

AGENDA
CONSERVATION, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: **Wednesday, February 4, 2026**
TIME: **9:00 AM**
LOCATION: **Courthouse – Room 302**

1. Call meeting to order
2. Declaration of Quorum
3. Public Comments (*brief comments/statement regarding committee business*)
4. Review Correspondence.
5. Approve minutes of January 7, 2026, meeting
6. Approve vouchers, staff reports, & committee reports
7. Risk and Injury Report
8. Extension
 - a. General Office Update
 - b. Extension Wood County Programming Overview
9. Land & Water Conservation Department
 - a. Approve budget resolution for amendment to 2025 DATCP budget
 - b. Update on Central Wis. Farm Profitability Expo Event held Jan. 27, 2026
 - c. Update on Mill Creek Watershed / source of chloride
 - d. Update on ongoing violations
10. Private Sewage
11. Land Records
 - a. Consider budget resolution for unanticipated expenses of \$43,765.73.
12. County Surveyor
13. Planning & Zoning
14. Economic Development
 - a. Consider release of 2026 economic development grant funds for CranCity Corner in the amount of \$20,000.
 - b. Consider match & program change to Wood County Health Department Catch A Ride economic development grant.
15. Committee requests for per diem for meeting attendance
16. Schedule next regular committee meeting
17. Agenda items for next meeting
18. Schedule any additional meetings if necessary
19. Adjourn

Join by phone
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Join by WebEx App or website
<https://woodcountywi.webex.com/woodcountywi/j.php?MTID=mf2c9b906d85229beb0805c321e51ca89>
Webinar number: 2499 584 9015
Webinar password: 020426

MINUTES
CONSERVATION, EDUCATION, & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 7, 2026

TIME: 9:00 AM

PLACE: Courthouse – Room 302

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Leichtnam, Tom Buttke, Wayne Schulz, Russ Perlock, Tim Hovendick (via WebEx, arriving at 9:35 AM), George Gilbertson

OTHERS PRESENT: Trent Miner, County Clerk; See attached sign-in list

1. Chairman Leichtnam called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and declared a quorum present.
2. There were no public comments.
3. Under correspondence, County Conservationist Wucherpfennig announced the upcoming Wisconsin Land + Water Annual Conference.
4. The minutes of the December 3, 2025, meeting were presented. Motion by Buttke/Perlock to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.
5. Motion by Schulz/Buttke to approve the vouchers, monthly department reports and committee reports. Motion carried unanimously.
6. Interim Area Extension Director McGivern provided an updated timeline on when a new Area Director would be in place with the final interviews occurring at the end of this month. The hope is to have them on the job by March.
7. Wucherpfennig highlighted the upcoming Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo being held in Marshfield on January 27, 2026.
8. Central Wisconsin Windshed Partnership Coordinator, Shannon Roedhe, provided a yearly update of activities completed over the past year, including planted and maintained windbreaks and snow fence.
9. Wucherpfennig reviewed the current status of the Mill Creek chloride issue and noted that not much has transpired in this regard due to the holidays. More information will be forthcoming.
10. Wucherpfennig brought the committee up to date on the current violations.
11. County Planner Simkowski presented a resolution amending the Town of Saratoga Zoning Ordinance, highlighting the various changes. Motion by Buttke/Schulz to approve the resolution and forward onto the county board for their consideration. Motion carried unanimously.
12. Planning & Zoning Director Grueneberg reviewed the current status of the Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) around the Marshfield area. Two companies received funding to

ensure this area of the county has broadband access. Wood County should be completely covered by the end of 2028.

13. Grueneberg & Extension Educator Rombalski reviewed the proposed economic development grant application. The committee noted a couple of changes and then, by consensus, instructed staff that this version was ready to be distributed.
14. Motion by Leichtnam/Buttke to approve per diem and mileage to one member of the CEED Committee to attend the Citizens Water Group each month. Motion carried unanimously.
15. The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at 9:00 AM.
16. Motion by Buttke/Perlock to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously at 10:17 AM.

Minutes taken by Trent Miner, County Clerk, and are in draft form until approved at the next meeting.

