

Putting Wetlands to Work for your Community:

*a Model Wetland
Conservation Ordinance*

Kyle Magyera || Local Government Outreach Specialist



Who is WWA?

Membership Organization

Science-based

Non-partisan

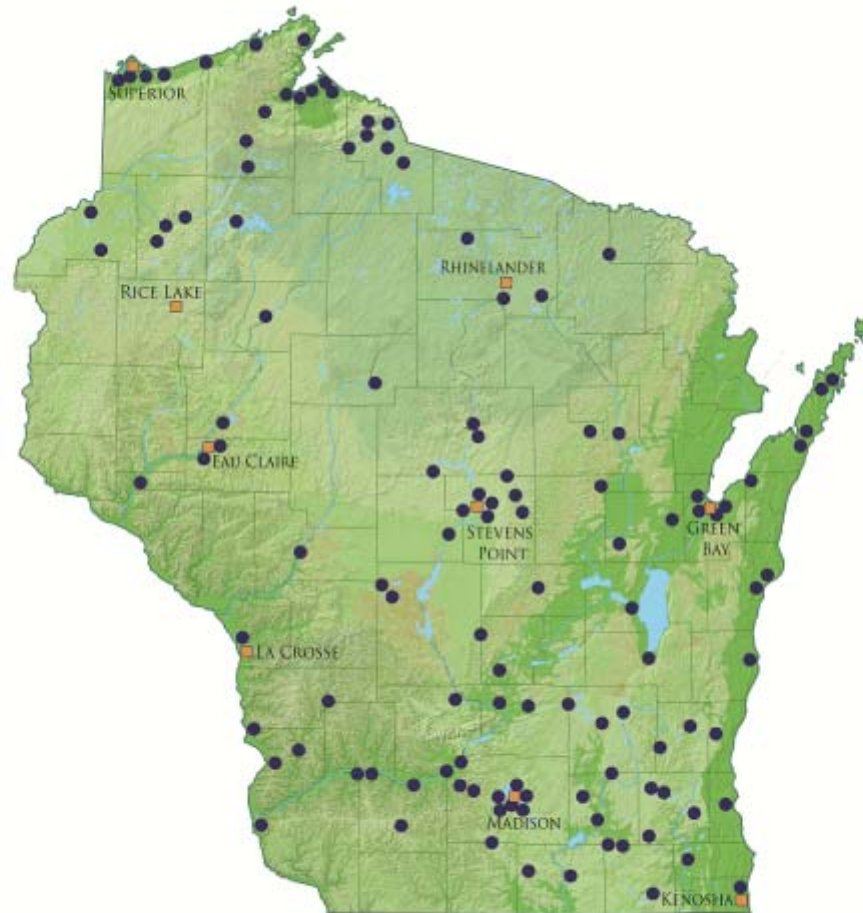
Private Non-Profit

Committed to:

- 1.Supporting locally-led wetland protection and restoration**
- 2.Promoting wetlands as solutions in local planning**
- 3.Supporting private lands stewardship**
- 4.Promoting best science and management**



Statewide Organization



Types of Wetlands



Wetlands are NOT just this (marshes)

