’re going along with that. There has been such a great increase in wildlife; amphibians, toads, and snakes are everywhere.”

—Sandy Quayle and Joyce Brehm,
Dane County landowners who
restored 100 acres.

Wetland Reserve Program NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

The **Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)**, a voluntary program offering landowners a chance to receive payments for restoring wetlands, is administered by the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Participation occurs at three levels, but all require:

- that the parcel must be restorable, and
- that the wetland has been altered by ditches, drain tiles, or some other change in hydrology.

Most WRP projects are larger than 40 acres in size. If accepted into the program, NRCS staff will provide technical assistance to design and construct the restoration on your property. The permitting process is simpler for these types of sponsored restorations. The levels of involvement vary in the number of years enrolled, the amount of cost sharing or cash payments involved, and the restrictions on your property. Please contact your local NRCS staff for the most current information on this program (see Appendix B for contact information).

10-Year WRP Agreement

This is a very competitive program and funded projects tend to be small sites (less than 10 acres). The NRCS will pay at least 75 percent of project costs, with the landowner responsible for up to 25 percent. On some projects, other federal agencies or the Wisconsin DNR may help fund your share of the costs.

Beyond cost-sharing, you would receive no additional financial incentives and would be obligated to maintain the wetland restoration for the term of the contract. Backing out early likely would require reimbursement of construction costs to the NRCS.



30-Year WRP Easement

If you sign up for the 30-year WRP, you receive the same cost-sharing and technical assistance as the 10-year program, plus a lump sum payment immediately, or in installments, for 75 percent of the lesser amount of the appraised agricultural value of the land. The wetland must remain undisturbed for the duration of the 30 years.

Permanent WRP Easement

Enrolling your land in a permanent easement increases your financial incentives. The NRCS will pay for 100 percent of the restoration, and you would receive a lump sum payment of 100 percent of the appraised agricultural value of the land. In exchange, the deed for the property reflects a permanent conservation easement for the restored wetland restricting how you or future landowners can use the restored land. Even with the easement in place, you still own the land.



Partners for Wildlife Program

In addition to the federal WRP cost sharing programs, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) sponsors the **Partners for Wildlife program (PFW)** to assist private landowners with wetland and associated upland habitat restoration. Although this program is more flexible than the various WRPs, there are no payments for the use of the land. The only eligibility requirement is that the site be considered restorable and that the landowner has written consent from neighbors in case water backs up on adjacent land. The program requires a minimum commitment of 10 years to the restoration. However, you can enroll longer to receive additional funding. Since its inception, the PFW program in Wisconsin has restored 4,500 sites on 11,770 acres. Wisconsin's PFW program is the third largest in the nation behind North Dakota and Minnesota.

USFWS will pay up to 100 percent of restoration costs, depending on the quality of the site and the nature of work. A majority of the funding usually goes toward the restoration of wetland hydrology for projects such as ditch plugs or drain tile breaks. If a landowner is interested in additional activities, such as removal of sediment, the PFW program may provide some cost sharing.

In addition, the PFW has landowner assistance available for upland buffer areas associated with wetlands or with projects protecting a threatened or endangered species. As of 2001, the PFW program had restored native prairie grasses and forbs to 905 sites in Wisconsin on 10,245 acres. In addition, the PFW program funds restoration of the endangered Karner blue butterfly habitat since the butterfly larvae feed on lupine, a prairie legume.



Each county has an **NRCS OFFICE**; consult your telephone directory for the appropriate location and phone number, or see Appendix B.

Contact the **STATE WRP COORDINATOR** for any further questions:

Wetland Reserve Program Coordinator

Natural Resources Conservation Service

**6515 Watts Road
Madison, WI 53719**

(608) 276-8732



"It's pretty neat to see the wildlife. The ducks and geese stop in spring. The United States Fish and Wildlife staff did everything for me and took care of all the hassles. They made it a trouble-free restoration from the landowner point of view."

— Tim Mielcarek,
Dane County landowner who
restored 25 acres of wetland.



CONTACT:
United States Fish and Wildlife Service Wisconsin Private Lands Office
**4511 Helgesen Drive
Madison, WI 53718
(608) 221-1206**

State Programs



CONTACT:

Tim Grunewald
Wetland Habitat Specialist
Wisconsin DNR

101 S. Webster St.
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

(608) 264-6137
(606) 267-3579 (fax)

Tim.Grunewald@dnr.state.wi.us



"I thought I had a pretty good natural area, but I was surprised by how much it could be improved. My land had been drained in the 30s so we filled the ditches and took down dikes. I'm eagerly awaiting spring to see what will happen."

