

## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

### DOOR COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

A. Mission Statement:

The Door County Soil and Water Conservation Department is created under the authority of Chapter 92 of Wisconsin Statutes. Chapter 92 gives the SWCD the responsibility for the administration of the County soil and water conservation program and the authority to exercise the powers granted to the Land Conservation Committee. The legislative declared policy of the State in Chapter 92 is to halt and reverse the depletion of the State's soil resources and pollution of its waters. The mission of conservation and environmental advocacy is the standard by which SWCD programs are developed and implemented.

B. Summary of Responsibilities:

The SWCD has a responsibility, and directive under Chapter 92, to promote land uses and programs which advance conservation and the protection of Door County's natural resources, and meet the goals and objectives established in the [2021-2030 Land and Water Resource Management Plan](#).

C. Program Summary:

Agricultural Performance Standards and Animal Waste Storage: SWCD administers Door County Code Chapter 23 which establishes minimum standards for agricultural operations to protect ground and surface water quality and permit requirements for animal waste storage facilities. In 2023 the SWCD implemented an emergency response planning effort with farmers who have aging liquid manure systems to prevent and or prepare for potential spill events.

Conservation practices: SWCD uses federal, state, and local funding sources to provide technical and cost share to landowners/operators for a wide range of conservation practices to protect and improve ground and surface water quality such as buffers, grassed waterways, nutrient management, manure storage, barnyard and feed storage runoff control systems, and well abandonment.

Invasive Species: SWCD maintains a lead role in the Door County Invasive Species Team (DCIST), a collaboration of natural resource professionals, community leaders and interested citizens who seek to halt the invasion of exotic non-native plants.

Nonmetallic Mine Reclamation: SWCD administers Door County Code Chapter 36 to ensure nonmetallic mining sites will be properly reclaimed in accordance with State Administrative Code and Statutes.

Technical Assistance: SWCD maintains staff with diverse expertise in natural resources who provide technical reviews and onsite inspections of proposed projects for the Land Use Services Department as well as other technical assistance to the public. In 2023 the SWCD started a culvert inventory to better enhance software calculations for watersheds and flow accumulations.

Water Quality Protection and Improvement: SWCD works cooperatively with a variety of partners to protect and improve ground and surface water quality including

identification of pollution sources at beaches (with Public Health), restoration of Dunes Lake (multiple partners), post drawdown study of the Forestville Millpond study (with Facilities and Parks), surface water quality monitoring (multiple partners), private well testing program (with Public Health), emerging contaminant study of private wells, and watershed planning (multiple partners).

Wildlife Damage Abatement & Claims: Landowners who experience wildlife damage to crops can enroll in the program to be eligible for assistance, claim payments, and/or abatement reimbursements.

Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative/Farmland Preservation Program: SWCD ensures participants in this program meet state conservation standards to remain eligible for tax credits and inspects operations once every four years.

D. Goals / Objectives Achieved in 2023:

- Continue promotion of a recently purchased No-Till drill for buffer and pollinator conservation plantings.
- Targeted outreach with landowners on 6 linear miles of the Ahnapee watershed for new Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP) enrollment.
- Promoted water quality and natural resource protection through multiple programs. The following are examples of completed activities in 2023, not an exhaustive list:

<b>2023 Accomplishments</b>	
2	Compliance notifications under Ch. 23, Door County Code (Farm sites)
2	Animal waste permits issued
61	Operation and maintenance inspections of installed agricultural practices
4	New agricultural practices cost shared and installed (such as feed storage runoff control, manure storage, grassed waterway)
251	Acres of cover crops cost shared
128	Acres Planted with the SWCD's No-Till drill
20	Acres of soil depth to bedrock verifications
94%	Cropland acres under nutrient management plans
30	Audits of cropland fields during manure spreading
10	Karst feature verifications
1,366	Acres monitored for priority, early detection, and other invasive species
462	Acres of priority invasive species inventoried
325.6	Acres of invasive species controlled
235	Pounds of European frog bit pulled and removed from 3 sites
67.5	Miles of shoreline inspected for European Frog bit
686	Landowner contacts for invasive species
4	Well abandonments cost shared
52	Nonmetallic mine inspections under Ch. 36, Door County Code
48	Land disturbance, Storm Water and Impervious Surface Plan reviews and approvals for Land Use Services Dept
357	Private wells sampled for bacteria and nitrate through UWO assistance
89	Private wells sampled for emerging contaminants
6	Enrollments in the wildlife damage abatement program
51	Deer donated

