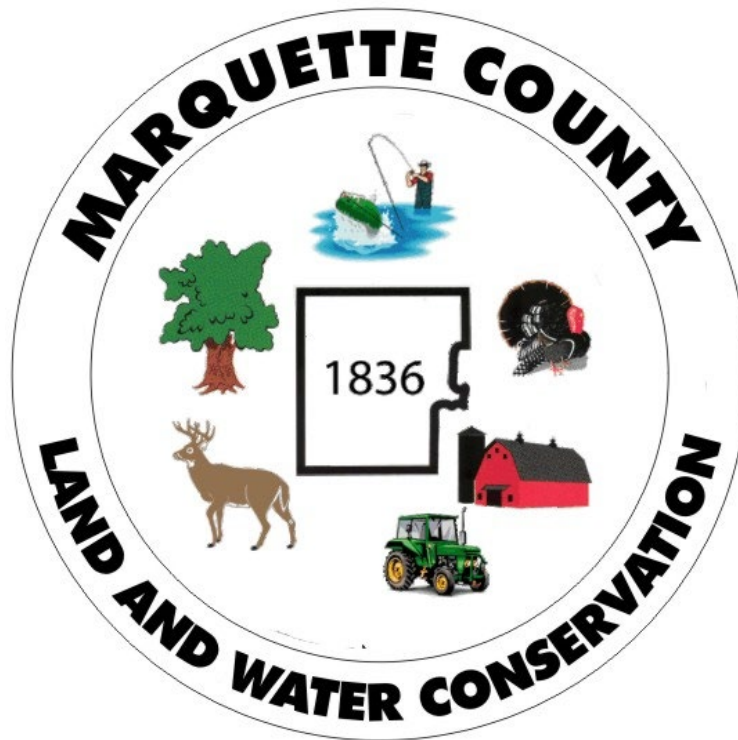


# **MARQUETTE COUNTY LAND & WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**

## **2024 Annual Report**



**Compiled for the County Board of Supervisors & County  
Landowners**

**TO THE HONORABLE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Thank You for another year of your support of the Land & Water Conservation Department (LWCD).

As usual our focus is on agricultural run-off (State Performance Standards) and its effect on surface water. The department also works diligently on other key issues such as lakeshore and near shore run-off, mine reclamation, wildlife damage, recycling, education, etc.

As it has the past few years, Nutrient Management Planning and Soil Health have been the focus of the Department. Look for more information on this later in this report.

# LAND AND WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Land & Water Conservation Department covers many resource concerns that are either covered by or regulated by different County, State or Federal Programs or Regulations. The Land & Water Resource Management Section covers most of the different programs listed below: *Cost Share, Staff Support, Farmland Preservation, Nutrient Management Planning and Demo Farm Program.*

## **Cost Share Dollars:**

Cost share dollars made available in the form of grants to Marquette County Landowners. Priorities always start with agricultural run-off practices being the top concern to help us get Landowners in compliance with State Conservation Standards.

***2024 saw a total of \$124,298*** spent directly on Landowners in the County for Conservation Compliance!

### Cost Share Summary

Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture.....	<b>\$112,102</b>
Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grant.....	<b>\$ 12,196</b>

## **Pollutant Reduction:**

*What did we get for all the Cost Share Dollars spent in 2024 (section above)?*

Agricultural practices accounted for the following reductions in pollutants to County Waterways:

<b>Phosphorus Reduction:</b>	<b>2,766 lbs.</b>
<b>Nitrogen Reduction:</b>	<b>1,304 lbs.</b>
<b>Suspended Solids Reduction:</b>	<b>653 lbs.</b>

## **Staff Support Grants:**

Marquette County is reimbursed by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture (DATCP) for a large majority of all staff dollars. The State supplies these grant dollars, so that Marquette County continues to have a viable Land and Water Conservation presence while implementing the State Run-Off (Ag-Performance) Standards.

