



## **Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees**

# **POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL**

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## I. COMMUNICATIONS

Since communications with all WALCE members is vital to retaining an active and effective organization, the following policies have been adopted to enhance communications:

### A. Meeting Notices & Agendas

Meeting notices and agendas for all WALCE meetings (Board of Directors and committees) will be distributed to all LCD employees as much as possible through an e-mail list server. (*Note: Bylaws require a 7-day notice.*) Each meeting notice will include a list of current committee or board members and the county and area that they represent – and a reminder to contact their representative with any related issues, comments or concerns.

### B. Meeting Minutes

All meeting minutes will be prepared in a timely manner and distributed as a “draft copy” to the members of the committee or board. Once approved by the committee or board, the minutes will be distributed in a similar manner as the agendas through an e-mail list server and will be archived on the WALCE web page. (*Note: Bylaws require distribution of minutes within 30 days of approval.*)

### C. Official WALCE Correspondence

Formal correspondence on behalf of WALCE will be made by the President, a standing WALCE committee chair or appointee of either, depending on the subject matter, expertise and available time. WALCE letterhead will usually be used for such correspondence. To ensure accuracy, such correspondence will be reviewed with other committee members or WALCE Board members prior to being sent out. In the event that time does not allow for this review, copies of such correspondence will be sent after the fact to the applicable committee and/or the Board.

### D. Annual Progress Reports

During each Annual Meeting, the President will give an annual report to the membership. At a minimum, this report will highlight the past year's activities and identify future issues. Each WALCE committee chair and non-WALCE committee appointee will also be expected to prepare a brief report summarizing the past years accomplishments and current or future issues to be addressed.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

## II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES & POLICIES FOR COMMITTEES

In accordance with the WALCE bylaws, the following guiding principles and policies have been adopted to assist the WALCE committee structure in carrying out their duties. Each committee is expected to update these as needed and maintain a work plan to accomplish their goals. Each committee member is expected to share responsibilities of implementing the committee work plan. Each committee will work with and provide input and support to the other committees and the Board on issues of mutual interest. Each committee will oppose any effort that is in conflict with any of the following guiding principles and policies.

- A. WALCE Administrative Committee. The Administrative Committee encourages and supports legislative and administrative initiatives and policies that:

1. Establish minimum statewide performance standards and prohibitions for controlling erosion and nonpoint source water pollution, to be implemented through County Land and Water Resource Management Plans.
2. Minimize the number of grant "pigeon holes", paperwork and bureaucracy that counties must contend with to obtain outside funds for local programs.
3. Maximize local control and flexibility in implementing conservation programs, including regulatory and voluntary approaches.
4. Recognize the regional diversity that exists throughout the state (i.e. does not jeopardize the flexibility or effectiveness of one area at the expense of another).
5. Encourage local planning, prioritization and program implementation based on approved County Land and Water Resources Management Plans.
6. Support a sufficient base level of grant funds to all counties to implement their LWRM plan (i.e. an "average of three staff persons per county").
7. Support targeted grant funds to support comprehensive county efforts to implement state performance standards and prohibitions, including regulatory efforts.
8. Encourage the integration of federal, state and local efforts into a seamless conservation program at the local level.
9. Facilitate communication and information exchange between WALCE, WCA, WLWCA, federal, state, local legislators, government agencies, conservation groups and environmental groups.
10. Continue to explore and pursue alternative funding sources to bolster staffing and implementation efforts statewide, including non-bonding revenues.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

B. WALCE Technical Committee. The Technical committee will:

1. Promote the integration of technical methods and procedures used by Federal, State, and local conservation programs and agencies.
2. Provide recommendations to the WALCE Board for appointments to non-WALCE committees that are technical in nature.
3. Encourage development of Technical Standards based on sound engineering practices and field research through SOC process.
4. Assist with the development, distribution, and review of Technical Standards before they are adopted or published.
5. Promote a fair and consistent technical certification process that recognizes the demonstrated knowledge, training, and experience of conservation staff.
6. Promote site inventory and conservation planning tools that are easy to use and account for the wide variety of Wisconsin landscapes.
7. Promote the development of technical guidance documents to assist field staff with planning, designing, and implementing conservation practices.
8. Promote tracking and reporting tools that are easy to use and measure actual implementation of program goals and objectives.

