



Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Watershed Restoration Partnership - Public Lands Ecologist Program



Jason Fleener – WDNR

Bruce Ross – WWA

10 Dec 2024

PLE Program: Topics

- Service needs
- WWA, services, business model
- Accomplishments
- Current work plan
- Partnership efficiencies
- Ongoing future needs for service
- Process for renewing agreement
- Questions?



Service Needs

- Post-alignment – more land, more restoration opportunity
- Identify potentially restorable wetlands
- Lead wetland restoration processes
- Contracting and contract management
- Secure funding for restoration
- Expand opportunities across property boundaries
- Procure and harvest wild rice





Agreement: Services

Wetland Restoration and Wild Rice Conservation Services Contract for Wisconsin DNR Managed Lands

THIS CONTRACT is entered into by and between the State of Wisconsin, Department of Natural Resources (the Department) and Wisconsin Waterfowl Association (the Contractor) for the purpose of providing support on wetland restoration and wild rice management projects on state managed lands and waters in Wisconsin.

The State of Wisconsin has lost approximately 50% of wetlands that were present prior to European settlement due to drainage, agriculture, development and incompatible land use practices. The restoration of hydrology in these wetlands will improve and increase habitats for waterfowl and other species of wildlife, improve retention of precipitation to prevent flooding in communities, filter groundwater, reduce runoff and erosion, and improve hunting and other recreational experiences.

Natural wild rice production in northern Wisconsin is on a long-term trend of decline, which is further threatened by the impacts of climate change. The Department cooperates with many partners to restore wild rice in this region. Additional support is needed to help identify and prioritize feasible wild rice restoration waters and to aid in coordination of seed procurement, harvest, delivery and seeding to restorable waters.

WDNR is limited in experience and capacity within its work force to adequately deliver these services to the fullest across the state. Recognizing these shortfalls, this contract is created to increase capacities for wetland and wild rice restoration opportunity assessments, survey, design, and other aspects of project delivery.

FOR AND IN CONSIDERATION of the terms and conditions contained in this contract, the above-named parties agree:

1. **PERIOD OF AGREEMENT:** This contract shall commence upon its signing by both parties and continue until December 31, 2024, during which period all performance as described in this contract shall be fully completed to the satisfaction of the Department. The contract may be amended if agreed upon in writing by both parties by December 31, 2024. The amendment may include additional funds, minor scope revisions, and/or time extension (not beyond December 31, 2025).
2. **CANCELLATION.** The Department reserves the right to cancel this contract in whole or in part, without penalty, due to nonappropriation of funds or for failure of the Contractor to comply with terms, conditions, or specifications of this contract.
3. **ENTIRE CONTRACT; AMENDMENTS.** This contract, together with the specifications in the bid request (if any) and referenced parts and attachments, shall constitute the entire agreement and previous communications or agreements pertaining to the subject matter of this contract are hereby superseded. Any contractual revisions including cost adjustments and time extensions may be made only by a written amendment to this contract, signed by both parties prior to the ending date of this contract.
4. **ASSIGNMENT.** Neither this contract nor any right or duty in whole or in part by the Contractor under this contract may be assigned, delegated or subcontracted without the written consent of the Department. If upon the written consent of the Department this contract or any right or duty in whole or in part is assigned, the Assignee(s) shall expressly agree to assume and perform all relevant obligations expressed under the terms of this contract and be bound by the terms and conditions of this contract. Assignment in whole or in part of this contract does not absolve the Contractor of any liability or obligation expressed and agreed to hereunder.

- **Two-year agreement, extendable to three, for...**
 - **Desktop analyses, 80% within hi-pri conservation opportunity watersheds**
 - **Field surveys**
 - **Propose restorations & provide site designs/plans**
 - **Prepare / process permits**
 - **Develop project construction agreements**
 - **Wild rice: procure, harvest, deliver, seed in ceded territories**
 - **Operational support for PLEs**
- **Provide one FTE of restoration ecologist**
- **Cost: \$57,000 per year**
 - **Intended to be 75% of program cost**