They vary in size, type, appearance, and location

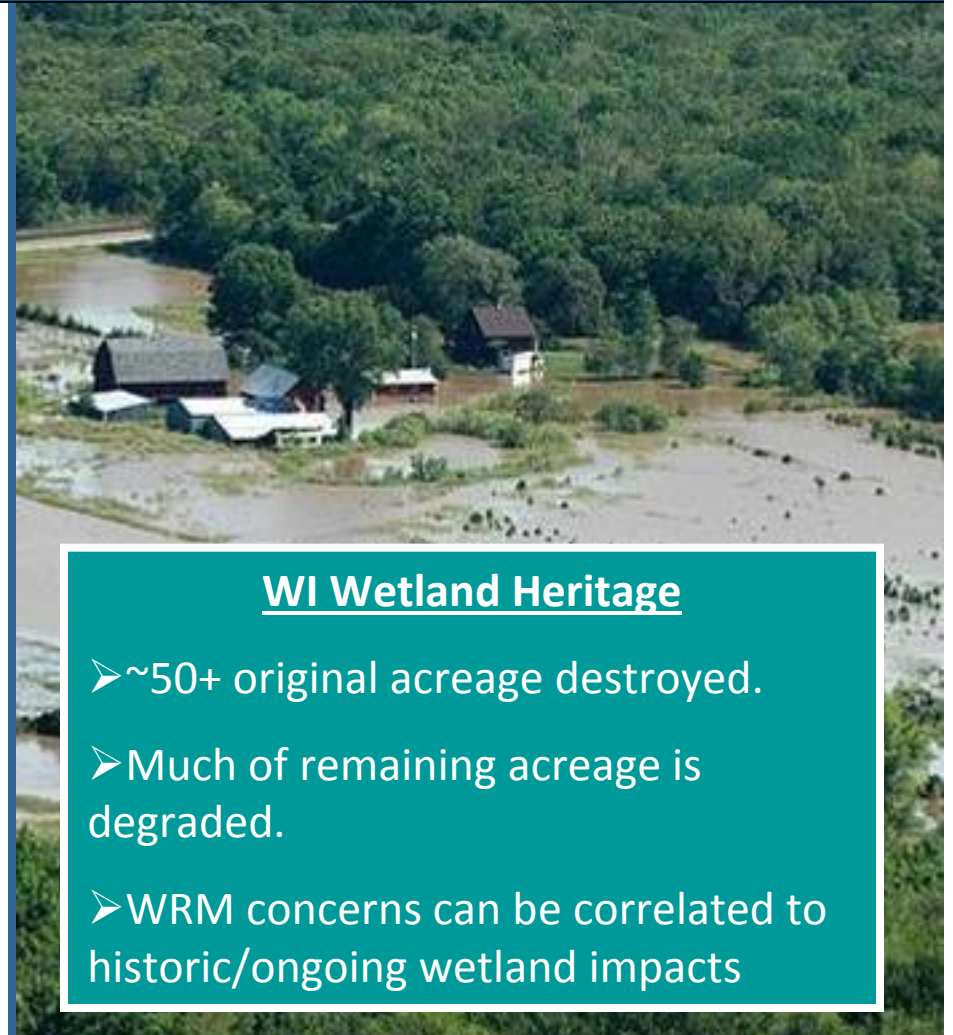
Many different types

wisconsinwetlands.org/Gems/WetlandTypes.pdf



Wetlands as Problem-Solvers

- Capture Snowmelt
- Charge Groundwater
- Keep Water Cool
- Slow the Flow
- Keep Nutrients in Balance
- Provide Habitat
- Reduce Erosion & Sediment
- Reduce Flooding
- Enhance Biodiversity



WI Wetland Heritage

- ~50+ original acreage destroyed.
- Much of remaining acreage is degraded.
- WRM concerns can be correlated to historic/ongoing wetland impacts