—Peg Whiteside,
Columbia County landowner
who restored 70 acres
on the Baraboo River.



Photos: Jeff Nantia

Above, Peg Whiteside's Columbia County ditch being prepared for fill.

Right, the ditch after being filled.



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Wisconsin DNR) has funding available for wetland restoration in priority areas of the state, which are identified in the *Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan*. In general, these areas are in the southeast and northwest quarters of the state where restored wetlands are known to be the most productive for waterfowl.

Funding for wetland restoration efforts on private lands in these areas is generated by the sale of waterfowl hunting licenses and from the solicitation of federal funds from various grant sources. In portions of the state where funding may not be available, Wisconsin DNR wildlife biologists can, at a minimum, assist landowners with technical advice about how to best design a wetland restoration to maximize wildlife benefits.

Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP)

This state program targets current and future forest landowners. Funds go to protect and enhance forest, prairie, wetland, and water bodies and may reimburse up to 65 percent of the cost to qualified landowners.

Applicants must demonstrate an interest in good stewardship of their natural resources *and* own at least 10 (but no more than 500) contiguous acres of non-industrial private forest in Wisconsin. The program defines a forest as an area being restored, or already planted with trees. Applicants should also have, or be in the process of applying for, a forest stewardship plan. A variety of projects or practices are funded by WFLGP, including:

- forest stewardship plan development,
- tree planting,
- forest improvement,
- soil and water protection or improvement,
- wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement,
- stream and stream bank protection,
- wildlife habitat creation or improvement, and
- the protection of rare natural communities and species.

Applications can be picked up at your county forester's office, from a private forestry consultant, or from the Wisconsin DNR Service Center in your area (see Appendix B).



Non-Governmental Assistance

A number of private non-profit organizations dedicated to wetland restoration can provide additional assistance. Services available range from direct assistance and funding, to raising funds matched by federal and state programs.

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association

Since 1983, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to waterfowl and wetland resources, has helped individuals and public agencies with wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration. The organization provides technical assistance and funding through cooperatives and other partnerships.

Project applications are available from the organization for anyone interested in a collaborative project. The organization requires upland components in accepted wetland restoration projects. A successful wetland restoration by Wisconsin Waterfowl Association is highlighted in Case Study #2 in Chapter 13.

Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

This national non-profit conservation organization addresses the needs of North American waterfowl by protecting, restoring, enhancing, and managing wetlands and associated uplands. Through its "Private Lands" program, Ducks Unlimited provides free technical assistance for managing land as wildlife habitat. Cost-sharing assistance, engineering services, and on-site surveys may be available for wetland restoration and grassland establishment in certain focus areas. Ducks Unlimited may also provide pipe or water control structures for suitable wetland restoration or enhancement projects. The organization gives priority to projects within targeted regions of the state.

A portion of all funds raised by Ducks Unlimited are retained for wetland habitat projects in the state. The funds are administered through the MARSH program. This program is a national initiative for the organization, and in this state is operated cooperatively with the Wisconsin DNR. The program provides matching funds to public or private conservation groups for projects that significantly benefit waterfowl and lead to the permanent protection or restoration of important waterfowl habitat. The MARSH program often provides cost sharing for wetland restoration on private land and through programs administered by the Wisconsin DNR, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and local county land conservation departments.



CONTACT:

Wisconsin Waterfowl Association

614 W. Capitol Drive
Hartland, WI 53029

(262) 369-6309
or (800) 524-8460

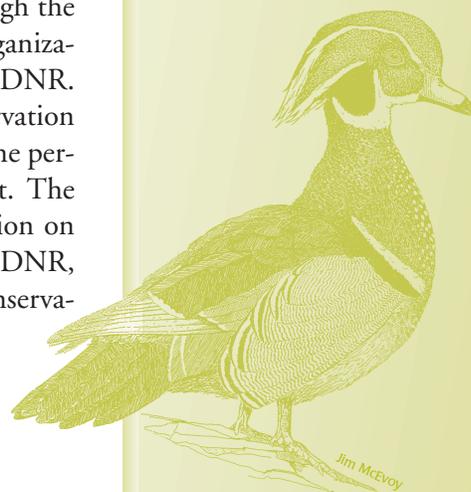
(262) 369-7813 (fax)
www.wisducks.org

CONTACT:

Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
GLARO

331 Metty Drive, Suite 4
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

(734) 623-2000
www.ducks.org



CONTACT:

Rick Stel
Wildlife Project Coordinator
Wings Over Wisconsin, Inc.

