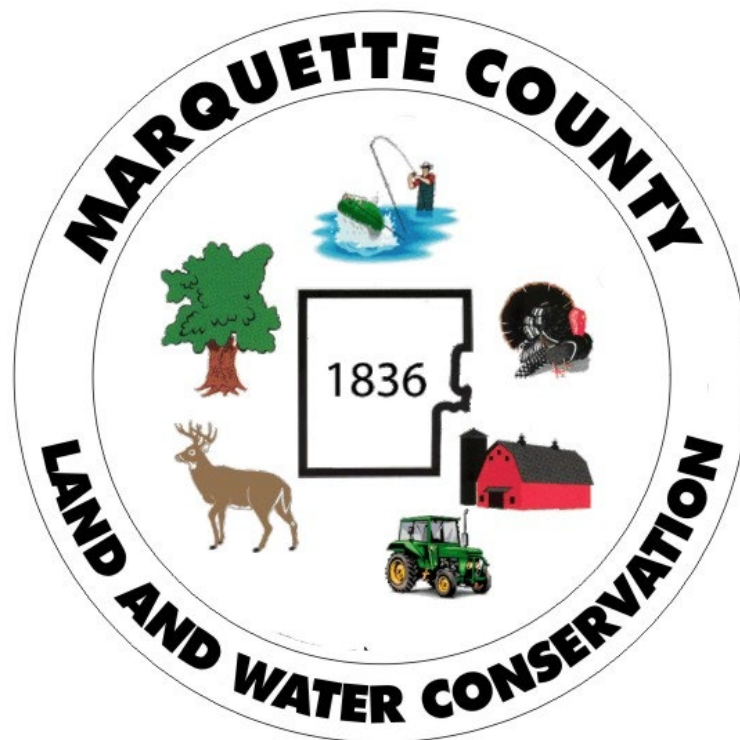


**MARQUETTE COUNTY
LAND & WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT**

2025 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, Watershed 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.

2025 saw a total of \$101,787 spent directly on Landowners in the County for Conservation Compliance!

Cost Share Summary

Wisconsin Dept. of Agriculture.....	\$ 86,019
Nutrient Management Farmer Education Grant.....	\$ 12,768
Wisconsin DNR Water Quality Grants.....	\$ 3,000

Pollutant Reduction:

What did we get for all the Cost Share Dollars spent in 2025 (section above)?

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

Phosphorus Reduction:	525 lbs.
Nitrogen Reduction:	1,097 lbs.
Suspended Solids Reduction:	583 lbs.

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

2025 LWCD Salary/Benefit Totals: \$274,234

DNR Recycling Grant:	\$ 8,804
<u>Wis. DATCP Grant:</u>	<u>\$150,748</u>

Total County Levy for salaries: \$114,682

The Land Conservation Department Staff (3 Full Time) were only \$114,682 against the tax levy.

Farmland Preservation:

2025 FPP Final Participation:

*134 Eligible Landowners were issued a Notice of **Compliance**
0 Ineligible Landowners were issued Notice of **Non-Compliance**
32,699.68 Claimed FPP Acres in Marquette County, for a total of \$326,996.80 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 46,013 Acres enrolled in Nutrient Management Planning. This is 64% 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).

Farmer Training:

Having an Agronomist on staff has proven valuable. This position trained 3 new Landowners and updated/trained an additional 56 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 \$12,804.05. NMFE payments were made to farmers that attended our NMP farmer training classes. The grant also covers 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.

9-Key Watershed Planning (Buffalo Lake Watershed)

In 2025 Marquette County started watershed wide planning in 2 sub-watersheds either touching (Buffalo Lake watershed) or directly upstream (Good Earth Creek). Planning started in 2025 and will continue into 2027 when a copy of the plan will be sent to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Federal approvals. Buffalo Lake District (through their Water Quality Committee) has pledged \$10,000 to help offset costs. Marquette County also applied for and received a Lake Planning Grant for an additional \$10,000 to pay for plan development.

Upper Fox DEMO Farm & Fox Wolf Alliance DEMO Farm:

Continuing in 2025, Marquette County worked in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to help facilitate a grant for two Demo Farms in Marquette County. Two local farms, Delwin Farms Inc. and farmer Zeb Zuehls practiced no-till and planted several different varieties of cover crops. They tried new cover crop seed species and new cover crop planting methods.

Zeb also 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.

Soil Health Field Day:

A Drone Interseeding Field Day was held at Delwin Farms Inc. and was successfully attended by 57 people. The field day showcased information on drone interseeding cover crops into cash crops. We discussed the benefits of interseeding and why a drone can be helpful with extending planting time windows for cover crops. The drone interseeding was done on three different fields; soybeans, sweet corn and field corn to compare how the cover crop was established in different growing crops.

We held a second field day in the Fall again at Delwin Farms Inc. to see how the drone interseeded cover crops held up post-harvest. This field day had 20 attendees to see how the cover crop sustained being driven over by harvest equipment and the growth of the cover crop since the interseeding.

We're so thankful to work with such great conservation farmers in Marquette County!

-See below photos that were taken at our Drone Interseeding Field Day and at our Post Harvest Field Day. Also included are also photos of Zeb Zuehls cattle grazing his interseeded cover crops and crop residue post-harvest.

Other Programs of Importance:

Healthy Lakes Grant:

This was the 7th 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 3 landowners in Marquette County receive grant reimbursements of \$1,000 each in 2025.

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 \$1,700.00. The total acreage number increased in 2025 as one operation increased their size by 9 acres.

Marquette County Mines (ACTIVE):

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

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 Grant of \$11,681. *Golden Sands Resource, Conservation & Development Association (RC&D)*** contracts with Marquette County to provide AIS Services.

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: 22
Infiltration Plans/Administrative Reviews: 9

Wildlife Damage Program:

Total *appraised* damage done by Whitetail Deer in Marquette County during 2025 totaled **\$59,568** with payable claims to 6 Landowners amounting to **\$45,195**. Maximum payment a Landowner can receive is \$10,000 with 2 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 2025 Tree Sale was another great year for our sale. **We had a total of 322 customers ordering a total of 44,000 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 (Jean & Zach) 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 27th 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 142.28 pounds/person/year**

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 2025 DNR grant for this program was \$78,841 with total expenditures by the Municipalities at \$220,762.

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%.

Drone Cover Crop Interseeding Field Day Photos:





Post Harvest Drone Interseeding Field Day Photo:



Zeb Zuehls cattle grazing his interseeded cover crops/corn residue photos:





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.

Respectfully Submitted
Patrick Kilbey
County Conservationist