



Land and Water Conservation Board
County Land and Water Resource Management Plan
Review of LWRM Plan Revisions

County: Racine

Implementation Covering Past Five Years and Future Directions

Answer these four questions in writing (not to exceed 4 pages)

1. Provide a representative number of accomplishments within the last five years that can be directly traced to activities identified in multiple work plans. For each accomplishment, explain how the planning process helped the county achieve its outcome, including planning adjustments that helped better target county activities.

The best management practices implemented over the last five years indicate the high demand and large workload for staff as we continue to attempt to meet client needs while continually moving them toward NR 151 and ag performance compliance. Our office typically completes 10 to 15 bond bmp's per year and 10 to 15 SEG practices per year utilizing SWRM and Federal funds. Over the last 5 years, we've assisted 91 separate landowners with SWRM cost-share funds on a variety of practices. Total construction costs of bond practices implemented from 2017 – 2021 is over one million dollars (no manure storage structures were built in Racine County over this period.) Racine County has received \$231,552 of transferred SWRM funds from other counties between 2017 and 2021 for the implementation of best management practices.

From 2016 - 2018, Racine County LWCD applied for and received a grant from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's "Fund for Lake Michigan" for \$90,000 to install riparian buffers. This grant was allocated over three years to sign up 12 different landowners to install a total of 30 acres of buffers. Each landowner entered into a 15-year contract to take riparian land out of production to reduce runoff, protect water quality and increase wildlife habitat.

The Producer Led Program has become an effective tool for farmer education regarding the soil health movement. The Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County (WPCR) formed in the summer of 2017 with 6 farmers requesting assistance from the County to collaborate their efforts. In the last 5 years, this producer led group and the Racine County LWCD have held 5 summer field days and 5 winter workshops with an average attendance around 80 people at each event. The next Producer Led application will have 23 farmers participating as part of the WPCR. The WPCR also provides cost share for innovative cover crop practices using grant funds. There have been 57 contracts signed over the last five years to install cover crops on over 14,000 acres. Finally, the WPCR contracted with Racine County to utilize cropland at Case Eagle Park for research between conventional vs regenerative agriculture. This will be demonstrated at field days.

2. Identify any areas where the county was unable to make desired progress in implementing activities identified in recent work plans. For each area identified, explain the work plan adjustments that were made to refocus planned activities. If no areas are identified, explain how the county was able to make progress in all the areas planned.

Nutrient Management planning and updates could have more desired progress. Although, we annually utilize all SEG funds, we continually need to inform and educate farmers about the nutrient management planning requirements and opportunities. Although, many farmers are doing soil testing, it seems as though there is a disconnect between “only soil testing” and developing a “certified plan”. We continually educate through mailings and one-on-one contacts. Also, there are not a lot of private sector CCA’s located in Racine County, which makes planning a little more difficult for producers.

3. Describe the county’s approach to implementation of its priority farm strategy including outreach, farm inventories and making use of multiple funding sources. How has the county evaluated the effectiveness of its priority farm strategy and used this information to improve implementation of the agricultural performance standards and conservation practices on farms?

The County’s priority farm strategy included contacting farmers within the Water Quality Management Areas (WQMA’s), all livestock operations, highly erodible lands and non-compliance farms based on staff evaluations. This strategy started in 2010 and has snowballed into an amount of work that at times seems impossible to get ahead of. Our GIS database records all farm evaluations, site visits, NR 151 compliance, nutrient management plans, bmp’s installed, bmp’s needed as well as year installed, cost, operation and maintenance agreements, etc. Database management is a very daunting task to include and maintain all of this information. The priority farm strategy continues, but is truly driven by the customers. Our office has daily conversations with the farmers, contractors, co-ops, CCA’s and other agency staff to keep all projects, compliance and programs moving forward. The LWCD has a staff meeting every other week to keep all projects on track. The LWCD meets with NRCS and FSA staff about every month to six weeks to coordinate our efforts and make sure no one is left behind. Working with the Federal Agencies allows us to utilize multiple funding sources such as EQIP and CRP.

4. Provide representative examples that show changes in direction in the county’s LWRM plan and annual work plans, with specific examples provided showing adjustments in goals, objectives or planned activities.

There are a few big changes in the last five years.

1. *The Producer Led Program and our collaboration with the Watershed Protection Committee of Racine County has led to a much stronger information and educational program for the farmers, elected officials, youth, lake associations, environmental non-profit organizations and the general public. This has strongly improved goal #4’s objectives and planned actions.*

This collaboration has also led to the soil health movement. Each year, it seems a few more producers either go all in with no-till and cover crops, or they at least try to incorporate some of this innovation into their farming operation. Obviously, this improves water quality and erosion control which matches Goal #1.

2. *The Multi-Discharge Variance did not exist in the prior LWRM Plan. This program may not have as large an impact as our Producer Led Program, but it does provide about \$10,000 annually to the Land and Water Conservation office. This money is usually used on one best management practice per year to reduce runoff that is directly impacting waters of the State. This is reported on the DNR's BMP Implementation Tracking System (BITS) using the Spreadsheet Tool for Estimating Pollutant Loads (STEPL).*
3. *Soil Health is now a primary focus to reduce runoff. Cost share for cover crops and no-till was not utilized in the previous plans. The additional resources for cost-share to assist farmers into implementing a regenerative soil health system is complimentary to achieving water quality goals. Soil health and regenerative agriculture are the focus at Field Days and Workshops.*

Racine County's Case Eagle Park is being utilized for research and demonstrations. The goal is to provide in-field examples as well as show economic benefits to starting a regenerative agriculture system.

Annual Work Plans

Attach both of the following:

- a. The most current annual work plan, prepared in the current format from DATCP, and addresses all required items such as needed funding and staff hours.
- b. The work plan for the previous year that includes a column that identifies the progress in implementing the planned activities for that year.

Presentation Regarding County Resource Concerns

Prepare and present an 8-10 minute snapshot to the board regarding county resources and management issues. The county must prepare one of following as part of this brief presentation:

- a. A PowerPoint (showing what your county looks like, can include maps), or
- b. A hand out (2 page max)

Guidance on Board Review Process

The LWCB's review supplements, but does not replace compliance with the DATCP checklist for LWRM plan approval. This encourages and supports honest presentations from the county. The county is strongly encouraged to have the LCC chair or committee member be a part of the presentation to the Board to contribute policy and other insights to the discussion. The goal of the review is not to fail counties. The board recognizes the dynamic nature of the planning process. Board members are interested in how counties tackle priorities over time and how they respond to changing conditions in pursuing their priorities. The board will evaluate a county's planning and implementation based on how well the county balances and prioritizes the following: agricultural performance standards, other state priorities (impaired waters, FPP checks), and local priorities. When needed, the Board will provide constructive support to counties to improve the quality of their planning.

Land Conservation Committee Notification

The LCC was provided a completed copy of this form (including attachments) on: September 19, 2022.

Signature of Authorized Representative: _____ **Date:** _____
(e.g. County Conservationist, LCC chair)

Send completed form and attachments to:

Lisa.Trumble@wi.gov