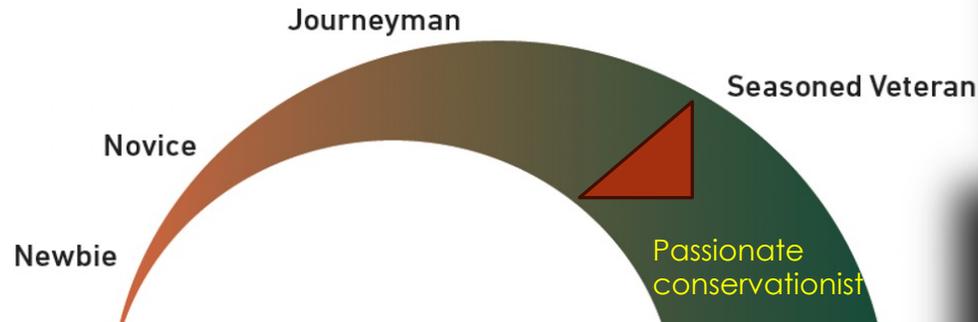
WWA: The Waterfowler's Voice

2025 policy priorities

- Wildlife Acct structural deficit
- Stewardship
- Advancing a SHC season



WWA: "The Waterfowlers Arc"



December 2024 Newsletter

2024: *Pedal to the Metal - Growing Impact*

Under the Chinese zodiac, 2024 was the year of the dragon. It was a "fire-breath" year for your WWA.

[Read on](#)

Navarino Project: Three and a Half Months On

Public Lands Ecologist Mark Pfost visited the Navarino project site three and a half months post construction - and all signs point to a successful restoration.

[Read on](#)



WWA: 40th anniversary recognitions

- Federation's Conservation org of year - 2024
- Delta's 2024 Partner in Conservation
- North American Waterfowl Management Plan Committee (USFWS) – 2024 Blue-winged Teal Award



WWA restoration business model



- WWA Project Director manages all habitat programs
- All ecologists do all habitat missions
 - Public lands
 - DNR, USFWS (MVSWA), other
 - Private lands
 - WWA restorations
 - NRCS (easement monitoring and plan development)
- Weekly video round-ups = > knowledge sharing
- Ecologist funding from multiple sources
 - DNR(P-R), EXPO, Foundations, USFWS (IRA), Grants, NRCS



DNR Benefits of collaboration

- ▶ Low WWA overheads
- ▶ Limited WWA bureaucracy
- ▶ WWA contracting efficiency
- ▶ Strong communications capacity
- ▶ Private / public project synergies
 - ▶ Boundary lines
 - ▶ Wetland ag / development mitigation projects
- ▶ Access to other funding sources
- ▶ Match opportunities for grants



This area is ripe with ditches we could plug, but can we plug them without affecting adjacent private landowners?

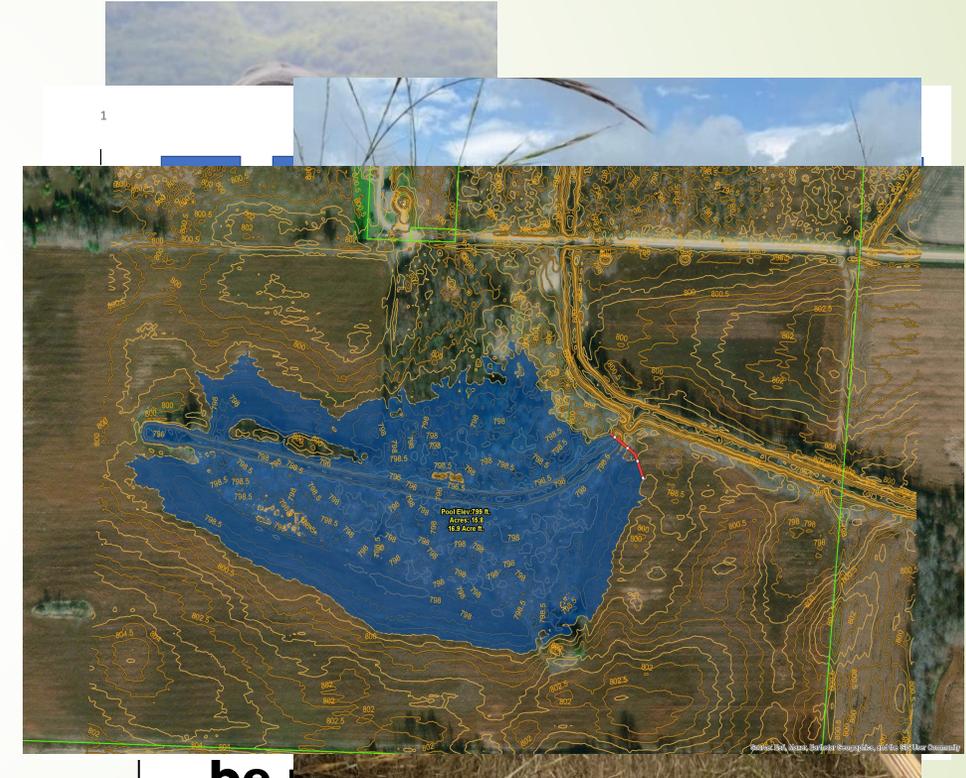
WWA Benefits of collaboration

- Landscape scale impact
- Membership draw.... publicly accessible lands
- Evolving WWA funding model
 - Fee for service
- Deepen DNR relationship
- Enhance credibility with partners
 - NRCS
 - USFWS
 - Others, including industry