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C. WALCE Professional Improvement Committee. The WALCE Professional Improvement Committee encourages and supports:

1. Coordinating an annual conference that provides high quality training for all types of land conservation employees, timely program updates, and an exposure to new ideas and trends in the land and water conservation field.
2. Sharing information among county land conservation departments throughout the year, especially for new employees and innovative or unique program efforts.
3. Developing and distributing interagency education and training materials that provide local conservation professionals the tools they need to carry out their duties.
4. Coordinating interagency training workshops, conferences and other professional improvement opportunities for all types of land conservation employees.
5. Coordinating the WALCE Scholarship Program.

*Latest Revision Date: 8/2006*

- D. Non-WALCE Committees. As described in the bylaws, the WALCE Board of Directors may appoint members to represent WALCE on committees outside of the organization in accordance with the following:
1. The Board must determine that the committee is of statewide importance.
  2. The appointee must be a paid WALCE member in good standing.
  3. Appointees must represent the views of WALCE as a whole, rather than their own position. The appointee must agree to represent all applicable WALCE guiding principles and other adopted WALCE policies.
  4. Appointees are authorized to represent the Association in the development of draft policies, rules, laws or other items. However, WALCE may not be listed as having approved any such item unless it was officially acted on, as deemed necessary or appropriate by the Board of Directors.
  5. The appointee shall provide minutes from the assigned committee to the WALCE Board and/or applicable oversight committee after each meeting and a report to the membership at the Annual Meeting.
  6. Appointees must communicate with the Board via-written or oral reports after any meeting which the committee has taken a position.
  7. The appointee may serve as long as they are regularly attending the scheduled meetings, participating in a manner that accurately represents WALCE and completing their duties described herein.
  8. The President may remove an appointee from the assigned committee at any time with just cause, which must be reported to the Board at their next meeting.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

### **III. TRAVEL & COMPENSATION**

Expenses of the WALCE Board, WALCE Committee members, or scholarship recipients may be paid for reasonable and necessary travel expenses actually incurred during the performance of official duties in accordance with these guidelines and the approved WALCE budget.

- A. Conferences & Out-of State Travel: These require prior approval of the WALCE Board or Professional Improvement Committee (for scholarships) to be eligible. To be eligible, the person must attend the entire conference or meeting and provide a written report to the Committee and/or Board at their next meeting. Limited funds will be distributed in the following order of priority (does not pertain to scholarships): WALCE officers, WALCE Committee chairs, Area Representatives to the Board of Directors,

other WALCE committee or subcommittee members, WALCE appointments (NACD, NCDEA, etc.) and finally, non-WALCE committee members.

- B. Compensation: In order to receive compensation for travel expenses, original receipts must be attached to the WALCE Travel Expense Sheet. The expense sheet must be submitted to the Treasurer for review and payment. The Treasurer will approve or deny the request within ten business days of receipt in accordance with this policy. The Treasurer will direct any questions to the WALCE Board or Professional Improvement Committee for final decision. The Treasurer's expenses will be reviewed and approved by the WALCE Secretary in accordance with these policies and procedures.
- C. Rates: All travel must be undertaken by the most practical and economical means available. Compensation will be paid at the current state rate. The WALCE Treasurer shall maintain a copy of the current state rates and provide to members upon request.
- D. Parking & Tolls: Parking fees and/or toll charges incurred when on Association business are reimbursable.
- E. Air Travel: Payment for air travel shall be limited to the lowest fare available. Payment may exceed the lowest fare only if seats are unavailable, or if air travel is shown to be a clear cost savings to the Association. Flight insurance coverage is not an eligible expense.
- F. Rental Car: Car rentals are authorized only when it has been determined that the total cost (including insurance) is the most practical and economical means available.