8 South Main St.
P.O. Box 202
Mayville, WI 53050
(920) 387-5298

CONTACT:

Dr. John Wilke
7329 Territorial Rd.
Evansville, WI 53536
(608) 882-4146

**CONTACT:**

Jeff Gaska
Regional Biologist
Pheasants Forever
W9947 Ghost Hill Rd.
Beaver Dam, WI 53916
(920) 927-3579



**“I know what cattails are
but I wouldn’t know a sedge
if I tripped over it. And I
have a life that doesn’t
include understanding all
the regulations. Find some-
one who can explain wet-
land restoration to you and
who really knows what
they are doing.”**

—Peg Whiteside,
Columbia County landowner
who restored 70 acres along the
Baraboo River with Wisconsin
Waterfowl Association assistance.

Wings Over Wisconsin, Inc.

This organization targets natural resource restoration and preservation, as well as, environmental education for communities. Funds raised go to local chapters that focus on particular habitat areas when providing landowners technical assistance and cost sharing for restoration projects. The organization initially worked to increase upland habitat for pheasants, but now actively promotes grassland, woodland, and wetland restorations.

Waterfowl USA

This national organization concerned with the dwindling waterfowl populations in America has a southern Wisconsin chapter that can provide technical assistance and wood duck houses to wetland projects in Dane, Jefferson, and Rock counties.

Pheasants Forever

Pheasants Forever coordinates a cost-share program to support a variety of habitat enhancement projects for ring-necked pheasants and other game and non-game species in counties with Pheasants Forever chapters. The organization provides cost-share funds for wetland restoration projects, prairie plantings, and seed drills. They review projects to develop long-term nesting, winter roosting, feeding, and brood-rearing habitats for pheasants and other species on private lands.

Some counties are more active than others and local chapters determine which activities to fund. For projects funded by Pheasants Forever, you must plan to maintain wetland restorations for at least 10 years. Food plots and nesting cover cannot be mowed or harvested before August 1 of each year and woody cover must remain for a minimum of 10 years.

Private Consultants

There may be situations where you need more assistance than what is available from state and federal programs or private organizations. Many private wetland consultants exist in Wisconsin and provide services for a fee.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers keeps updated lists of wetland consultants (see Appendix B). The Wisconsin DNR and WWA’s *Wetland Resource Directory* maintain a list of consultants. The listings are not endorsements of the consultants. In addition, your local phone directory generally lists consultants under “Ecological and Environmental Firms.” You may also wish to contact other individuals or associations with wetland restoration experience and ask their advice.

As with any profession, consultants fall within a range of skills and expertise. Depending on your needs, you may want to select a consultant who can help you identify and assess your wetland and serve as your agent in the permitting process. A wetland consultant experienced in wetland restoration can provide site planning, help avoid and minimize adverse wetland impacts, and assist with planting and site management, activities that may be outside the range of what some of the governmental programs can offer.



Evaluate the consultant's qualifications, experience, and quality of service. Ask for three to five references from former wetland clients and ask these contacts about the quality of service they received, including their professionalism, working relationship with the consultant, the client and regulatory agencies, and their fees and timeliness.

Native Plant Nurseries

Numerous private native plant nurseries operate around the state. The quality of advice and plant stock may vary so check references and ask questions to ensure they provide viable seed of local stock and to evaluate the price and availability of seed. If you plan a spring planting, you could request that the seed be cold stratified. The nursery may also mix the seed with vermiculite or other similar material for hand seeding. The Wisconsin DNR and WWA's *Wetland Resource Directory* updates a list of Wisconsin native plant nurseries that carry wetland species annually (see side box). The listings are not endorsements of the nurseries.

Nature Centers

Local nature centers may offer diverse and useful resources for your restoration project. You may find there:

- ✓ plant and animal identification books,
- ✓ naturalists who can assist with species identification or management,
- ✓ plans for duck and bluebird nest boxes or the boxes themselves,
- ✓ seed and live plant materials,
- ✓ a restored wetland or prairie on site, and
- ✓ staff experienced in restoration. 🐻



The Department of Natural Resources maintains **A CURRENT LIST OF NATIVE PLANT NURSERIES** around the state. You may contact the DNR for a copy.

Native Plant Conservation Program Manager
Bureau of Endangered Resources
P.O. Box 7921
101 S. Webster Street
Madison, WI 53707
(608) 267-5066

www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/invasive/info/nurseries.htm

The WWA "**WETLAND RESOURCE DIRECTORY**" available on the WWA web site lists many native plant nurseries and private consultants in Wisconsin and the region.

USEFUL LITERATURE AND WEB SITES

Appendix A in this handbook contains a bibliography of general wetland references, plant and animal guides, and commonly used web sites. Many books can be located through the public or university library systems. Ever-increasing resources are available through the Internet; the web sites we provide may also provide links to other useful sites.