Timeline

- **18 Jan 2023** - Contract signed
- **Feb-Mar 2023**
 - 1.5 FTE - Ecologists hired
- **April 2023**
 - Processes Developed
 - Documentation created
- **Apr-Jul 2023**
 - Reviewed DNR worklist
- **Jun 2023-today**
 - Project “mining”, grant seeking
- **Sep 2023 and 2024**
 - Rice restoration
- **Summer 2024**
 - First project completed

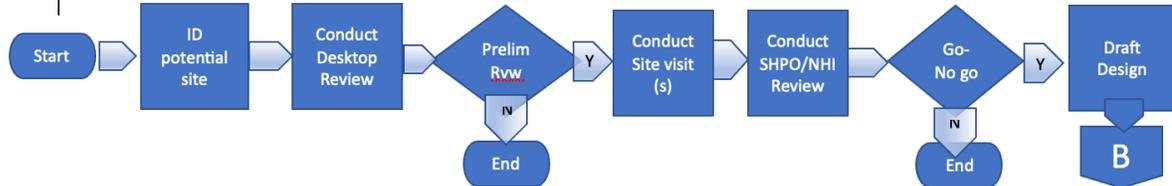


be named
later (2025)

PLE Process



Public Lands Restoration Flow Chart



Step name	Identify potential restoration site, Establish documentation	Conduct Desktop Review	Preliminary review	Conduct Site Visit(s)	SHPO / NHI review	Secondary Review Decision	Draft Design
Who	PLE	PLE	PL Team	PLE	DNR Biologist	PL Team (+DNR?)	PLE
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a site for review, prioritizing DNR rating, Potential scale of project, eastern half of Wisconsin, Lake Michigan Drainage Basin Name site per naming protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review digital online material to provide preliminary review information. Review DNR existing site plans Discuss property with DNR property manager. Review public NHI Identify and describe potential restorations on site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLE presents results of Desktop review to PLE team, using maps and PPW, including a proposed prelim design for Team consideration. Team assesses site and proposed prelim design, offers perspective and determines whether to proceed to field survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walks site to collect on-the-ground info on restoration potential, incl vegetation, topography, rough elevations, hydrological features. Take pictures to document before condition Update prelim design w/ conclusions from field survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research DNR databases for any native or natural heritage that could influence moving forward. Provide results of research to PLE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present secondary design to PLE Team and DNR property manager / POC. Decide whether to continue project at this site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update design Compare design to expected plan design criteria (to be developed) Submit refined design to DNR for approval.
Document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create "Project Progress worksheet" (PPW) for this site. Create folder for site documentation. Update Work Plan spreadsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update "Project Progress Worksheet" (PPW) with initial information, include a proposed prelim design for Team consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update "Project Progress Worksheet" with team assessment and decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place photos in folder (2on PPW?) Update PPW with results of field survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of research on PPW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update PPW with conclusion of secondary review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated design
Step completed when....	Potential project site has required administrative material in named folder on Habitat shared drive	Sufficient information to conduct preliminary review with team & PPW updated	PLE Team agrees project supports a field visit & PPW updated.	Sufficient field data collected to complete secondary design & PPW updated.	No insurmountable obstacles identified from research	Secondary review decision reached, & PPW updated	Refined Design is completed and documented in folder/PPW

Project Progress Worksheet WWA Public Lands Restoration: White River Fishery Area

Project Site name: White River Fishery Area Date Started: 1/24
 County: Waushara Lat: 44.061314° N Long: 89.365013° W
 Est Acres: 15
 Property Manager / contact info
 Biologist:
 Jacob Fries
 Jacob.Fries@wisconsin.gov
 Fisheries:
 Thomas Meronek
 Thomas.Meronek@wisconsin.gov

DNR priority (1-6): 3 WWCCS Priority (1-9): 7

A. Desktop review Conducted by: Anna Rzchowski

<<Findings of desktop review, including maps, state management documents, etc. Open questions?>>
 The White River System Fishery Area contains some of the best trout streams in Wisconsin. The parcel in question is located along Lunch Creek, which feeds into the White River, then the Fox River, and finally Lake Michigan.