### Salary/Grant Reimbursement Breakdown

2024 LWCD Salary/Benefit Totals: \$304,204

DNR Recycling Grant:	\$ 10,117
<u>Wis. DATCP Grant:</u>	<u>\$144,736</u>

Total County Levy for salaries: \$149,351

**The Land Conservation Department Staff (3 Full Time) were only \$149,351 against the tax levy.**

## **Farmland Preservation:**

### **2024 FPP Final Participation:**

*107 Eligible Landowners were issued a Notice of Compliance  
0 Ineligible Landowners were issued Notice of Non-Compliance  
27,731.59 Claimed FPP Acres in Marquette County, for a total of \$277,315.90 in  
Wisconsin State Income Tax Credits.*

To receive the State Income Tax Credit, a Landowner must first be compliant with State Conservation Standards. The Land & Water Conservation Department must find their land to be compliant by looking at animal waste runoff, erosion, and nutrient management plans.

## **Nutrient Management Planning:**

*Marquette County now has a total of 44,049 Acres enrolled in Nutrient Management Planning. This is 62% of the cropland in Marquette County that is now enrolled in Nutrient Management Planning.*

Nutrient Management Planning affects farmers with OR without animal waste, as fertilizer and manure are both VALUABLE nutrients. A Nutrient Management Plan assures a farmer is not over applying manure or commercial fertilizer that pose an environmental threat (when over applied).

## **Cover Crop Practice Program:**

2024 was our second year of the Cover Crop Incentive Payment Program. This program had 13 farmers sign up and **plant Cover Crops on 1,030 acres in Marquette County.** A total of **\$30,900 was paid out to farmer participants.**

### **Farmer Training:**

Having an Agronomist on staff has proven valuable. This **position trained 4 new Landowners and updated/trained an additional 54 Landowners with existing plans on how to create and update their OWN Nutrient Management Plan.** This Farmer training gives them firsthand knowledge of a plan and most importantly gives them ownership in the plan, so they will follow and implement it.

### **Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grant:**

**Marquette County was awarded the Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grant with \$12,195.95.** NMFE payments were made to farmers that attended our NMP farmer training classes. The grant also provides support costs, so these training courses are held at no cost to the County. We have applied for this grant again for the upcoming year.

### **Upper Fox DEMO Farm & Fox Wolf Alliance DEMO Farm:**

Continuing in 2024, Marquette County worked in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help facilitate a grant for a Demo Farm in Marquette County. A local farmer, Zeb Zuehls practiced no-till and broadcast spread several different varieties of cover crop mixes into his corn and soybeans to improve his soil health and reduce soil erosion. Zeb also completed a fencing project for his cattle to graze his cover crops that were interseeded in his corn field. The animals were able graze on both left over corn residue and the cover crop mix. This also helped Zeb reduce his manure hauling.

Our Fox Wolf Alliance Demo Farm with Soda Farms LLC was a huge success this year. The Sodas practiced no-till and they also interseeded a multi-species cover crop mix into their corn in early June. They also broadcast spread a rye cover crop into their standing corn in early September and seeded down wheat to keep a cover on fields over winter. It was great seeing a farm plant cover crops three different methods at three different times.

### **Soil Health Field Day:**

A Soil Health Field Day was held at Soda Farms LLC last fall and was successfully attended by 52 people. The Field Day showcased information on no-till practices, different cover crop species and application methods. A rainfall simulator was on site and a demonstration was provided by NRCS. The UW-Wisconsin Wisco-Net team also came and shared different weather tracking devices and methods to optimize planting/application timing.

Afternoon presentations were held on Nutrient Management, Farmland Preservation Program and Cost Sharing options from County Staff and a DATCP representative. The highlight of the Field Day was notably a field walk to look at the Soda Farms different cover crop fields. We were able to see three different cover crop options. We're so thankful to work with such great conservation farmers in Marquette County!