Capture Melting Snow



Charge Groundwater



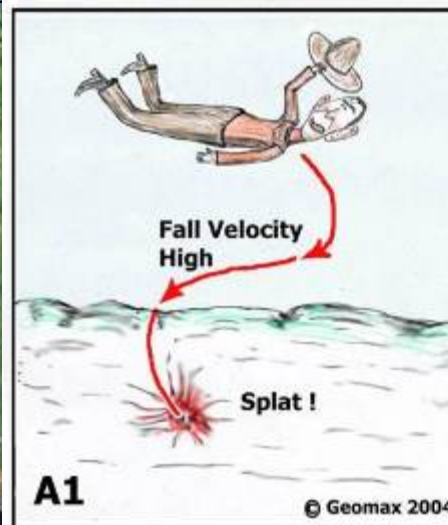
Supply Steady, Cool, Clean Water



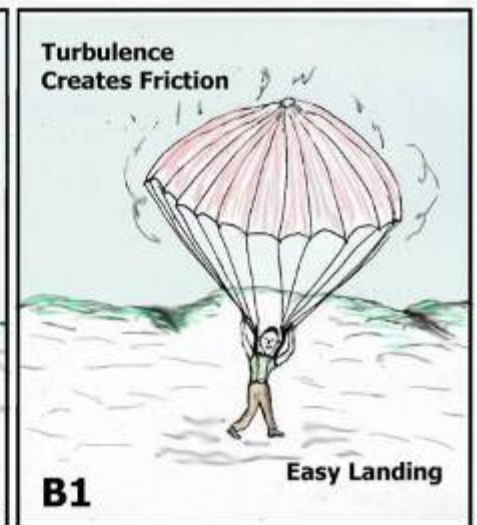
Sediment Retention & Nutrient Transformation



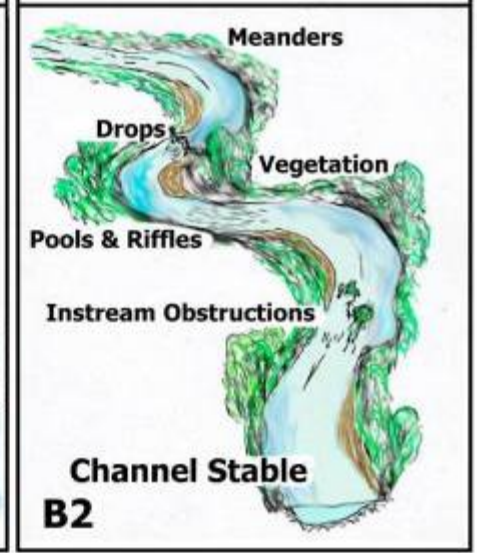
Store Floodwaters



Minimum Friction



Increased Friction



Putting Wetlands to Work

Step 1: Identify watershed needs (i.e., problems)