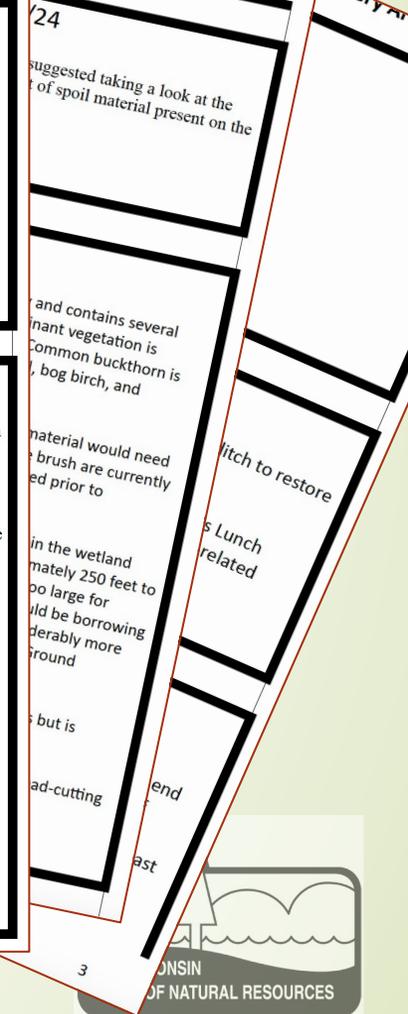
Lunch Creek is a cold water trout stream that flows into the Lower White River Mill pond. Lunch Creek has several springs and tributaries that maintain thermal stability and high oxygen content. In addition, the tributaries serve as important spawning and nursery areas for trout. The adjacent wetlands and uplands serve as important buffers to protect this high-quality water source.

Immediately to the east of State Road 21, a ditch appears to be draining water from an approximately 20-acre parcel. Plugging this ditch may have some benefit, though it will be important to confirm that the ditch is not currently being used as trout habitat.

<<Discussions with wildlife area biologist or manager>>
 The wildlife biologist is interested in a project here if the site shows promise. Fisheries is not concerned. There may be incompatibilities with forestry management, so the forester will need to be included on future conversations. Jason Fleener is also interested in pursuing a project here.

<<Public NHI Review>>
 Needs further review.

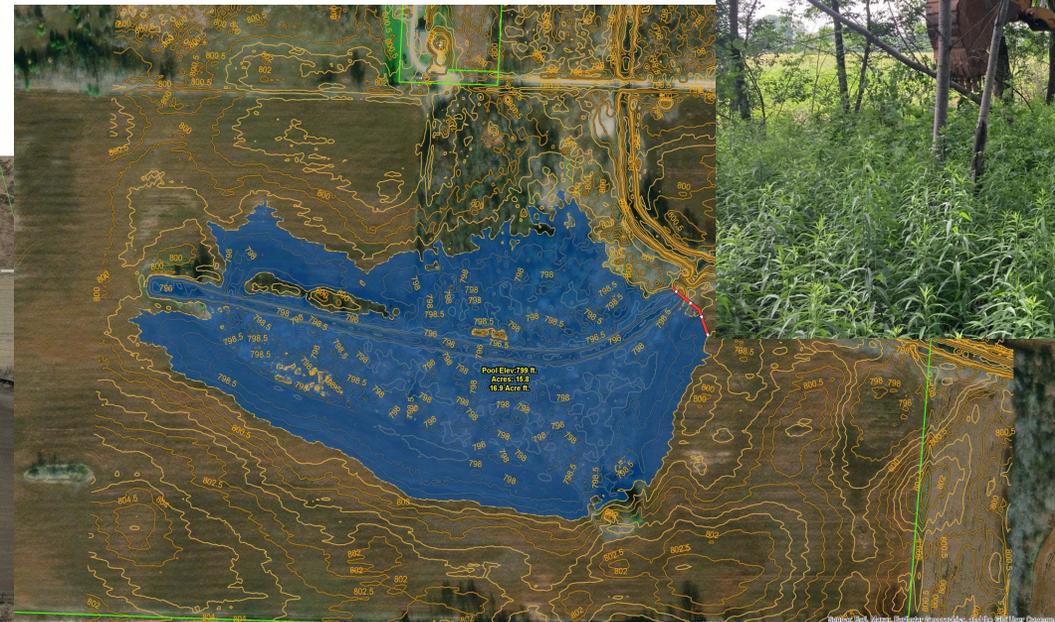
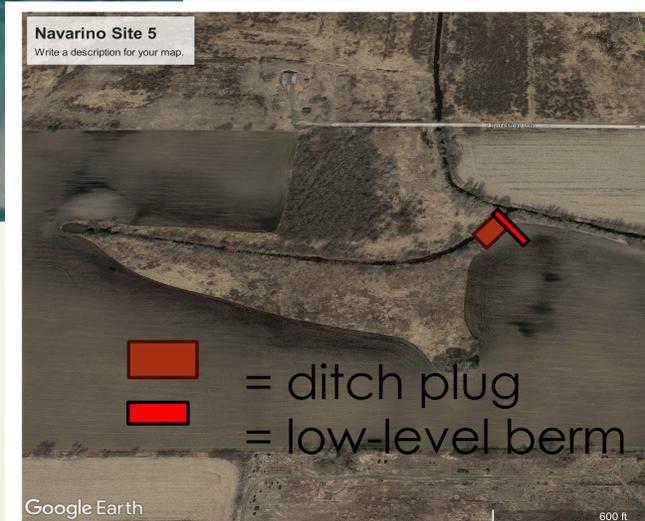
Recommend site visit? Yes



