

# 2009 Annual Report



## Racine County Land Conservation Division

*The mission of the Land Conservation Division is to protect, preserve,  
and enhance the natural resources of Racine County.*

This report features some of the 2009 programs and projects which highlight the responsibilities of the Land Conservation Division. If you have any questions regarding our promoted programs or the County's natural resources, please contact this office at 262-886-8479 or at the Division's website <http://www.racineco.com>.

### 2009 Land Conservation Committee

Robert Grove . . . . .	<i>Chairman</i>
Mark Gleason . . . . .	<i>Vice-Chairman</i>
Daniel Sharkozy . . . . .	<i>Secretary</i>
Tom Pringle . . . . .	<i>County Board Member</i>
John Wisch . . . . .	<i>County Board Member</i>
Q.A. Shakoor II . . . . .	<i>County Board Member</i>
Ken Hall . . . . .	<i>County Board Member</i>
Keith Heineck . . . . .	<i>USDA Representative</i>

### 2009 Land Conservation Division Staff

Chad Sampson . . . . .	<i>County Conservationist</i>
Jonathan Grove . . . . .	<i>Project Specialist</i>
Krystal Freimark . . . . .	<i>Plan Reviewer</i>
Roberta Klingmeyer . . . . .	<i>Senior Clerk Typist</i>

# Racine County Land and Water Resource Management Plan (LWRMP) - (2008-2012)

Under the direction of the Land Conservation Committee (LCC), the LWRMP provides conservation goals and workload guidance for the Land Conservation Division (LCD). Updated in 2007, the LWRMP focuses on preventing soil erosion and improving water quality throughout the County. The current plan is in effect through 2012.

In 2009, the Division received \$132,032 from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WI-DATCP) for staff support and \$61,493 for conservation practice installation. With contract approval of the LCC, the LCD staff assessed Racine County resource needs and utilized appropriate Federal and State funds to meet soil erosion and water quality goals.



*Above: Marginal farmland restored to wetlands*

## Cost-share assistance

Cost-share assistance for conservation practices is provided through multiple Federal, State, and non-profit programs and grants; however, the Division's primary cost-share funding source is WI-DATCP's Soil and Water Resource Management Program (SWRMP). The maximum cost-share rate for eligible conservation practices via SWRMP is 70%. In 2009, our office assisted 25 separate landowners with the implementation of 37 different conservation practices. The total construction cost of installing conservation practices in 2009 was \$174,885.

The conservation practices installed in 2009 included:

- 21,857 feet** *Grassed waterways*
- 6,773 feet** *Subsurface drainage along waterway systems*
- 222.6 acres** *Certified nutrient management*
- 67 feet** *Shoreland stabilization*
  - 7** *Grade stabilization structures*
  - 2** *Rock channel crossings (as part of waterway)*
  - 2** *Surface inlets (as part of waterway system)*
  - 1** *Barnyard runoff control structure*



*Above: Cash grain farm in Racine County*

## Farmland Preservation Program

Since 1981, the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) has existed within Racine County in an effort to protect valuable farmland from converting to developed lands. Eligible landowners located within the Towns of Waterford and Burlington, zoned A-1 General Farming District 1 can claim tax credits through the FPP's Exclusive Agricultural Zoning (A-1) provision. For participating farmers located in the remainder of the County, signed long-term agreements are required. The County is required to spot check participating farms for conservation compliance every four years. Starting in 2010, the State's revised FPP provisions adopted via the Working Lands Initiative will take effect.



*Above: Racine County farm*

In 2009, 19 Racine County farmers participated in the program with 3,626 acres enrolled. The average tax credit in Racine County was \$652. Five participating farms were inspected to determine conservation compliance for program eligibility.

## Siting Livestock Operations

Recent changes to the Livestock Facility Siting Law, consisting of State Statute 93.90 and Rule ATCP 51, have changed how local governments regulate the siting of new and/or expanding livestock operations. In 2006, Racine County adopted a Livestock Siting Ordinance (2006-91). New State and County regulations require new and expanding livestock facilities with more than 500 animal units (AU) to apply for a Livestock Siting permit.

The permit requirements include:

- Property line setbacks
- Management plans
- Odor management
- Manure management
- Manure storage facilities
- Runoff management



*Above: Liquid manure injected into cropland*

In 2009, Racine County received one application in which a permit was issued. The permit was challenged by an aggrieved neighbor and taken before the State's Livestock Siting Review Board. The County's decision was upheld by the Board.