Step 2: Evaluate hydrology

Step 3: Assess present/past wetland landscape

Step 4: Evaluate “potential” wetland landscape

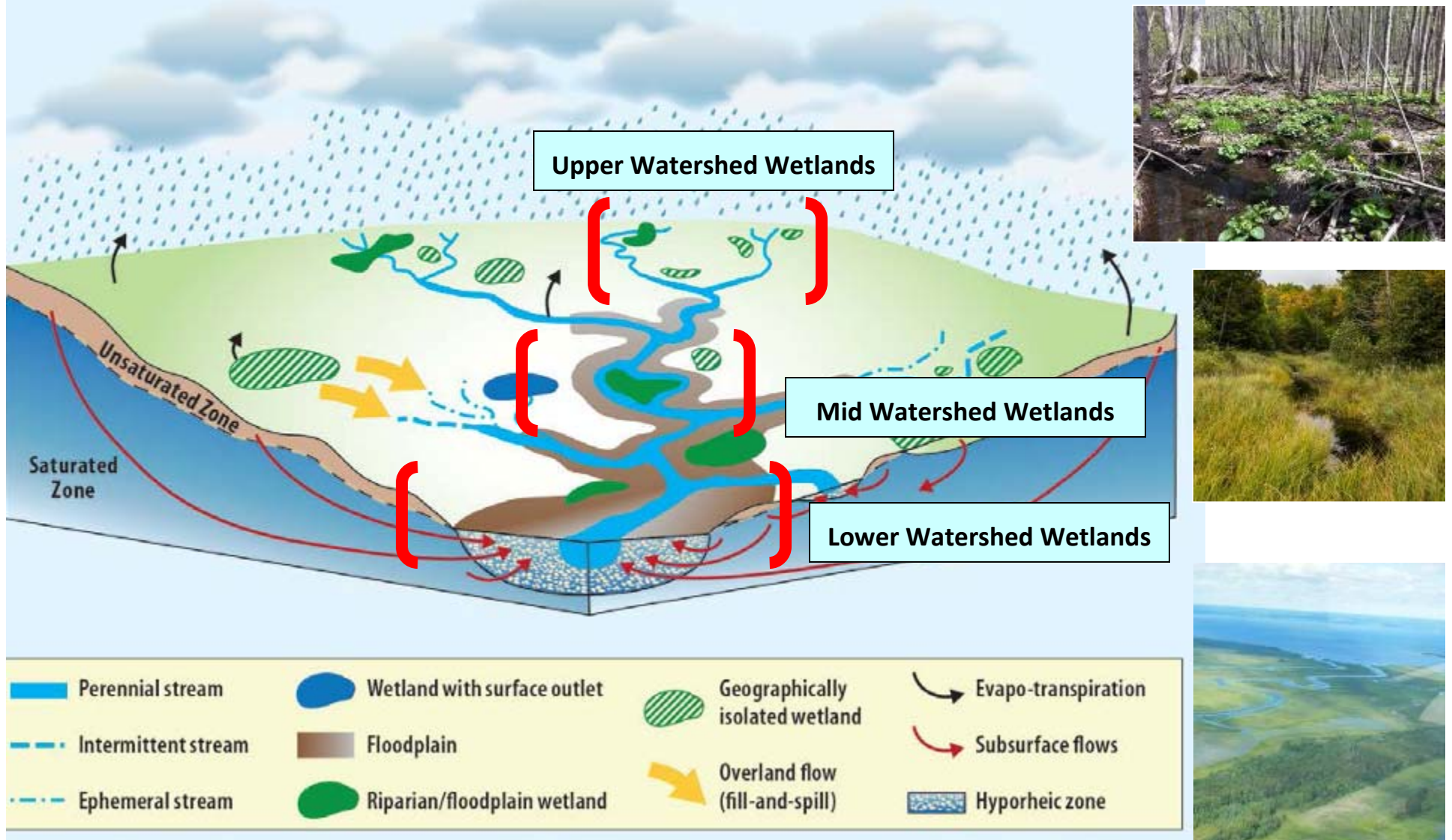
Step 5: Improve &/or enhance wetland maps to help establish wetland priorities

Step 6: Incorporate findings & priorities into local plans & policies

Step 7: **Establish plan implementation strategies**
(regulatory & non-regulatory)



Location, Location, Location



Wetland Hydrology



Altered Wetland Hydrology



Types of Disturbances

- 1) Direct (within wetland boundary)
- 2) Indirect (altered hydrology)
 - Changes to natural topography and vegetation on lands draining to wetlands
 - Improper culvert placement

***Locally-Led Wetland Protection:
Model Wetland Conservation Ordinance***

Purpose/Intent

Plan Implementation Tool:

Preserving wetlands and wetland hydrology is a matter of public concern.

- Reduce flooding, and flood hazards, damages, and expenditures
- Prevent and control water pollution
- Prevent soil loss and erosion of stream beds and banks.
- Preserve natural drainage features and minimize the need to construct, repair, maintain, or replace structural water management systems.
- Maintain and support stream base flow and temperature, lake levels, and shallow groundwater supplies.
- Preserve and improve fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and open space.

Benefits of MWCO



Local control over wetlands

- Ensure land use and wetland decisions are consistent with local plans and priorities.
 - *Steer development away from sensitive/high-functional wetlands or even potentially restorable wetlands.*
- Review of activities that are unregulated by federal/state wetland law
 - *Activities outside of the wetland boundary*
- Maintenance of hydrologic connections between wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater.
- *Potential* to require compensatory mitigation to occur in/upstream of community.