*Latest Revision Date: 8/2006*

#### **IV. TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS**

- A. Purpose. Training scholarships are designed to help cover the expenses of WALCE members who would otherwise be unable to afford a particular professional improvement or leadership training program. The scholarship provides a means for the Association to give back to its individual members, while at the same time benefiting the Association and local departments by allowing employees to glean new and innovative information or learn valuable leadership qualities.
- B. Funding. Training scholarships are supported by raffle proceeds from the annual conference and general WALCE operating funds, as approved in the annual budget. Funding for each scholarship will be provided on a first-come, first-serve basis and will be paid at 100% of eligible expenses, maximum of \$500 per applicant per event, with a maximum of \$1,000 per applicant per WALCE budget cycle, and the total amount allocated in the annual WALCE budget is utilized. All travel expenses shall be consistent with section III of the WALCE Policy & Procedures Manual.
- C. Eligibility. To be eligible for a training scholarship, a person must be a paid WALCE member for the past two years and agree to a means by which he/she will provide input back to the Association. Examples include a written report, talk or slide show. Eligible expenses must be consistent with the above noted purpose and funding guidelines.

Expenses for the WALCE Annual Professional Improvement Conference are not eligible for scholarship funds.

- D. Process. The Professional Improvement Committee (PIC) will advertise the availability of the scholarships, determine the items required for a complete application and maintain the application forms on the WALCE web page. Completed applications must be submitted to the WALCE PIC Chair and Vice Chair no later than ten business days prior to the training event. Within ten business days of receiving an application, the PIC Chair or Vice Chair will: a) Review the application and determine the conformity of the applicant and application to the WALCE Training Scholarship Guidelines; b) Forward the completed application to the PIC voting members for action (approval or denial by a majority vote), incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant for additional information; c) Notify the applicant of the PIC's decision. To be approved, the application form must be completed in full, comply with this policy and adequate funds must be available in the WALCE budget. Any application that is denied or returned for more information will be accompanied by a written explanation.

*Latest Revision Date: 8/2006*

## V. AWARDS PROGRAM

- A. Purpose & Name. The purpose of the awards program is to recognize outstanding contributions of county land conservation employees toward resource protection or program innovation. The name of the awards will be *Outstanding Land Conservation Employee: (Year)*.
- B. Award Categories. Awards will be sponsored in each of the following categories:
- County Conservationist/Administrator/Supervisor
  - Technician/Planner/Project Manager/GIS Specialist/Agronomist/Educator)
  - Administrative Assistant/Clerical
  - Special Recognition (may include non-county staff)
- C. Eligibility. Any land conservation employee is eligible for an award except for current members of the WALCE Board of Directors. Those nominated for "special recognition" category may also include any person from a partner agency or organization that has demonstrated outstanding support of WALCE activities. A person is eligible to win an award only once every ten years per category.
- D. Process. Nominations will be announced by e-mail to all employees in December each year. The Board of Directors will review all nominations, decide if an award will be given in each category and vote on each by secret ballot. In case of tie, a revote will be retaken between those nominees that receive the top two numbers of votes. In case of second tie vote, the president's second vote will be used to select the winner. The awards will be presented to the winners during the annual conference. The entire process will be coordinated by the Vice President or other designee of the President. Nominated employees not selected for an award will not be presented with certificates.

- E. NCDEA. The WALCE Board may forward any award winner(s) to the National Conservation District Employee Association for consideration of regional or national awards.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

## **VI. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

The WALCE budget represents the current policies and priorities of the organization, which are updated by the Board of Directors as part of the annual budget process. Listed below are a set of policies that are currently in effect to guide the development and administration of the annual budget.