## Agricultural Performance Standards

A component of the LWRMP is to uphold the established State Agricultural Performance Standards, as listed below. Our implementation strategy requires that all farms included in the Farmland Preservation Program and any landowners currently receiving cost-share funds must have all farm operations in compliance and meet the established standards within five years' time. Initial compliance includes monitoring all farm fields to insure fields are within tolerable soil loss rates (T) and creating or upholding phosphorus-based nutrient management plans.

### ***NR 151 Agricultural Performance Standards***

#### **Farmers growing agricultural crops:**

- Must meet acceptable T-rates on all cropped fields
- Must develop and uphold nutrient management plans

#### **Farmers who raise, feed, or house livestock:**

- May not direct runoff from feedlots or stored manure structures into waters of the State
- May not allow livestock access to waters of the State where high concentrations of animals prevent the maintenance of adequate or self-sustaining sod cover
- Must develop and uphold nutrient management plans



*Above: Livestock siting facility*

#### **Farmers who have or plan to build a manure storage structure:**

- Must maintain a structure to prevent overflow, leakage, or structural failure
- Must repair or upgrade a failing or leaking structure that poses an imminent health threat or violates groundwater standards
- Must close a structure according to accepted standards
- Must meet technical standards for a newly constructed or substantially altered structure

**Farmers with land in a water quality management area: [defined as an area within: 1) 300 feet of a stream, 2) 1000 feet from a lake, 3) an area susceptible to groundwater contamination]**

- May not stack manure in unconfined piles
- Must divert clean water away from feedlots, manure storage areas, and barnyards located within this area

## Technical Reviews and Staff Field Checks

Staff recommendations for erosion control and stormwater practices are administered for any new construction or proposed alterations and/or additions to structures within the County's shoreland jurisdictional areas. Shoreland areas are defined as 1) within 300 feet from a navigable watercourse or 2) within 1000 feet from a lake. Pond reviews are also completed to determine pond functionality and safety. Staff field checks are completed as a result of public concerns and/or complaints to determine if ordinances or departmental policies are being met; typical concerns include drainage, flooding, and animal waste.



*Above: Proper silt fence installation*

- 46 Shoreland contract technical reviews
- 12 Gypsy moth concerns/infestations
- 3 Pond reviews
- 8 Animal waste / manure spreading complaints
- 3 Drainage concerns (i.e., illegal filling / ditching / tile maintenance / flooding)

## Tree Program

Beginning in 1984, the tree program has allowed Racine County citizens a chance to purchase and plant seedling trees at minimal prices for conservation uses and practices (i.e., wind breaks, wood lots, and the promotion of wildlife habitat). In 2009, the Land Conservation Division (LCD) sold over 41,000 trees to 310 landowners. The 2 to 3 year old seedlings were sold in bundles of 25 with prices ranging from \$10 to \$13 per bundle. A variety of pines, spruces, shrubs, and hardwoods are available for purchase on an annual basis. The program also includes native prairie mixes and wildflowers for owners interested in a native conservation cover.



*Above: Newly planted seedlings*

## Gypsy Moth Suppression Program

The Gypsy Moth Suppression Program is a voluntary partnership involving the State, County, local municipalities, and landowners in a WI-DNR organized aerial insecticide treatment to suppress damaging gypsy moth populations; which in turn can cause heavy tree defoliation. The suppression program sprays are completed in May and June; areas qualifying as spray blocks are determined in the fall. In 2009, 20 acres within the Town of Burlington were sprayed.

*Below: Aerial gypsy moth spraying*



## Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP is a partnership between the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WI-DATCP), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI-DNR), and participating Land Conservation Departments throughout the State. It is an opportunity for Racine County landowners to enroll agricultural lands into various conservation practices including: riparian buffers, wetland restorations, and the establishment of native grassland areas. The State contract with Racine County is through January 2013.

In 2009, four Racine County landowners enrolled in the program. They installed 2.7 acres of grassed waterways and 10.7 acres of grassed buffers. The total cost-share amounts received by landowners through the State's portion of the program were \$6,835.60; the State incentive bonuses totaled \$2,388.20.



*Above: Grassed waterway and buffer installed using CREP*

## Federal Conservation Program Assistance

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a federally-funded program that provides financial assistance to landowners installing conservation practices. In 2009, eight landowners received \$63,400 in cost-share assistance using this program.



*Above: Barnyard installed to control animal waste through EQIP*

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) allows landowners to improve their land(s) to promote wildlife. In 2009, Racine County had one participant that received \$1,400.