Benefits of MWCO



Clarifies which wetlands are protected

- Lessens reliance on WI Wetland Inventory maps
- Protects ALL wetlands protected regardless of size or depiction on maps By field conditions
 - *Consistency w/ federal & state law*
- Recognizes upland/upstream hydrologic connections

Benefits of MWCO

Site Plan – Discretion to review:

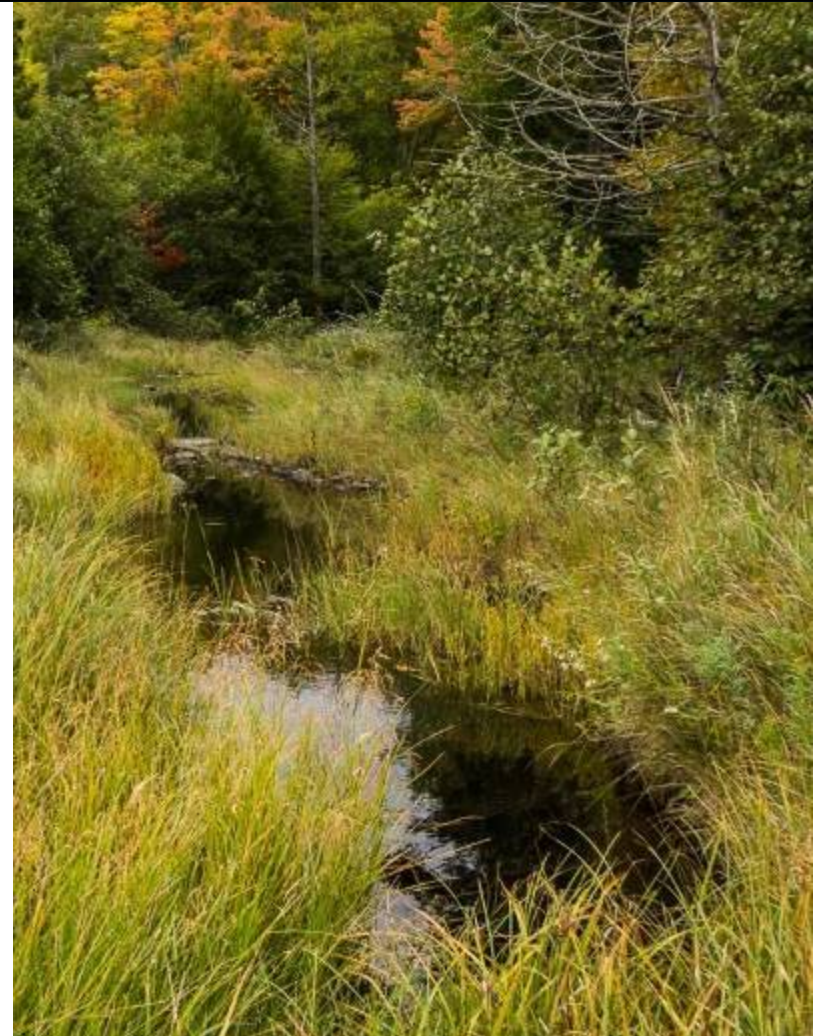
- **Direct Impacts**
 - Input on federal and state wetland permits
 - Review of under-regulated activities
- **Indirect Impacts**
 - Review of alterations to wetland hydrology
- **Land suitability**
 - Wetlands
 - Associated hydrologic features
- **Potential impacts in the context of WRM concerns**