7	Inspections for the farmland preservation program
27	Certificates of compliance issued for the farmland preservation program

E. Knowledge Sharing 2023:

- One-on-one visits with landowners and operators to identify management and conservation practices to meet minimum agricultural standards and prohibitions and go beyond to protect ground and surface water quality.
- Outreach and education to the public about invasive species included: 200 hours of Clean Boats Clean Waters at priority boat launches providing inspections for 540 boats, 21 media posts, 6 educational presentations/training sessions, 2 volunteer days, hundreds of one-on-one contacts and 686 direct mailings to landowners.
- Several educational presentations about SWCD programs and natural resource issues in Door County to a wide variety of audience ages from high school students through learning in retirement.

F. Department Budget Status

	2022	2023
Approved Budgeted Expenditures	\$1,541,434.00	\$1,293,376.00
Actual Expenditures	\$969,946.56	\$755,209.73
Budgeted Revenues	\$1,010,221.00	\$693,079.00
Actual Revenues	\$495,906.31	\$340,897.89
Actual Levy Appropriation	\$474,040.25	\$414,311.84

**Grants Used in 2023:**

DNR Wildlife Damage Claims Program	\$10,652.85
DATCP Soil & Water Resource Management Staffing	\$178,571.00
DATCP Land & Water Resource Management	\$10,519.24
DNR Aquatic Invasive Species – LMPN	\$12,371.23
DNR Aquatic Invasive Species – CBCW	\$3,846.00
DNR Aquatic Invasive Species - Control	\$11,710.24
DNR Aquatic Invasive Species – Plan Update	\$2,812.75
DNR EPA Early Detection – European Frog Bit	\$14,926.00
Fish & Wildlife Service – Detroit/Plum Island	\$2,100.68
US Forest Service GLRI 2022 (Invasive Species)	\$29,613.88
WI Coastal Management Grant – Translation	\$21,022.18
Friends for Lake Michigan – Ridges Beach	\$874.01
DNR Lake Planning Grant – Forestville Millpond	\$4,832.71
DNR Multi-discharger Variance	5,076.05

**Revenue from Reserve Accounts:**

Forestry Program	\$74.72
Nonmetallic Mine Program	\$25,282.83

**Donations Used in 2023:**

Dunes Lake Donations	\$157.72
Invasive Species	\$4,401.06

G. Other Accomplishments: N/A

H. Issues, Concerns and Restraints:

- Program demands and natural resource protection needs continue to expand while fiscal and staffing resources remain limited. Two resignations and three new hires occurred in 2023. Employee retention was an issue in 2023.
- SWCD has successfully pursued grants to provide cost share to landowners and fund staff. However the short term nature of 2-3 year grants requires a continual investment of time to apply for and manage multiple programs, each with a unique set of requirements and reporting expectations.

I. Goals and Objectives for 2024:

- Follow the 2021-2030 Land and Water Resource Management Plan, available online at: <https://www.co.door.wi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2900/Door-County-Land-and-Water-Resource-Management-Plan-2021-2030>
- Continue to control non-native *Phragmites*, targeting 85% of known populations on private properties, using ARPA funding. A contract with a professional contractor to cover the duration of the five-year project has been secured.
- Continue the study of emerging contaminants in groundwater with GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. through the sampling of private wells.
- Continue Spring and Fall private well monitoring program with UW Oshkosh.
- Start analysis of Door County Surface waters for eventual update of Door County Surface water Inventory.
- Complete bathymetric analysis and final post drawdown report for the Forestville Millpond.
- Complete culvert and small “bridge” inventory for the entire County.
- Complete emergency spill response plans for farmers with aging liquid manure systems.