Conservation, Education, & Economic Development Committee

January 7, 2026

NAME	REPRESENTING
Dennis Pocach	WC-B-14
Bill Pendleton	WC-D-15
Shane Michalek/Kennig	LWCD
George Gilbertson	LWCD Rep
Shannon Rohde	LWWP
Kayla Rombalski	Extension
Lance Plim	CB Chair
Barb Peeters (WebEx)	LWCD
Julie Mancl (WebEx)	P-3
Victoria Wilson (WebEx)	P-3
Katie DeKlyn (WebEx)	County Clerk

Committee Report

County of Wood

Report of claims for: Extension Wood County

For the period of: December 2025 - January 2026

For the range of vouchers: 30250175 - 30250180 30260001 - 30260008

Voucher	Vendor Name	Nature of Claim	Doc Date	Amount	Paid
30250175	SCHLICE ANN	StrongBodies Reimbursement	01/07/2026	\$25.46	P
30250176	LEU-TIMMERMANN BOBBETTE	StrongBodies Reimbursement	01/07/2026	\$37.85	P
30250177	UW MADISON ACCOUNTING SERVICES	State Contract - July-Dec	01/07/2026	\$158,036.07	P
30250178	US BANK	2025 Credit Card Charge	01/20/2026	\$53.79	
30250179	HUBER LAURA	December Expense - 4H Program	01/27/2026	\$29.41	
30250180	ROMBALSKI KAYLA-ROSE	December Expenses	01/27/2026	\$205.52	
30260001	WAE4-HYDP	4-H Membership Dues	01/13/2026	\$125.00	P
30260002	US BANK	January Credit Card Statement	01/20/2026	\$519.29	
30260003	BORES TRINA	January Expenses	01/27/2026	\$74.10	
30260004	EBERLEIN BENJAMIN	January Expenses	01/27/2026	\$35.16	
30260005	JONJAK ALLISON	January Expenses	01/27/2026	\$381.15	
30260006	ROMBALSKI KAYLA-ROSE	January Expenses	01/27/2026	\$265.31	
30260007	SCOTT HANNAH	January Expenses	01/27/2026	\$50.75	
30260008	TOMSYCK KARLI	January Expenses	01/27/2026	\$29.00	
Grand Total:					\$159,867.86

Signatures

Committee Chair:

Committee Member:

Committee Report

County of Wood

Report of claims for: Land & Water Conservation

For the period of: December 2025

For the range of vouchers: 18250203 - 18250207

Voucher	Vendor Name	Nature of Claim	Doc Date	Amount	Paid
18250203	ROTH GOLDEN ACRES LLC	NMFE Reimbursement	12/31/2025	\$1,570.00	P
18250204	KITOWSKI KEVAN	NMFE Reimbursement	12/31/2025	\$400.00	P
18250205	GOLDEN SANDS RC D	Groundwater Lessons 5th Gr.	12/28/2025	\$600.00	P
18250206	US BANK	Meeting lunch	01/19/2026	\$73.24	
18250207	J & S PROCESSING LLC	Venison program reimbursement	12/31/2025	\$1,090.00	
Grand Total:				\$3,733.24	

Signatures

Committee Chair: _____

Committee Member: _____

Committee Report

County of Wood

Report of claims for: Land & Water Conservation

For the period of: January 2026

For the range of vouchers: 18260001 - 18260009

Voucher	Vendor Name	Nature of Claim	Doc Date	Amount	Paid
18260001	WI LAND + WATER CONSERVATION	2026 WI Land+Water Dues	01/01/2026	\$1,663.01	P
18260002	GOLDEN SANDS RC D	2026 Dues (90% invoice amt)	01/01/2026	\$1,710.00	P
18260003	WATER EXCELLENCE	CS nitrate removal system(DF)	12/04/2025	\$6,960.00	P
18260004	US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	2026 Bear Abatement Fee	01/12/2026	\$800.00	P
18260005	US BANK	ESRI renewal, conference (KA)	01/19/2026	\$2,346.00	
18260006	AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES	Education & Wildlife supplies	01/21/2026	\$28.22	
18260007	AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES	Poster contest trophies	01/26/2026	\$55.34	
18260008	AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES	Tree sale supplies	01/26/2026	\$50.25	
18260009	AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES	Poster contest trophy	01/27/2026	\$27.67	
Grand Total:					\$13,640.49