Benefits of MWCO

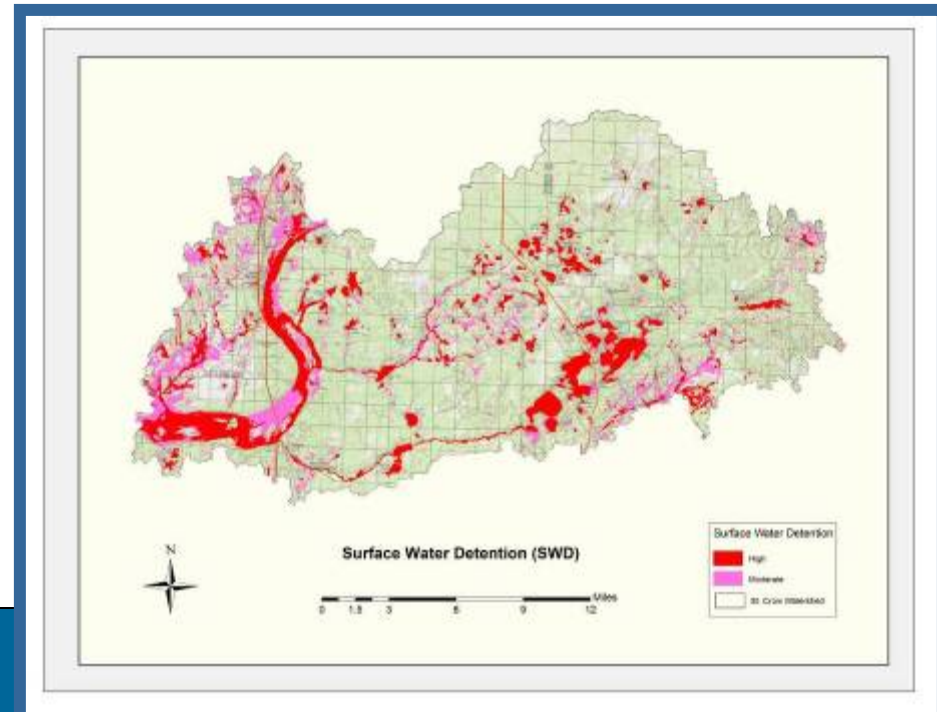
Wetland Protective Areas

- Setback/vegetated buffer standards
 - Min. 70% self-sustaining vegetative cover
- Science-based ranges
 - Minimums consistent with state law
 - Can be driven by planning
- Select per site-specific conditions
 - Increase → surface water inlets/outlets
 - Increase → wildlife habitat needs
 - Decrease → unique property limitations




Implementing Watershed-Based Plans

- MWCO *could be tailored* to address priorities identified by watershed-scale wetland assessments or other planning processes
 - Reduce impacts to high-functioning wetlands
 - Avoid priority potentially restorable wetlands
 - Larger Wetland Protective Areas around vulnerable or high-functioning wetlands
- Incorporate into relevant plans:
 - Comprehensive Plan
 - Land and Water Management Plan
 - Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - TMDL
 - Recreation or Open Space



Summary

- Stand-alone ordinance/chapter for county, tribal, and municipal governments
 - Alternatively, revisions to specific chapters/sections
- Does NOT create a new wetland permit
- Wetland-specific standards/approval criteria:
 - General and shoreland zoning (*conditional uses, variances*)
 - Land division (*prelim./final plat/CSM*)
 - Stormwater (*erosion control/stormwater management plans*)
- New policies that do not exist under federal/state wetland law and shoreland-wetland zoning (i.e., NOT limited by Act 55, changes to shoreland zoning)
- Crystallizes existing discretion that exists under state law and local ordinances
 - “proper relationship to adjoining areas”
 - “degree of disturbance & impact on adjoining NR”  “preserve wetland hydrology”