Accomplishments

First restoration summer 2024

- Navarino SWA
- 18 Acres, ~\$9500
- GP-1 funding (wetland mitigation)





Projects *In the Queue*...

17 Active project sites

➔ 3 in contracting

➔ ~2,130 acres *

➔ ~\$1,074,000

➔ 14 in other phases

➔ ~1,200 acres

* Conservative – could be as high as 18,000 acres

Property Name	Project Description	Stage	Wetland Acres
Navarino Wildlife Area Site 5	Ditch plug and associated scrape. Tree and brush removal completed in the work area.	6 - Completed	16
Peter Helland Wildlife Area	berms, scrapes and water control structure to manage water levels on the property and avoid impacts to roadways.	4 - Contracting	125
White River Fishery Area	1,000' ditch fill and associated scrape to restore hydrology to spring-fed wetland at headwaters of Lunch Creek.	4 - Contracting	15
Meadow Valley Wildlife Area	x	4 - Contracting	2,000
Brooklyn Wildlife Area	Ditch plugs and associated scrapes on two lateral ditches feeding into Story Creek. Culvert cleanout and crossing improvement.	3 - Permitting	40
Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Uni	Ditch plugs and associated scrapes on several lateral ditches south of Highway ZZ. Plug repair and construction on ditch that is currently re-routing flow from Scuppernong River into the straightened channel. Acres are a rough approximation. NAWCA pass through funds will be used to complete this project in-house by DNR. Projects plans will be provided to DNR by WWA.	3 - Permitting	45
Big Muskego Wildlife Area	Partial ditch fill and scrapes to partially restore hydrology on DOT mitigation site.	2 - Design	18
Goose Lake Wildlife Area	Ditch fill and plugs on two lateral ditches. Scrapes and remaining spoil used for fill and/or plugs.	2 - Design	50
Poygan Marsh Wildlife Area	x	2 - Design	75
Allen Creek Streambank Protection Area	Two ditch fills, berms, and associated scrapes to restore hydrology. Tile search and potential tile breaks.	2 - Design	42
Ertmer GHRA	haven't heard back since spring discussion	2 - Design	20+
Evansville Wildlife Area	Potential ditch fills and tile breaks.	1 - Survey	
Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Uni	Potential ditch plug. Acres are a rough approximation. NAWCA pass through funds will be used to complete this project in-house by DNR. Projects plans will be provided to DNR by WWA.	1 - Survey	8
Young Prairie State Natural Area	Tree and brush removal and ditch fill to restore high quality wet prairie and fen habitat. No associated scrapes.	1 - Survey	30
Dyers Marsh Wildlife Area	Land manager very interested, continue developing plan	1 - Survey	75
Jackson Marsh	Watershed-level approach. Potential hydrologic study to better understand hydrology and issues in the marsh. Potential short-term project NW of Division Rd. TBD	1 - Survey	800
White River Marsh site 5	Land manager wants to wait until after prescribed burn, but got go ahead to write permit app	1 - Survey	10
Deer Creek	Recently heard back, forester OK with more water, want to continue, maybe more surveying, more discussions	1 - Survey	20
			3,333