Signatures

Committee Chair: _____

Committee Member: _____

Committee Report

County of Wood

Report of claims for: Planning & Zoning

For the period of: December 2025

For the range of vouchers: 22250091 - 22250093

Voucher	Vendor Name	Nature of Claim	Doc Date	Amount	Paid
22250091	QUEST CIVIL ENGINEERS LLC	LR-Operating Supplies/Equip	12/29/2025	\$30,700.00	P
22250092	INDUSTRY SERVICES DIVISION	PS-Sanitary Permit Fees	12/31/2025	\$500.00	P
22250093	US BANK	Credit Card Charges	12/31/2025	\$7.02	
Grand Total:					\$31,207.02

Signatures

Committee Chair: _____

Committee Member: _____

Committee Report

County of Wood

Report of claims for: Planning & Zoning

For the period of: January 2026

For the range of vouchers: 22260001 - 22260010 38260001 - 38260001

Voucher	Vendor Name	Nature of Claim	Doc Date	Amount	Paid
22260001	BOYER KEVIN	SU-Services per contract	01/01/2026	\$1,126.67	P
22260002	WOOD COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS	SU-R/M Serv-Other	01/01/2026	\$1,100.00	P
22260003	ON Q SOLUTIONS LLC	LR-Other Pubs, Subs & Dues	01/02/2026	\$11,000.00	P
22260004	WISCONSIN COUNTY SURVEYOR ASSOCIATION INC	SU-Dues	01/01/2026	\$100.00	P
22260005	CARMODY SOFTWARE INC	PS-Prof Serv-Other	01/07/2026	\$5,136.00	P
22260006	WISCONSIN LAND INFORMATION ASSC	LR-Dues	01/05/2026	\$250.00	P
22260007	AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES	PL-Office Supplies	01/08/2026	\$34.98	P
22260008	CLOUDPOINT GEOSPATIAL INC	LR-ARPA Deliverables	12/31/2025	\$50,911.75	P
22260009	US BANK	Credit Card Charges	12/31/2025	(Voided)	P
22260010	US BANK	Credit Card Charges	01/19/2026	\$84.23	
38260001	NORTH CENTRAL WI REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION	ED-Prof Serv	01/05/2026	\$34,905.00	P
Grand Total:					\$104,648.63

Signatures

Committee Chair:

Committee Member:

Extension Wood County staff led, delivered, planned or collaborated on all of the following activities:

4-H POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator

Trina Bores, 4-H AmeriCorps member

- Interviews for the 2026 Langlade, Marathon, and Wood County 4-H Summer Camp staff were conducted, with 40 youth participating. Applicants shared their interest in camp, explained why they wish to serve as camp counselors, and responded to questions related to the responsibilities and expectations of the counselor role.
 - Total Reach:** 40 youth in grade 8-12 3 staff
- An in-person, after-school 4-H Club meeting during which youth used their imaginations and teamwork to imagine an ideal playground feature. Youth worked in small groups to build their ideal feature with LEGO, and learned how their ideas for issues that affect them can be shared to make community impact.
 - Total Reach:** 17 youth members
- An in-person after school program for youth in grades 3-8 where students learned how to work together as a team, problem solve and build new connections through interactive games. In play-based programs such as these, youth build skills without realizing they are in the middle of an educational lesson.
 - Total Reach:** 30 youth in grades 3-8 who are enrolled in Pittsville Elementary School's After School Program
- A series of lessons (Healthy Living/Life Management) for students at River Cities High School, where we engage them in lessons around topics such as budgeting/renting, cooking, nutrition, basic home repairs, and other essential life skills to prepare them for life after high school and help support their overall health and well-being for when they are on their own.
 - Total Reach:** 81 students



AGRICULTURE

Matt Lippert, Agriculture Educator

- Organizing a career event in conjunction with Wisconsin FFA and MSTC. We expect about 100 students to participate in dairy judging on March 24, the event qualifies students to advance to the state contest. Students evaluate actual dairy cows on a farm, with a team of four industry experts determining the most accurate evaluation of the dairy cows. Also, the students give oral reasons on their placings, helping them develop communication skills in addition to problem solving in the judging process. The students also take a dairy industry knowledge quiz.

