

*“Water defines life in Wisconsin. Wisconsin’s landscape, history, cultures, communities, ecosystems and economy are fundamentally shaped by its waters – the Great lakes and the Mississippi River, 15,000 inland lakes, 32,000 miles of perennial rivers, 5.3 million acres of wetlands and 1.2 quadrillion gallons of groundwater... These waters confer upon us a special stewardship responsibility.”*

from *Waters of Wisconsin*, a special report by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, 2003

## THE WISCONSIN APPROACH TO WATER QUALITY EDUCATION:

### Integrating Water Resources, Lands and Communities

Wisconsin’s approach to meeting the challenges and opportunities in water quality protection is grounded in the strong foundation of the Land Grant University. That foundation mandates that the University of Wisconsin system integrate its knowledge and share its science-based expertise to meet the needs of communities statewide. Such expertise involves experts on 26 campuses, a statewide network of county-based Extension educators in all 72 Wisconsin counties, and an additional network of 15 watershed-based natural resources educators. Wisconsin’s educational approach is a combination of:

- ☞ Serving citizens directly;
- ☞ Engaging and empowering local leaders;
- ☞ Supporting organizational development;
- ☞ Promoting effective group processes and community decision making;
- ☞ Providing access to science-based information;
- ☞ Developing targeted educational materials.

## EFFECTIVELY ADDRESSING AUDIENCE NEEDS

### ANIMAL WASTE MANAGEMENT Discovery Farms Program

[www.discoveryfarms.org](http://www.discoveryfarms.org)

Discovery Farms make up a network of real working Wisconsin farms in different geographic areas facing different environmental challenges.

☞ A primary program objective is to establish baseline data that can be used to determine environmental impacts of various farm management practices.

☞ Landowners work with University of Wisconsin researchers at campuses in Madison, Platteville and Stevens Point to evaluate their nutrient management strategies and practices and protect farm profitability.



### NUTRIENT & PEST MANAGEMENT Farm Planning

[clean-water.uwex.edu/malweg](http://clean-water.uwex.edu/malweg)

Local Extension Educators and Conservation District staff work directly with producers to promote nutrient management planning and farm conservation practices. Program evaluations show that:

- ☞ More than 85% of participating producers complete a nutrient management plan and also have their soil conservation plans reviewed to accepted specifications.
- ☞ The majority of the participants have their manure spreaders calibrated.
- ☞ More than half of the Nutrient Management Plan writers were the farmers themselves.



### DRINKING WATER & HUMAN HEALTH Water Action Volunteers

[clean-water.uwex.edu/wav](http://clean-water.uwex.edu/wav)

Water Action Volunteers (WAV) is a statewide program coordinated through a partnership between the Wisconsin DNR and the UW-Extension. Citizens, civic groups, 4-H clubs, students and other volunteer groups are participating in WAV. The program offers support for citizen stream monitoring, storm drain stenciling, river cleanups and other protection projects. Key efforts focus on:

- ☞ Stream monitoring training that reaches more than 1,500 individuals;
- ☞ Coordination and expansion of a volunteer monitoring network within the Great Lakes Region that partners with five other states to study usability of E. coli testing by volunteers;
- ☞ Database development to links local sites and coordinate the sharing of results among different volunteer projects.



### WATERSHED MANAGEMENT Wisconsin’s Basin Education Initiative

[basineducation.uwex.edu](http://basineducation.uwex.edu)

The Basin Education program represents an ongoing partnership among University of Wisconsin Extension, the Wisconsin DNR and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. It provides a statewide network of 15 watershed-based natural resources educators. Basin Educators commonly address agricultural and urban stormwater management; streams, lakes and shorelands; wetlands; coastal resource management; and groundwater. Basin Educators coordinate efforts on many lake and shoreland issues with Wisconsin’s Lakes Partnership.



### ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION Habitat Restoration & Freshwater Estuaries

[www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality/FocusAreas/states/wisconsin.htm#awm](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/regionalwaterquality/FocusAreas/states/wisconsin.htm#awm)

Working directly with Wisconsin’s Coastal Zone Management Program, UW-Extension is addressing natural area restoration and preservation. Special attention is given to the estuaries of Wisconsin’s Great Lakes coasts. Programs are often conducted in partnership with tribes, NGOs, and federal and state agencies. Programs focus on:

- ☞ Shorelines and riparian buffer zones;
- ☞ Wetland restoration;
- ☞ Wild rice protection;
- ☞ Community development issues associated with local dams and impoundments.



## WISCONSIN’S PROGRAMMING LEADERSHIP

### Incorporating the Human Dimension of Natural Resources Management

[clean-water.uwex.edu/loape](http://clean-water.uwex.edu/loape)

Natural resources management begins and ends with a sound understanding of the resource manager or landowner. An educational program unit within Cooperative Extension’s Environmental Resources Center (ERC) helps local water quality programs address audience needs through targeted educational strategies and sound evaluation techniques.

Staff expertise is used in Wisconsin, and regionally within the Great Lakes States in partnership with US EPA Region 5 on the Social Indicators project.

### Focusing Locally - The Multi-Agency Land and Water Education Grant Program (MALWEG)

[clean-water.uwex.edu/malweg](http://clean-water.uwex.edu/malweg)

Since 1997 University of Wisconsin Extension has supported a special approach to integrating educational programming and local conservation efforts. This program provides special assistance to county-based Cooperative Extension educators, staff from the USDA (NRCS, FSA), the Wisconsin DNR, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

The MALWEG Program has allocated over \$1 million to more than 100 local projects. These funds make possible a variety of local outreach efforts that focus on the Transfer of Conservation Technology.

### Future Actors - Educating Young People About Water

[www.uwex.edu/erc/ey paw](http://www.uwex.edu/erc/ey paw)

Educating Young People About Water (EYPAW) provides assistance for developing a community-based, youth water education program. A water curriculum database targets youth and links educators to key community members. EYPAW provides ideas, checklists, references, partner lists, and community action education materials.

*The National Water Quality Program is supported by the 406 Integrated CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service) Competitive Grants Program, and has a Regional Coordination component that seeks to ensure the integration of water quality efforts within the jurisdiction of each of the ten regions established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Regional Coordination Programs make research, education, and Extension resources of the university system more accessible to federal, state and local water quality improvement efforts. The Conservation Technology Transfer program, a cooperative effort of the University of Wisconsin and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), was created to help deliver research-based best management practices and expertise into the hands of producers at a local level.*



Graphic design by Amy B. Hurley, Environmental Resources Center UW-Extension