



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a bright yellow circle in the upper left, with its light reflecting as a shimmering path of golden light down the center of the water. In the distance, a long bridge with multiple support pillars spans across the horizon. To the right of the bridge, a dark silhouette of a lighthouse stands against the orange sky.

*Great Lakes
Restoration
Initiative
in Wisconsin
2011-2012*

Conservation Beyond Boundaries



FROM THE STATE CONSERVATIONIST



The Great Lakes are truly a natural treasure and NRCS is proud to be one of 11 federal agencies supporting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Our conservation professionals provide technical assistance to install proven conservation practices on the land.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is known for its accomplishments and innovations in conservation. NRCS staff is recognized for their talent, dedication and ingenuity in helping private landowners conserve natural resources.

The Wisconsin staff dedicated to this initiative have years of experience in delivering the financial and technical assistance required to make this project successful. This team has an efficient, smart strategic approach to conservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patricia A. Leavenworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Pat Leavenworth

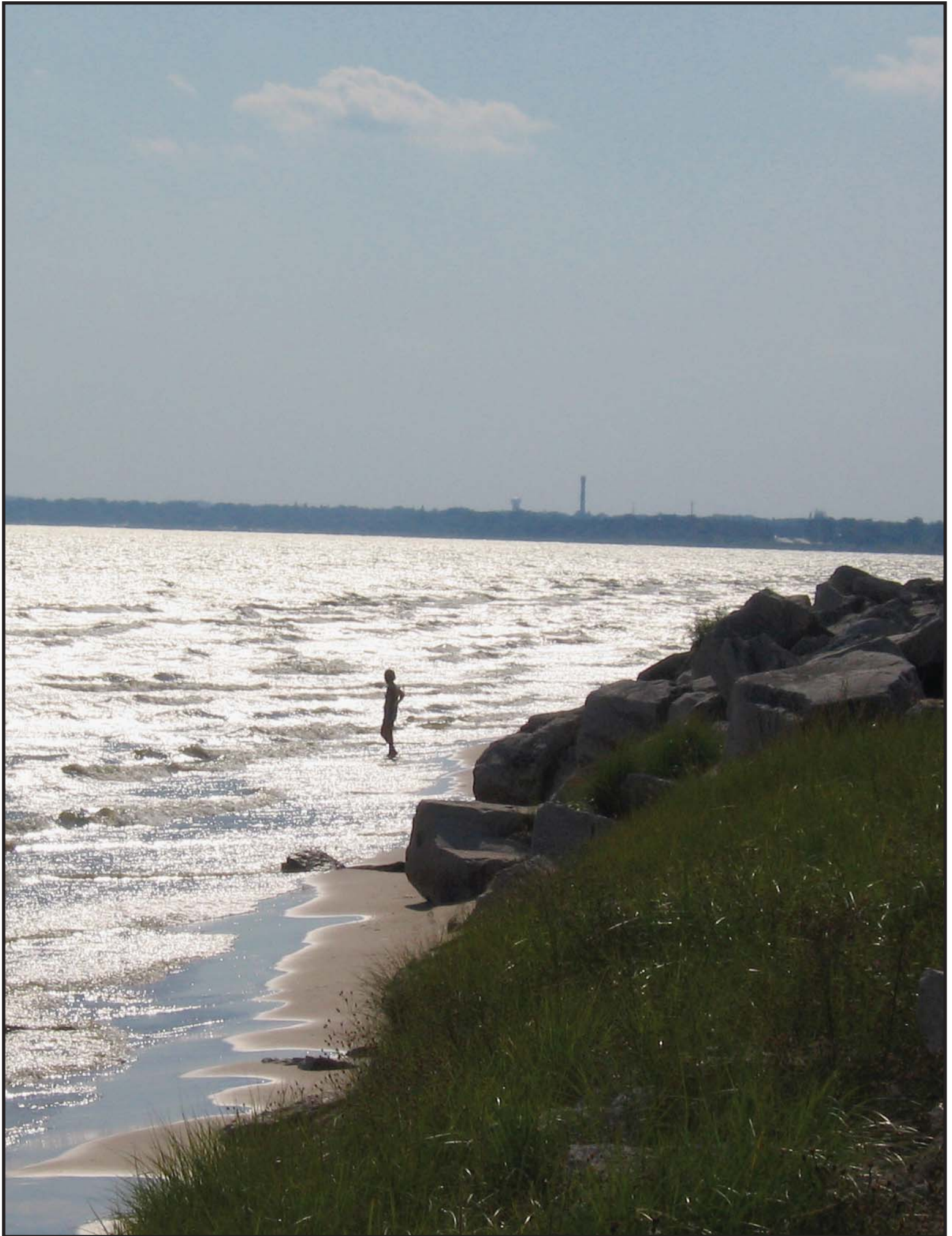
State Conservationist - Wisconsin

Helping People Help the Land

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has assisted Wisconsin landowners in conserving natural resources on private lands for over 75 years. Resource stewardship is a vital part of conservation and is the primary mission of NRCS.