- Presentation on the Badger Dairy Insight program about an emerging trend on Wisconsin farms, growing High- Oleic (Fatty Acid) Soybeans. These beans differ from the normal fatty acid profile of soybeans and have been developed through conventional breeding or through genetic modification. The resulting soybeans have much better feeding value for dairy cows but are different enough that they must be managed separately in marketing channels. Also, the beans have fewer options as far as crop protection (herbicide resistance and maturity) making them somewhat of a challenge to manage weeds, primarily water hemp, and somewhat too long for a growing season in Central Wisconsin. These obstacles are expected to be reduced in coming years as new varieties are developed.
- Cooperatively developing a future Badger Dairy Insight (virtual zoom program) on grazing. A topic will be fenceless fencing, controlling cows without an actual fence using technology similar to pet collars that keep animals off the road. There will also be a segment on supplementing pasture to improve cow performance.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Educator

- Planning for the Central Wisconsin Housing Summit, a regional event for stakeholders across five counties who will learn best practices, explore resources, and build connections to advance local housing solutions. This event is designed to elevate the builder and developer perspective and address real challenges in today's housing landscape. The goal is to accelerate cross-sector collaboration that leads to more housing development in Central Wisconsin.
- Development of a Founders Network entrepreneurial meeting in collaboration with Marshfield-based economic development partners, where entrepreneurs and small business owners will learn about local resources, funding opportunities, and real-world business experiences. This effort is designed to strengthen the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem by increasing awareness of supports available to emerging and existing business owners. The goal is to foster a more vibrant, connected, and resilient business community.
 - **Total Reach:** anticipating 20 attendees
- A professional development training for Marathon County employees where participants learned meeting facilitation basics, including preparation strategies, facilitator roles, and examples drawn from Wood County's REDI implementation teams. The goal of this training is to help staff lead more effective, engaging, and outcome-oriented meetings.
 - **Total Reach:** 30 participants
- Planning for strategic planning processes for two Wood County organizations, where organizational leaders will engage in goal setting, prioritization, and capacity-building discussions. This effort is designed to strengthen organizational effectiveness and enhance long-term decision-making. The goal is to support healthier, more sustainable organizations that can better serve their communities.

CRANBERRIES

Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist

- A Nutrient Management Plan Training curriculum was revised and updated using common recordkeeping software in addition to using the legacy option of spreadsheets or handwritten records
- A Cranberry School was held for 515 cranberry growers and industry partners to receive current research-backed education on etymology, plant pathology, heat stress, nutrient timing, moisture management, and more.
- A tour of the UW-Madison campus and the labs of key cranberry-focused researchers was prepared for cranberry growers to interact in-person with research. (To be held Feb 2.)
- Proceedings from the 2026 Cranberry School are being compiled for publication.
- A new cranberry-focused Extension website is being developed and being prepared for deployment.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Ka Zoua Thao, Bilingual (Hmong) Community Health Worker

Hannah Wendels Scott, Health and Well-Being Educator

Behavioral Health

- Bi-weekly support groups for Hmong students where they learn about feelings, safety, and respect through storytelling, art, and guided conversations. Using age-appropriate terms, basic concepts of mental health, personal boundaries, and trusted adults while honoring Hmong traditions and values will be introduced. Through this program, Hmong students will feel safe, heard, and confident to lay the foundation for lifelong emotional well-being and opening the door to healthier conversations in their families and communities.
 - **Total Reach:** 61 students
 - 7 students in grades 4-5
 - 33 students in grades 6-8
 - 21 students in grades 9-12
- Building relationships and engaging with partners to address health needs with the Hmong community within Wood County.
- A meeting for WRPS Wellness Committee, where members of the committee meet to discuss goals for the committee, ways to support staff and student wellness, and plan engaging activities for students and staff to interact with throughout the school year to support their overall wellbeing while at work, school and home.
- An as needed meeting with Hmong clients, where I met one-on-one with clients to listen to their needs, offer support, and help them identify and access local health and community resources. Through this effort, participants will gain personalized support, clearer pathways to services, and greater confidence navigating systems.