Further Assistance from WWA

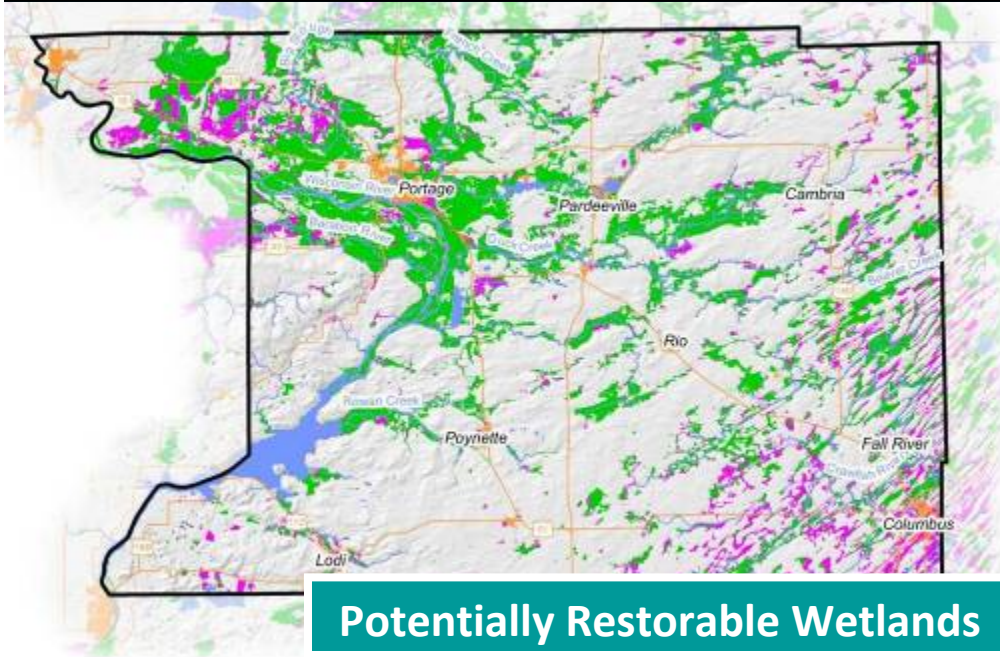
- Land Use and Wetlands Publication Series

wisconsinwetlands.org/localgovs.htm



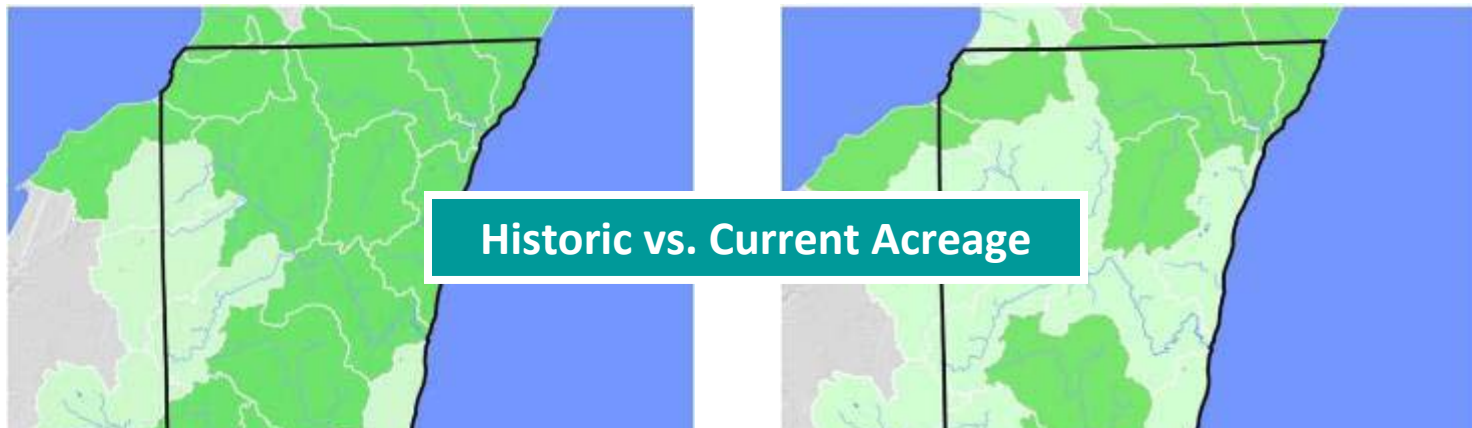
- Direct advisory and educational support
 - Review of existing ordinances (*identify gaps/opportunities*)
 - Guidance/input on proposed ordinance language or other questions
 - Wetland education at meetings/hearings (*as capacity allows*)
- Classroom or Field-Based Wetland Trainings
 - Board of Adjustment or Plan Commission workshops (Center for Land Use Education)
 - Community-specific or other topical field-based workshops

