

Wetlands, Wildlife Habitat, and Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin

Promoting Collaboration to Restore Wetlands and Floodplains and Mitigate Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin

A 4-Part Webinar Series for Busy Professionals¹

Resource Brief – Wetland Restoration in the Rock River Basin

Half of the original 10 million acres of wetlands in Wisconsin have been ditched and drained for agriculture or filled to create land for houses, roads, or commercial development. Protecting and restoring Wisconsin's wetlands and watersheds requires involvement of many partner agencies and organizations. This webinar will focus on opportunities for and the multiple benefits of effective wetland and watershed protection and restoration in the Rock River Basin and throughout the state.

- *Refining the Potentially Restorable Wetland Map*- Scott Taylor, Rock River Coalition

The Rock River Coalition seeks strategies to reduce nutrient contamination of waterways in the Rock River Basin. The Rock River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report, a study of phosphorus loading to the Rock River and its tributaries, identified wetland restoration as one of several strategies to reduce water pollution and improve water quality in the Basin. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has already mapped potentially restorable wetlands throughout the Rock River Basin. The Rock River Coalition has decided to refine this “potentially restorable wetland” (PRW) map to identify, at a finer scale, drained wetland basins with high restoration potential. The Coalition plans to accomplish this by overlaying parcel maps onto PRW maps to find single-ownership basins, and then to field-verify the restorability of these basins.

The Coalition is still searching for funds for this project. However, the organization has already learned that development of new conservation strategies leads naturally to partnerships among organizations. Once the Coalition obtains funding for the project, the organization will be positioned to collaborate with numerous public and non-profit organizations that will assist with project execution and will make use of the end product, a refined map of restorable wetlands.

- *Delavan Lake Watershed Initiative Network* – Maggie Zoellner, Delavan Lake Watershed Initiative Network

The Delavan Lake Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) is a voluntary collaboration of agencies and groups working to protect and improve water quality in the Delavan Lake Watershed. The Delavan Lake WIN has successfully implemented many improvement projects on agricultural land since its inception in 2010 and is now gathering data to create a protection plan for the head water basin, Jackson Creek. The Jackson Creek Protection Plan will consider potentially restorable wetlands, current stream and watershed

¹ See www.eli.org/pdf/wetlandsguidebook.pdf for more information on this webinar series.

conditions, and local community input to formulate a protection plan supported by the local communities. The protection plan will be completed in December 2013.

- ***The NAWCA Grant Process and Ongoing Restoration/Protection Work in the Rock River Basin*** – Michele Kille, *The Nature Conservancy*

Wisconsin has historically been among the most successful states in the nation in securing millions of dollars in North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant funds to protect, restore, and enhance critical wetlands and associated upland habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. The NAWCA Grant Program offers tremendous leveraging power to provide funding for landscape-scale conservation projects and its success is due in large part to its strong partnership model. NAWCA grants offer an excellent opportunity to bring diverse partnerships together to implement large-scale conservation projects that benefit migratory birds and wetland-associated wildlife and provide other important services like water quality and flood control. In the Rock River Basin, there are two active and successful multi-phase NAWCA grant initiatives that have resulted in the combined protection, restoration, and enhancement of over 42,000 acres of wetlands and associated uplands over more than a decade. Learning how to effectively navigate the NAWCA process is the key to developing successful proposals and sustaining vital long-term wetland conservation initiatives in the Rock River Basin and throughout the state.

For more information about the NAWCA program, visit The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Division of Bird Habitat Conservation website: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/Grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>