- **Total Reach:** 5 one-on-one Hmong clients
- A monthly food pantry pick-up for Hmong community members in Wood County, where I support families in choosing foods that their household needs and share information about additional local resources. Through this effort, Hmong residents gain reliable access to healthier food options and feel better connected to community supports.
 - **Total Reach:** 12 Hmong families
- A series of strength training sessions (StrongBodies) for adults in the community, where participants engage in regular, progressive strength training and health education to improve their physical and mental health and enhance social connectedness.
 - **Total Reach:** 9 Hmong participants
- The Hmong Women's Social Space serves as a monthly gathering for Hmong women to engage in discussions about often overlooked topics within their community. This initiative aims to foster relationships among participants and empower them to advocate for the recognition of their voices.
 - **Total Reach:** 7 participants
- A weekly program for incarcerated men in the Wood County Jail, where participants practiced healthy coping strategies, built emotional awareness, and strengthened skills for managing stress in daily life. Through this effort, men gained tools that support their well-being during incarceration and increase their capacity to navigate re-entry with resilience and confidence.
 - **Total Reach:** 2 incarcerated males
- A weekly program for incarcerated women in the Wood County Jail, where participants practiced healthy coping strategies, built emotional awareness, and strengthened skills for managing stress in daily life. Through this effort, women gained tools that support their well-being during incarceration and increase their capacity to navigate re-entry with resilience and confidence.
 - **Total Reach:** 7 incarcerated females

HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living)

- Planning for 4 community listening sessions with individuals and families who are experiencing food insecurity in collaboration with the Wood County Health Department. The goal of these sessions is to gather qualitative data from residents with lived experience of food insecurity to better understand the barriers they face and the solutions they believe would be most effective. The second half of this project will be taking the feedback from each session to help guide our strategies to reduce food insecurity in Wood County.
- A meeting for WRPS Wellness Committee, where members of the committee meet to discuss goals for the committee, ways to support staff and student wellness, and plan engaging activities for students and staff to interact with throughout the school year to support their overall wellbeing while at work, school and home.
- A presentation to the WRPS School Board informed board members and attendees about the work of the WRPS Wellness Committee and the initiatives undertaken during the current school year. The

presentation also highlighted Extension Wood County's collaboration with the committee across three program areas: healthy eating and active living, mental health, and financial wellness opportunities for both staff and students.

- A series of lessons for adults who are incarcerated participating in the SMART Recovery Pod Program in the Wood County Jail. Through this series, participants will learn nutrition education, cooking skills, and participate in the StrongBodies program that improves their physical and mental health.
 - **Total Reach:** 6 total participants
- An ongoing series of strength training sessions (StrongBodies) for older adults/adults in the community, where participants engage in regular, progressive strength training and health education to improve their physical and mental health and enhance social connectedness. This series is led by two Extension StrongBodies volunteers.
 - **Total Reach:** 26 participants
- A series of after-school lessons for elementary and middle school students at Pittsville Elementary School, where students learn about the five food groups, how they benefit their overall health and well-being, and how to make healthy food and physical activity choices both at home and at school.
 - **Total Reach:** 24 students
- A series of lessons (Healthy Living/Life Management) for students at River Cities High School, where we engage them in lessons around topics such as budgeting/renting, cooking, nutrition, basic home repairs, and other essential life skills to prepare them for life after high school and help support their overall health and well-being for when they are on their own.
 - **Total Reach:** 81 students
- A bi-monthly meeting with the Student Wellness Advisory Group (SWAG) students at Grove Elementary School where we plan, discuss, and share ideas on ways to make healthy changes within the school. This group empowers 5th grade students who are passionate about all areas of health for themselves and their classmates to make healthy changes at school that will impact everyone.
 - **Total Reach:** 8 students

HORTICULTURE

Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

- Planning for a bilingual agricultural conference for Hmong farmers in collaboration with local agencies and educators. The goal is to provide education on sustainable farming, business development, and pest management, so that participants can improve farm profitability, adopt resilient practices, and strengthen community connections.
- A presentation for the general public, where participants learned how to choose cultivars and plan gardens using IPM including crop rotation. Through this effort, participants improved their understanding of how sustainable horticultural practices positively impact landscapes and ecosystems.
 - **Total Reach:** 9 participants

- A presentation for the general public, where participants learned the components of Integrated Pest Management, including when to use chemical management practices. Through this effort, participants improved their understanding of how sustainable horticulture practices positively impact landscapes and ecosystems.
 - **Total Reach:** 22
- County residents' horticultural inquiries are answered through evidence-based resources. This effort is designed to reduce pollution through horticultural product (pesticides and fertilizers) misuse.

