



# WISCONSIN WATERFOWL ASSOCIATION

RESTORATION      EDUCATION      LEGISLATION

Wisconsin  
Waterfowl  
Association

11 March 2025

To: WIDNR Migratory Bird Committee

Bruce Ross  
Executive Director

Subject: **WWA Waterfowl Stamp Submissions**

Kelcy Boettcher  
Administrative Services

Dear Committee Members,

Rob Monette  
Regional Director

WWA is submitting a cooperator's application for restorations we typically (but not exclusively) perform on private land. We are also submitting 7 other applications to support project work that derive from our public lands program with the DNR. In the interest of completeness, the following information is provided as background.

Tom Seibert  
Class A Raffle  
Specialist

## 1. COOPERATOR APPLICATION.

Anna Rzechowski  
Ecologist

- a. It's well documented that 50% of Wisconsin's historic wetlands have been erased, and that 75% of the remaining wetlands are in private hands. In the context of DNR research that indicates over 50% of a Wisconsin waterfowler's harvest is hatched in this state, maintaining harvest levels (a key component of duckhunter satisfaction) warrants strong attention to private, restorable wetlands. Particularly the small, sometimes seasonal wetlands that are, acre-for-acre, more productive than larger wetlands for waterfowl nesting and brood-rearing. Even if they are more expensive per acre than large projects.
- b. The cooperator projects seeking stamp funding are currently in WWA's project queue now plus one additional project to be identified over the course of the grant period.
  - i. WWA has had considerable recent success in building landowner awareness of our program and increasing the number of applications. We have implemented a systematic approach to project selection that borrows heavily from the duck stamp process. These projects are formally approved by our Habitat Committee (comprised of waterfowlers) that systematically considers watershed priority, type of restoration, landowner commitment, partner involvement and expected outcomes.
  - ii. Landowners not successful in receiving funding still benefit from our restoration consulting and other assistance. Projects that are selected receive some funding towards the project, but we require landowners to have their own "skin in the game" as they are more likely to maintain those projects in the future.

Mark Pfost  
Ecologist

Peter Ziegler  
Habitat Restoration  
Partners

Board of Directors

Bruce Urben  
Board President

Todd Schaller  
Vice President

Kim Shady  
Treasurer

David Elwing  
Secretary

Mike Depies

George Ermert

Jim Freck

Joe Gonyo

B.J. Grassmann

Connie Markham

Patrick Smith

(Continued)

**1.(c).** Our Waterfowl Stamp projects have met expected acreage requirements, averaging greater than 60% landowner funding. Our restoration projects average above 7.5 in the aggregate watershed priority ranking over the last funding cycle.

**2. PUBLIC LANDS APPLICATIONS:**

- a. In 2023, WWA reached an agreement with the DNR to formally bring our hydrologic restoration experience to the challenge of the DNR's 1.4 million acres of managed property. WWA's focus is in returning the land to its the original hydrological conditions to the degree possible. While this does not always produce classic hemi-marshes, it brings similar waterfowl / wildlife benefits--particularly with spring brood rearing. Importantly in this era of dam and impound abandonment, it also minimizes initial infrastructure costs and downstream maintenance costs.
  - b. Two WWA ecologists plus a supervisor work in this effort. They first identify potential restoration candidates, work with property managers / biologists to understand management goals, undertake survey and designs, find / coordinate funding, then contract/oversee construction.
  - c. Despite starting from scratch two years ago, WWA ecologists have reviewed nearly a quarter of a million acres for restoration potential. Three projects have been undertaken, meeting the acreage goals associated with the \$150K duck stamp grant awarded two years ago. A report of those projects is attached. Other projects are planned for the remaining funds. The current applications represent the highest priority candidates.
  - d. Notably, in addition to the waterfowl stamp funding that was the initial seed project money for this initiative, this partnership has leveraged an additional \$1.15 million from other sources.
3. WWA has incorporated some limited staff expenses in the applications since the funding for WWA's agreement with the DNR is not assured past 2025. WWA would intend to continue the restorations even if the agreement is not funded. If these reimbursable costs are not realized during the project, they will be available for DNR program leadership use to fund other projects.

PLE FUNDING		<i>projected through June 2022</i>	
Sources	2-1/2 year Program funding		PROJECT
	DNR	OTHER	WORK
WDNR	\$142,500		
WWA: EXPO		\$16,250	
WWA: Dutton Fdn		\$7,000	
WWA: NRF / Bird Fund		\$3,000	
WWA: FFLM		\$30,000	
Duck Stamp			\$150,000
USFWS/IRA		\$15,000	\$979,000
GP-1			\$8,000
GLRI			\$168,000
TOTAL	\$142,500	\$71,250	\$1,305,000
		67%	33%

Warmly,

**Bruce Ross**

Bruce Ross  
Executive Director, WWA

Attachments (a) Report of private land Cooperator project results  
 (b) Reports of public land (PLE) project results – Navarino, Lunch Creek, Peter Helland