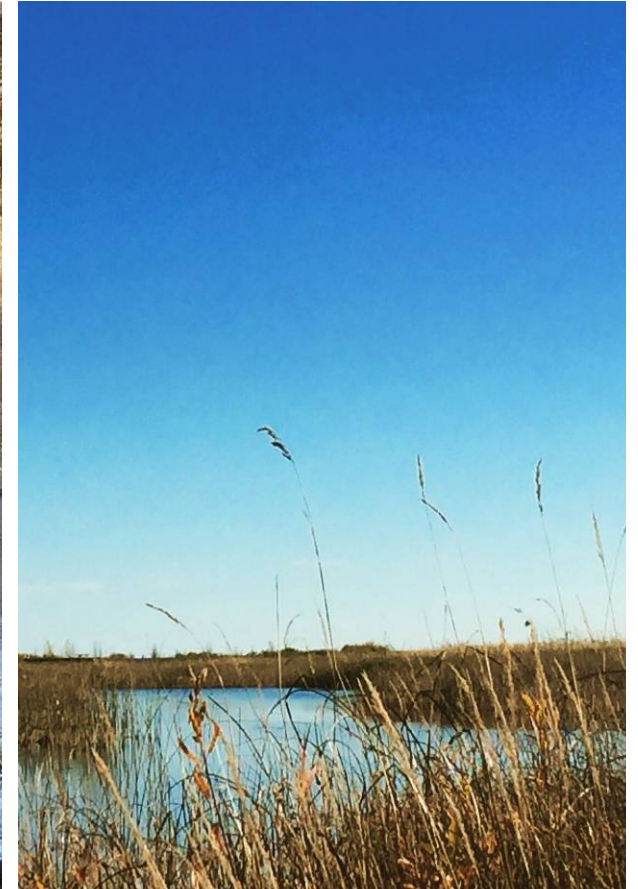
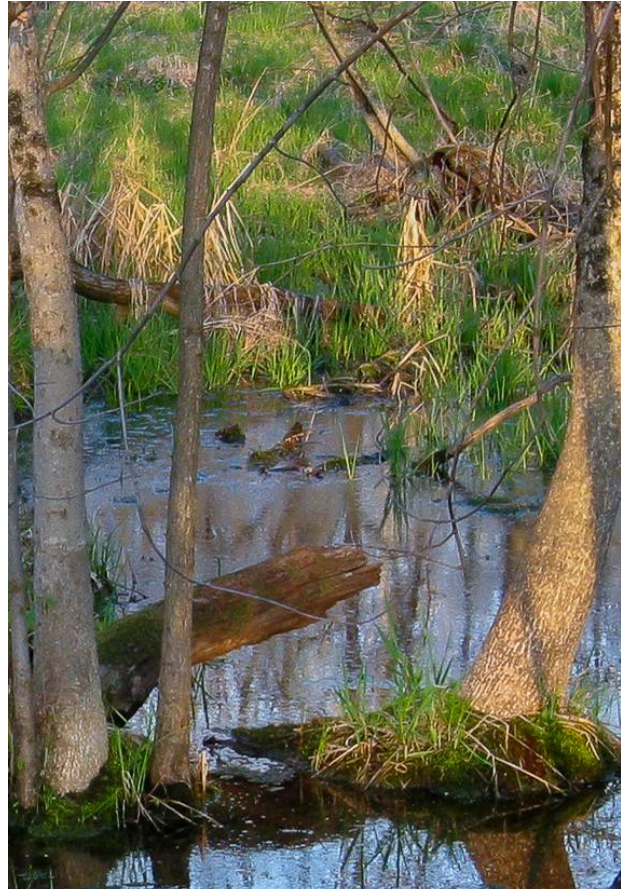
County Fact Sheets



33 fact sheets currently available

wisconsinwetlands.org/countyfactsheets.htm





QUESTIONS?

wisconsinwetlands.org/localgovs.htm

Kyle Magyera

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608.250.9971 || localgovs@wisconsinwetlands.org