*“Conservation
Beyond
Boundaries”*



Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The Great Lakes are a key part of Wisconsin's identity. Wisconsin enjoys nearly 800 miles of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior coastline. Nearly one-third of the land and one-half of the population of Wisconsin reside within the Great Lakes basin. The economy and quality of life in Wisconsin depend on the ecological health of the Lakes for water supply, tourism, and recreation.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin is playing a central role in carrying out the GLRI Action Plan. We are dedicating staff, developing partnerships, and targeting financial assistance within specific watersheds of the Great Lakes. We are working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency to ensure we achieve or exceed the restoration goals of the Action Plan.

Conservation Beyond Boundaries

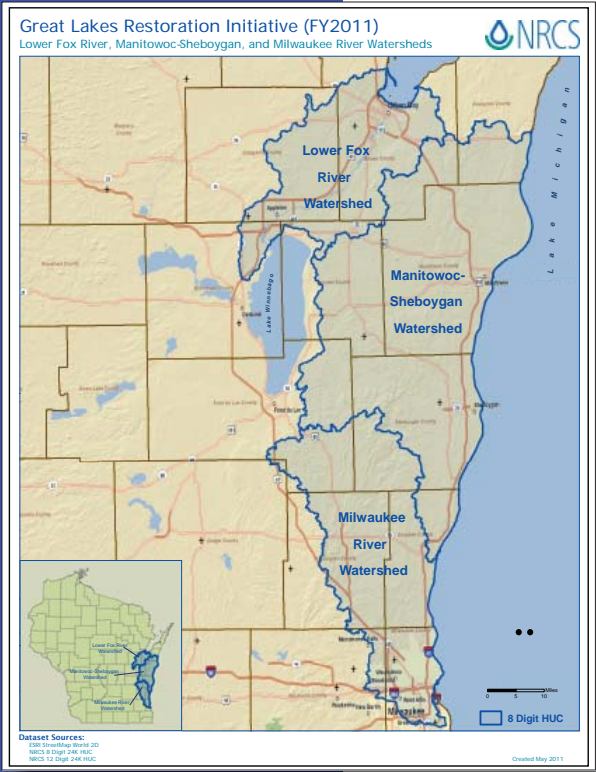
Clean water, abundant wildlife, and productive agriculture are all interconnected. Conservation doesn't have man-made boundaries. That's why NRCS is addressing natural resource priorities on a landscape scale. Our conservation solutions are to benefit both landowners and the environment, provide wildlife habitat and improve agricultural production.



The GLRI Action Plan calls for aggressive efforts to address five urgent priorities:

- 1. Clean up the most polluted areas in the lakes*
- 2. Combat invasive species*
- 3. Protect watersheds and shoreline from run-off*
- 4. Restore wetlands and other habitats*
- 5. Work with strategic partners on education, evaluation, and outreach*

The plan also provides accountability by including measures of progress and benchmarks for success over five years.



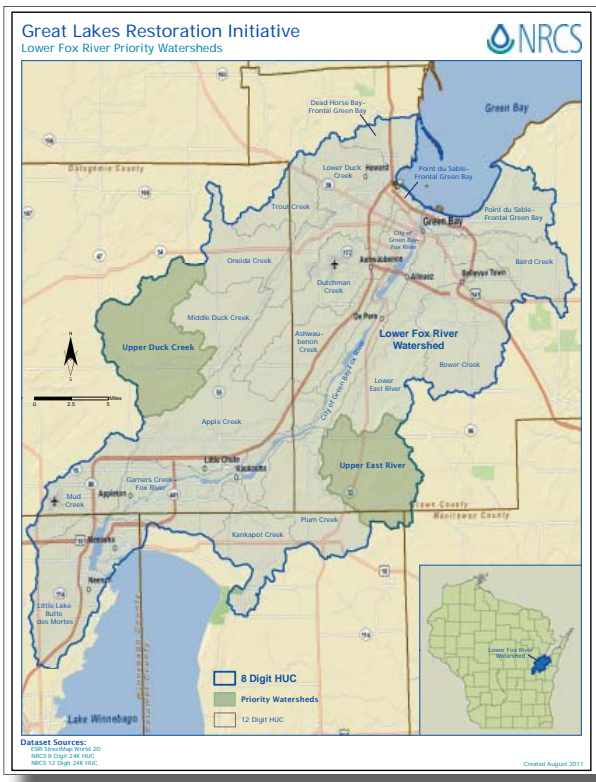
In Wisconsin, NRCS is focusing GLRI efforts on three Lake Michigan watersheds: Lower Fox River, Manitowoc-Sheboygan, and Milwaukee River. In 2010 and 2011, NRCS has invested nearly \$3 million in GLRI funding toward conservation practices in this area.