Federal programs are not only important to landowners due to the ample amounts of financial assistance they provide, but the programs also assist our office in our attempts to achieve the goals and objectives stated in our Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

## Informational and Educational Activities

Educational literature with a focus on shoreland restoration, lawn care, and water quality is distributed to the general public via this office and/or the Land Conservation Division booth at the Racine County Fair.

**ANNUAL POSTER CONTEST:** The Land Conservation office annually participates in the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WLWCA) environmental poster contest. The 2009 theme was “DIG IT: The Secrets of Soil”. Twenty-nine 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at St. John’s Lutheran School, Racine, submitted creative posters for judging. The winning poster advanced to the Southeast area contest and took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Middle Division.

**TIES TO THE LAND:** Our quarterly newsletter, “Ties to the Land”, provides timely updates on conservation programs, as well as news and information that can be used to promote a healthy environment.

**RURAL LANDOWNER CONFERENCE:** The LCD co-hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Southeast Wisconsin Rural Landowner Conference on November 7, 2009 with cooperation from UW-Extension, Kenosha County, USDA, and several non-profit groups. Over 70 landowners attended this event. The multi-jurisdictional agency effort was established to address issues affecting rural landowners and farmers within the surrounding area. A tradeshow and farmers’ market accompanied the workshop to promote locally produced and sustainable goods.



*Above: Rural Landowner Conference session*

## Wildlife Damage and Abatement Claims Program

The Wildlife Damage and Abatement Claims Program is a cooperative effort by Racine County, WI-DNR, and USDA Wildlife Services to control agricultural crop damage caused by deer, geese, turkey, and bear. This program provides farmers, growers, and producers the necessary technical and/or operational assistance in identifying, abating, controlling, and assessing wildlife damage to agricultural interests. Agricultural producers must contact the USDA Wildlife Services within 14 days after first notice of damages to their crops to be eligible for abatement and/or compensation. There were no claims submitted within Racine County in 2009.

## Deer Donation Program

The Wildlife Damage Deer Donation program marked its 10-year anniversary in the fall of 2009. Since the program began in 2000, hunters have donated nearly 70,000 deer which were processed into 3.1 million pounds of ground venison which were donated to local food pantries. Since 2002, the voluntary venison processing has netted more than \$123,000 from some 40,000 hunters. As in previous years, Racine County participated in this program in 2009.

## Land Conservation Division - State Mandated Services

### **1) Land & Water Resource Management Plan: (ATCP 50, Ch. 92)**

- a. *Mandated by ATCP 50 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code found under Chapter 92 (Wisconsin Statutes)*
- b. *Funded by State of Wisconsin Soil and Water Resource Management Program (SWRMP)*

Under the direction of the Racine County Land Conservation Committee, and administered by the Land Conservation office this program protects the environment through agricultural conservation measures including: farm compliance, agricultural planning, conservation engineering, animal waste management, nutrient management, erosion control, and water quality issues related to the SWRMP.

### **2) Farmland Preservation Program - Working Lands Initiative: (ATCP 50, Ch. 91)**

- a. *Mandated under Chapter 91 (Wisconsin Statutes)*

This program reviews compliance on farm conservation plans, and requires appropriate crop rotations, tillage methods, erosion control plans, animal waste storage and handling practices, as well as nutrient management. Qualifying farmers with an A-1 zoning classification or with a farm certificate are eligible for tax credits.

### **3) Livestock Facility Siting: (ATCP 51, Ch 93.90)**

- a. *State statute (s93.90) and rule (ATCP 51)*

The Land Conservation office regulates new and expanding livestock operations within Racine County. The County uses the application and worksheets in ATCP 51 to determine if the proposed facility meets the following standards: property line and road setbacks, management plans, odor management, manure management, animal waste storage facilities, and runoff management.

### **4) Non-point source Program: (NR 151)**

- a. *Wisconsin Administrative Rule NR 151: Agricultural Standards and Prohibitions and Non-agriculture Performance Standards*
- b. *This is a companion administrative rule to ATCP 50*

In conjunction with the SWRMP, NR 151 regulates runoff management from agricultural and nonagricultural sources. Runoff from agricultural facilities includes: erosion, manure storage, clean water diversions, and nutrient management. The manure management prohibitions include: no manure storage facility overflows; no unconfined manure piles within 1000 feet of a lake, 300 feet of a stream; and/or areas susceptible to groundwater contamination; no direct runoff from feedlots or stored manure into the waters of the State; and no unlimited access to State waters by livestock.

### **5) Non-Metallic Mining: (NR 135)**

The LCD conducts on-site reviews, as well as mine reclamation inspections, and planning related analysis in reference to non-metallic mining compliance.