Below are photos that were taken at our Soil Health Field Day. Special thanks to the Soda Farm Family and all the cooperating agencies that helped to make our field day a success!



Steve and Kevin Soda- Soda Farms LLC

## **Other Programs of Importance:**

### **Healthy Lakes Grant:**

This was the 6<sup>th</sup> year Marquette County took advantage of the Healthy Lakes Grant. This Grant helps landowners restore their property shorelines with native plantings and conservation practices that help maintain a healthy shoreline. We had 4 landowners in Marquette County receive grant reimbursements of \$1,000 each in 2024.

### **Non-Metallic Mine Reclamation:**

Mine Reclamation (restoring quarries to their pre-mining condition) is usually a quiet program. Marquette County receives annual fees from all operators below which totaled \$1,475.00.

#### **Marquette County Mines (ACTIVE):**

<u>Owner/Operator:</u>	<u>Acres:</u>
Richard Pit/Marquette County Highway	12
Frozone/Milestone Materials	30
Wampler	3

### **Aquatic Invasive Species:**

The Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator (*AIS Coordinator*) performs annual lake inspections in Marquette County for Aquatic plants, education to landowners and Lake Groups on plant ID and removal options.

This position is **100% paid for by State DNR Grants** through our conservation partner from Stevens Point, the ***Golden Sands Resource, Conservation & Development*** Association (RC&D).

### **Zoning Department Assistance:**

The County Land & Water Conservation Department assists the County Zoning Department in certain environmental areas each year. These include (not limited to) Construction Site Erosion Control, Stormwater, Board of Adjustment requests and other Zoning Ordinance issues as needed.

Construction Site Erosion Control Plans:	25
Infiltration Plans/Administrative Reviews:	12

### **Wildlife Damage Program:**

Total appraised damage done by Whitetail Deer in Marquette County during 2024 totaled **\$53,394** with payable claims to 5 Landowners amounting to **\$41,970**. Maximum payment a Landowner can receive is \$10,000 with 1 out of the 6 Landowners meeting this cap.

Please note this was reported damage, not complete damage in the entire County, if ALL damage was reported it would be an astronomical number.

### **Tree and Shrub Sale:**

The 2024 Tree Sale was another great year for our sale. **We had a total of 324 customers ordering a total of 42,500 trees!**

We work very hard together to make this sale a success year after year. We're especially thankful for all our volunteers that help. SPECIAL THANKS to the County Zoning Staff (Tom & Jean) and the USDA/NRCS Staff for helping us each year with our Tree Sale! Also, all the hard-working Westfield High School FFA Program students, who volunteered their time.

### **Recycling:**

Residents continued (for the 26<sup>th</sup> year in a row) to recycle more pounds of recyclables per household than the rates set by the DNR. This is an excellent track record for Marquette County. DNR requires a minimum of 82.4 pounds of recyclables per person and residents of Marquette County **recycled 159.8 pounds per Capita!**

The Recycling Grant from Wisconsin DNR are supplied by the Marquette County Land & Water Conservation Department to every Town/Village/Municipality in the County except the Villages of Oxford and Endeavor. The total 2023 DNR grant for this program was \$78,865.48 with total expenditures by the Municipalities at \$244,534.

Recycling is another program we manage that does not use any tax levy at the County level. All related County recycling expenses are reimbursed to Marquette County at 100%.

### **Soil Health Field Day Photos Continued:**



Soil Health Day Field Walk to view Interseeded Cover Crops.





Soil Health Field Day Attendees

## Summary

Marquette County, for a smaller County, has a very active Conservation Community that is always ready to address a resource concern in the County. Whether it's a lake group, agricultural group or just a recreational landowner, they are always ready.

It is thanks to the continued support of the County Board of Supervisors that makes this County always on the forefront of conservation.

Thanks for your past and future support of the Marquette County Land & Water Conservation Department.

Respectively Submitted  
Patrick Kilbey  
County Conservationist