### A. Revenues

1. The primary sources of WALCE revenues are conference and workshop fees and annual membership dues.
2. The Board of Directors, through the annual budget, will provide the Professional Improvement Committee revenue targets for the annual conference.
3. The current WALCE annual membership dues are \$20.00 per person. There are no dues by county.

### B. Expenditures

1. No contributions shall be made to other organizations unless it is specifically stated in the budget.
2. In general, WALCE will support specific joint undertakings with other organizations rather than providing ongoing program or staff support. Before committing funds to another organization, the Board of Directors will consider the mission of that organization, the specific use of the funds, and the effectiveness at meeting WALCE objectives.
3. No contributions shall be made to the WLWCA without a written working agreement that has been approved by the Administrative Committee and the Board of Directors.

### C. Fund Balances

1. The WALCE Board will not approve nor operate a deficit budget unless specifically approved by the membership at the annual meeting.
2. A fund balance of at least 10% of the previous year's expenditures will be maintained at all times.
3. The Treasurer will maintain one checking account for ongoing and immediate expenses. Other interest-bearing accounts will be used for other fund balances.
4. Annual contributions will be made to a replacement account for a WALCE-owned laptop computer and peripherals based on a three-year depreciation schedule.

### D. Other Financial Policies

1. Any budget item that has offsetting revenues and expenses shall be recorded as such in the budget.
2. The Treasurer will annually review federal and state reporting requirement thresholds for the association and ensure compliance.
3. The Treasurer shall be bonded at all times.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

## VII. ANNUAL CONFERENCE

- A. Location. The Professional Improvement Committee is responsible for selecting the location for each year's annual conference. Each of the four WALCE Areas will host an Annual Conference on a revolving basis in the following order: Western Area, Central Area, Northern Area, and Eastern Area. The committee will attempt to rotate the specific location within each area as much as practical. The current schedule includes the following locations:
- 2006 Conference – Dane County (Madison Concourse Hotel)
  - 2007 Conference - Stevens Point (New Holiday Inn)
- B. Hosting Duties. The host county and adjoining counties will be asked to play a key role in coordinating activities for the annual conference.
- C. Fees. Conference fees will be determined by the Professional Improvement Committee. Conference fees are intended to meet budgeted revenue targets, but remain relatively steady from year to year.
- D. Documentation. The Professional Improvement Committee is responsible for maintaining accurate documentation of conference planning materials, procedures, budgeting, actual expenses and all other items necessary to enhance future conference planning efforts.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

## VIII. STRATEGIC PLAN

- A. Purpose. To maintain the effectiveness of WALCE as an organization, it is the policy of the Board of Directors to develop and maintain a Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan is used to identify current and future issues that may affect WALCE and communicate the mission and future direction of the organization to its membership and partners.
- B. Maintenance. At a minimum, the Board of Directors will review the Strategic Plan bi-annually at the Board of Directors meeting following officer elections. The Board is responsible for determining if any modifications are needed to the plan and carrying them out.

*Latest Revision Date: 12/2005*

## IX. MAINTENANCE OF THIS MANUAL

To maintain this manual, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Editor. The WALCE President shall appoint an editor for this manual. The editor is responsible for ensuring that the manual is kept up-to-date at all times in accordance with the procedures described below and carry out all other duties assigned to the Editor.
- B. Approving Changes. Unless otherwise stated in the WALCE bylaws, the WALCE Board must approve all changes to this manual. Each WALCE standing committee may recommend changes to the manual, which must be sent to the President and Secretary for

consideration by the Board at their next meeting. The WALCE Board shall give the recommendation of any standing committee due consideration based on the jurisdiction and expertise of the committee on the topic.

Update Process. After the Board has approved a change to this manual, the President shall forward the changes to the Editor for incorporation. Within 30 days, the Editor shall incorporate approved changes and ensure proper placement, numbering and wording for the manual. The Editor shall add the month and year that the Board approved the change at the end of the appropriate section. The President shall review the final edits and approve for distribution to the Board, all standing committees and for posting on the WALCE web page.