For 2012, EPA and NRCS have agreed to concentrate efforts in the Lower Fox River watershed. Several factors favor this focus:

- a large proportion (50% of land area) of the area is agricultural
- the basin delivers high volumes of phosphorus and sediment into the waters of Green Bay
- a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study, including targets for reducing phosphorus and sediment loading from agriculture, was recently submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency
- water quality monitoring efforts exist in the area

To further focus GLRI efforts in the Lower Fox watershed, NRCS consulted with County Land and Water Conservation staff to select two sub-watersheds within the Lower Fox basin. The Upper Duck Creek in Outagamie County and the Upper East River in Brown County will receive additional GLRI funding in 2012. This focus results from a combination of resource concerns, potential for improvement, and likely participation of land managers in these areas.

In addition to these focus areas, Wisconsin NRCS intends to continue supporting the highest ranking cost share applications throughout the same three Lake Michigan watersheds that GLRI has supported since 2010.



Measuring Results

The GLRI Action Plan sets annual targets for progress under each of its five major priorities, through 2014. In Wisconsin, NRCS works with Federal and local partners to measure the effects of conservation practices on water quality. In the Lower Fox River watershed; USGS is installing edge-of-field monitoring stations to track changes in the amount of nutrients and sediments leaving farm fields after conservation practices are applied. In the Milwaukee River basin; NRCS supports a project led by the Sand County Foundation to quantify water quality impacts of improved on-farm nutrient management planning.

The overall strategy is to achieve maximum conservation practices in each focus watershed, so that water quality actually improves downstream. This target approach to conservation seeks outcomes that can then be effectively scaled up to broader areas.



Through 2010 and 2011, NRCS in Wisconsin has committed just under \$3 million to contracts with farmers to reduce sediment and nutrient delivery in the Lake Michigan basin. Approximately 80 percent of these funds support practices to improve water quality leaving the farmstead namely, waste storage, waste treatment, manure transfer, heavy use area protection, waste solid/liquid separation, and roof runoff structures.

About 10 percent of these funds support nutrient management and associated cropland practices such as grassed waterways. Over five percent pays for the writing of comprehensive nutrient management plans for livestock operations. And nearly five percent supports prescribed grazing practices including grazing plans, fencing, and watering facilities.

As with other NRCS cost share programs, a minimum of 10 percent of the funds supported farms that qualify as beginning or historically underserved.

Current Staffing



NRCS currently employs six conservation staff exclusively for this initiative to ensure water quality results are achieved. Technical assistance money from GLRI will fund these positions through 2012 and will continue upon 2-year funding allocations through 2013.

Three Soil Conservationists and two Soil Conservation Technicians work directly with agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices in Brown, Sheboygan and Manitowoc counties.

A Resource Conservationist develops watershed plans and implementation strategies that target cost-share dollars to maximize water quality improvements basin-wide.

All staff work closely with other conservation professionals and network with local partners within and outside of government.

Measuring our accomplishments

In 2010 and 2011, Wisconsin NRCS contracted with 82 landowners on \$2.9 million in conservation practices in the Great Lakes Basin. This targeted GLRI funding is in addition to the general Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding that was contracted across Wisconsin.

Partnership projects ongoing as a result of GLRI funds and in cooperation with NRCS

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

Technical support to conservation professionals and farm operators to create nutrient management plans including use of SNAP-Plus nutrient management software.

Location: Throughout the three Wisconsin GLRI sub-basins

Outcomes: Write 150 plans; deliver 70 training sessions

Timeline: 2011-2013

The Sand County Foundation

Recruitment of landowners to apply nutrient management practices and implement water quality monitoring to measure impacts.

Location: Milwaukee River Watershed

Outcomes: Coordinate 100 farm visits; apply SNAP Plus on 30 fields

Timeline: 2011-2014

Outagamie County Land Conservation Department

Develop conservation plans with a focus on barnyard buffers.

Location: Throughout Lower Fox Basin in Outagamie County

Outcomes: 246 producers reached, 21,000 acres planned, 52 surveys and 38 designs

Timeline: 2011-2013

Ozaukee County Land Conservation Department

Develop conservation plans with a focus on cropland buffers.

Location: Milwaukee River and Sheboygan River sub-basins

Outcomes: 9000 acres planned

Timeline: 2010-2013

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Wisconsin Partners Assisting the NRCS Initiative:

Environmental Protection
Agency (EPA)

United States Geological
Survey (USGS)

Wisconsin Department
of Agriculture, Trade and
Consumer Protection
(DATCP)

Sand County Foundation

Outagamie County Land
Conservation Department

Ozaukee County Land
and Water Management
Department

Brown County Land
and Water Conservation
Department

Wisconsin December 2011

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