Accomplishments: Wild Rice

2023 – 1650# harvested / bought

2024 – 800# harvested / bought

12 volunteers engaged



 **Wisconsin Waterfowl Association**

JOIN US SUPPORT WVA Search Keyword

WHO IS WWA? SPONSORS HABITAT EDUCATION LEGISLATION/REGULATION SUPPORT WVA UPCOMING EVENTS

- Home
- News
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- I Want to Volunteer
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Calling All Ricers

By B.J. Grassmann, a citizen conservationist and Habitat Committee Chair

This article originally appeared in Wisconsin Waterfowl Association's July, 2024 Newsletter edition.

It's hard to believe we are almost at Independence Day!





PLE invoicing and Expenditures

		Day of Month															
Hours	Total hrs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Admin, Training	16.5												6				
PTO	4		4														
Non-site specific	16.5			1		8	6										
Project site <i>Peter Helland</i>	1.5																
<i>Poygan Marsh</i>	0																
<i>Brooklyn Wildlife Area</i>	0																
<i>Young Prairie SNA</i>	2		1	1													
<i>Sugar River WA</i>	0																
<i>Navarino</i>	0.5																
<i>Meadow Valley</i>	0																
<i>Mazomanie Dog Training</i>	0																
<i>Big Muskego - Loomis Rd</i>	0																
<i>Evansville Wildlife Area/Allen Creek</i>	0																
<i>Jackson Marsh</i>	0																
<i>Kettle Moraine Southern Unit</i>	0																

Wetland restoration services from contract paragraph 5	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l					
(Restoration services - Post)						\$ 1,102.50			x		x	x	x	x			

PLE Funding thru October 2024 (22 months)		
DNR =>	\$ 106,559	68%
WWA =>	\$ 49,351	32%

	\$ 347.50		
	\$ 50.00		
Insurance, other direct support costs	\$ -		
Direct Costs	\$ 4,273.79		
Indirect @10%	\$ 427.38		
Direct and Indirect	\$ 4,701.17		\$ 3,525.88 Total
Contributed by WWA (25%)	\$ 1,175.29		
Due from DNR (75%)	\$ 3,525.88		

PLE: A good use of funds?

- Every \$2 of DNR (P-R) program funds brings additional \$1 from WWA... for more than one FTE worth of function
- Program awarded \$1.3M in project funds
- Every \$1 of DNR(P-R) funding generates over \$9.60 additional funding.

But... Agreement instability risks...

- Biologist flight
- Stillborn projects
- Grantor disappointment
- Lost opportunities

“... without the agreement between WWA and DNR, the project would not have happened. We just didn't have the time or the expertise...”

Navarino SWA manager

1	PLE FUNDING		projected through June 2025		
2	Sources	2-1/2 year Program funding		PROJECT	EXPIRY
3		DNR	OTHER	WORK	
4	WDNR	\$142,500			Jun-25
5	WWA: EXPO		\$16,250		n/a
6	WWA: Dutton Fdn		\$7,000		Jun-25
7	WWA: NRF / Bird Fund		\$3,000		Jun-25
8	WWA: FFLM		\$30,000		Jun-26
9	Duck Stamp			\$150,000	Dec-26
10	USFWS/IRA		\$15,000	\$979,000	Dec-27
11	GP-1			\$8,000	n/a
12	GLRI			\$168,000	Sep-27
13	TOTAL	\$142,500	\$71,250	\$1,305,000	
14		67%	33%		



DNR Efficiencies Gained from Partnership

- Less WM staff time needed – Restorations and wild rice
- WWA contributions toward PLE services
- WWA contributions toward construction costs
- Reasonable/cost effective project plans
- Partnership/relationship building with other parties
- Promotion of work with membership, public and policy makers
- DNR staff training/learning



Ongoing and Future Needs

- Outstanding and ongoing projects/grants on the current work plan
- Striving toward Wisconsin and Joint Venture Habitat Goals
- Mitigating flooding in communities
- Upcoming Duck Stamp Applications
- Priority Habitat Areas



Agreement Renewal Process

- Renewal option exercised for CY2025
- Budget approval still needed for July – December 2025
- WLT work plan budget approval for 2026 and beyond for next agreement
- DOA sole source approval process needed for a new agreement, CY2026 - ?
- WWA staffing and work planning





Questions?



Jason Fleener – WDNR

Bruce Ross – WWA

10 Dec 2024