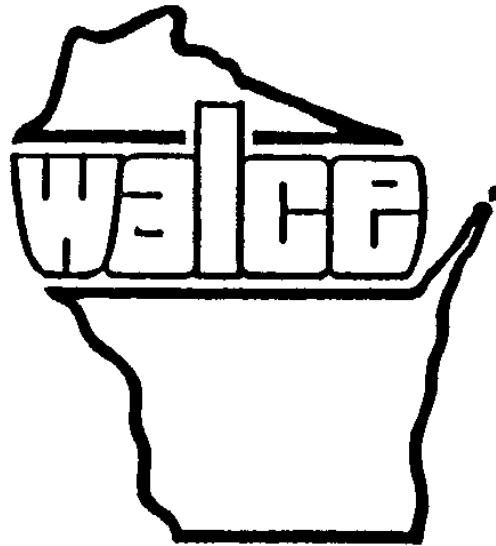


WALCE Strategic Plan 2006



Wisconsin Association of Land Conservation Employees

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The WALCE Mission:

To represent and serve the interests of county land conservation employees by facilitating the exchange of information and ideas, supporting locally-led conservation programs and services, providing professional improvement opportunities, working with other agencies and organizations and providing input on proposed conservation legislation, program rules, policies and standards.

Background Information:

WALCE was initially formed in 1978 as the Wisconsin Association of District Employees (WADE), including a few dozen employees of Soil and Water Conservation Districts around the state. After the 1982 rewrite of state law, conservation district employees became county land conservation department employees, WADE became WALCE, and state conservation programs grew rapidly. By the 1990's there were over 400 county land conservation employees around the state administering a complex array of local, state and federal conservation programs. In 1993, WALCE adopted a total rewrite of their bylaws, reflecting the increased activity of the association.

Since then, the association has evolved along with the programs and experiences of its membership. At their annual membership meeting in March 1999, WALCE adopted its first strategic plan, setting the direction of the association and focusing future activities on specific issues. This document represents the second generation strategic plan for the association. Some of the significant association actions that have occurred since the 1999 plan adoption include the following:

- An internal evaluation of the association structure, how it functions and how it relates to the WLWCA was completed in 2000. This evaluation was updated in 2002 after a proposed merger with the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WLWCA) failed to materialize;
- The creation of a WALCE web site and e-mail list server;
- An update to the WALCE bylaws was adopted in 2003, creating four WALCE Areas and three standing committees (administrative, technical and professional improvement). The revised bylaws recognize the multiple purposes of the association and establishes a mission for each of the standing committees, consistent with the overall mission of the association;
- The adoption of guiding principles for each of the standing committees in 2004, which helped focus their efforts and clarify their mission to the membership (see Appendix A for a listing of these principles as of the date of this plan);
- The adoption of a policy and procedures manual in 2005, which documents decisions made by the Board of Directors and standing committees and serves as a reference for future members;

Key Strategic Issues

The following issues were identified as key to the future of WALCE as an organization and are used as a foundation for the following Action Plan.

1. Participation. The more membership participation, the more effective the organization can be. The new WALCE committee structure has helped encourage more involvement from all types of land conservation employees. Each committee is designed to operate independent of the Board of Directors, following an adopted mission and set of guiding principles. WALCE will continue to solicit active involvement in WALCE committees and recognize the independent nature of their work as vitally important to carrying out the mission of the association.
2. Diversity. Statewide, county land conservation employees deal with a diversity of landscapes, resource concerns, and political realities. The association itself also deals with a diversity of functions, as illustrated in Appendix A. All this diversity can be a source of strength or weakness for the organization. WALCE will continue to capitalize on our diversity and see it as a strength, respecting the differences among us and unifying the similarities as much as possible.
3. Communications. Effective communication with all our members is vital to maintaining an active and effective organization. In addition, communicating the mission and accomplishments of county land conservation departments to elected officials and the general public helps maintain support for local program efforts. WALCE will continue to improve communications with its membership, elected officials and the general public.
4. Partnerships. To effectively carry out our mission, the association needs to encourage sharing knowledge, skills and resources among counties and with other agencies and organizations. However, these partnerships have sometimes been strained due to a number of constantly changing factors that affect working relationships. (An example of this is the recent trend to promulgate state administrative rules that pre-empt local authority to implement nonpoint programs.) WALCE will continue to provide the opportunity and encourage inter-county cooperation on program efforts. WALCE will also identify where mutual interests exist with other agencies and organizations and develop or strengthen partnerships with those that demonstrate a willingness and ability to help us advance our mission.

Action Plan

The following action plan is designed to address the key strategic issues and is organized in the same manner. Each issue is listed as a goal statement, followed by a list of more specific action items designed to accomplish the goal. All activities listed below apply to the WALCE Board of Directors and WALCE Committees, unless otherwise noted. This action plan should be considered a starting point for more a specific annual work planning process for each WALCE Committee and the Board of Directors.

WALCE Committees and the Board of Directors will:

- 1. Encourage participation by:**
 - Soliciting active membership in the association by all land conservation employees through e-mails, workshop and conference registrations, WALCE flyers, word-of-mouth, etc.
 - Rotating meeting locations and timing meetings with other events with a broad interest among land conservation employees
 - Periodically surveying constituents on local issues or needs
 - E-mailing requests for information, input on specific issues or reviewing draft materials or position statements
 - Facilitating the transfer of information

- 2. Recognize county diversity while:**
 - Appointing committee members
 - Establishing annual goals and work plans
 - Establishing internal policies and procedures for carrying out activities
 - Communicating with other agencies and organizations
 - Taking positions on issues, avoiding any that may favor one geographic area or otherwise polarize or divide the association
 - Annually reviewing and updating adopted mission and guiding principles

- 3. Improve communications by:**
 - Maintaining the WALCE web site with current bylaws, adopted policies, procedures, guiding principles and strategic plan, meeting notices and minutes, position statements, and other information pertinent to the operation of WALCE (Contract for a “web master”?)
 - Improving web-based e-mail list server to allow distribution of information statewide or by area, committee or topic
 - Encouraging the use of list server for posting questions to peers and sharing information among counties
 - Allowing land conservation employees to subscribe to e-mailed agendas and meeting minutes

- Coordinating periodic committee reports to the Board and annual reports to the membership
 - Distributing annual work plans, goals and objectives to the membership
 - Promoting accomplishments in newsletters, tours and other means
 - Introducing committee members or area representatives to their constituents
 - Developing and implementing a consistent format for communicating with and gathering input from the membership
- 4. Develop or strengthen partnerships by:**
- Sharing our knowledge, skills and resources with other counties through peer-to-peer contacts, field trips, workshops, conferences, web page specialty listings, etc.
 - Building relationships and alliances with other agencies and organizations that are willing and able to support the mission of WALCE or its committees
 - Engaging selected partners in specific supporting activities as needed

Plan Maintenance

This strategic plan will, at a minimum, be reviewed and updated bi-annually by the WALCE Board of Directors at the organizational meeting following elections.

Appendix A

Guiding Principles for WALCE Committees (as of 12/05)

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. Updates to these are recorded in the WALCE Policy & Procedures Manual. 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.

- 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 the 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.
- 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. Recognizing outstanding contributions to conservation programs by land conservation employees through an annual awards program.
 3. Sharing information among county land conservation departments throughout the year, especially for new employees and innovative or unique program efforts.
 4. Developing and distributing interagency education and training materials that provide local conservation professionals the tools they need to carry out their duties.
 5. Coordinating interagency training workshops, conferences and other professional improvement opportunities for all types of land conservation employees.
 6. Coordinating the WALCE Scholarship Program.