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS & DEVELOPMENT

Ben Eberlein, Human Development & Relationships Educator

- A 6-session course for renters where participants learn how to find and apply for rental housing, understand their responsibilities as a renter, how to communicate effectively with their landlords, and manage housing expenses. Through this, those with negative rental records and those new to renting are able to increase their ability to find and keep safe affordable housing, thereby increasing their stability and decreasing their reliance on public supports.
- A direct education activity for elementary & middle school students in which participants learn basic financial concepts like the difference between needs & wants and to identify personal financial values and goals. Through this, they establish a foundation of knowledge for positive money management later in life.
 - **Total Reach:** 24 students
- A meeting for WRPS Wellness Committee, where members of the committee meet to discuss goals for the committee, ways to support staff and student wellness, and plan engaging activities for students and staff to interact with throughout the school year to support their overall wellbeing while at work, school and home.
- An 8-module class that provides people reentering communities with tools and tips for managing bills, identifying & prioritizing payments for both legal system-related debt and consumer debt, creating a spending & savings plan, understanding credit scores & reports, choosing financial products and services, and building other financial competencies. Through this, participants strengthen their financial literacy to support a prosperous reentry to their community.
 - **Total Reach:** 23 participants
- A series of lessons (Healthy Living/Life Management) for students at River Cities High School, where we engage them in lessons around topics such as budgeting/renting, cooking, nutrition, basic home repairs, and other essential life skills to prepare them for life after high school and help support their overall health and well-being for when they are on their own.
 - **Total Reach:** 81 students

NATURAL RESOURCES

Jen McNelly, Natural Resources Groundwater Educator

Anna Mitchell, Natural Resources Educator

- Facilitation of monthly meetings of the Wood County Citizen Water Groups, where stakeholders meet to discuss ways to implement their annual action plan, learn about water related issues in Wood County, plan events and activities, update each other on work being done in Wood County, and identify new collaborations for future work/projects.
 - Total Reach:** 15 Citizen Members of the Wood County Citizen Water Group
- A series of meetings for conservation and water professionals from six counties in the Wisconsin central sands to learn about the groundwater flow tracker model created by the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey. The first meeting was to introduce the model and solicit feedback on potential improvements. The second meeting was providing guidance on the use of the model and answer any questions that the Counties might have and the third and final meeting was the release of final version of the model with modifications and provided an opportunity for the Counties to utilize the model.
 - Total Reach:** 10 Meeting Attendees
- Two facilitated strategic planning workshops for Nepco Lake District board members and community members where participants engaged in guided discussion and activities to clarify a shared vision and identify barriers to progress. In the first workshop, participants explored "what if" scenarios to create practical images of their desired future, while the second workshop focused on identifying obstacles and analyzing root causes preventing realization of that vision. Through these workshops, participants built a common understanding of shared visions and challenges, strengthening their capacity for coordinated, strategic decision-making to guide the future of the Lake District.
 - Total Reach:** 9 members of Nepco Lake District
- A workgroup for Marathon County staff and water resource professionals to review and discuss the existing Marathon County Wellhead Protection Ordinance. The workgroup will continue to meet monthly to discuss revisions to the ordinance and mapping until the ordinance is updated.
 - Total Reach:** 9 Workgroup participants





LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION DEPARTMENT

STAFF REPORTS – JANUARY 2026

Barb Peeters

Conservation Administrative Specialist

- Generated 2025 Innovations Grant Reimbursement Request (for grant funds that were extended from 2024 to 2025), compiled supporting documents and submitted to DATCP prior to February 15, 2026 deadline.
- Completed December sales tax report and forwarded to Finance.
- Compiled information regarding WI Land+Water Annual conference to distribute to CEED committee members.
- Processed nonmetallic mining annual permit fee payments as received (per ordinance, permit fees are due by January 31, 2026).
- Attended virtual planning meeting on Jan. 6th with Kendra Wilhelm and Caleb Armstrong for the Central WI Farm Profitability Expo to finalize details.
- Attended January 7th CEED meeting virtually.
- Shared January 13th Wellness Committee meeting updates with LWCD staff.
- Downloaded the January DATCP monthly report and shared with LWCD staff.
- Processed customer tree sale orders as received. Fielded calls & emails from customers regarding tree sale. Revised order form as trees sold out and worked with I.T. to have order form updated to website (both species of peach trees and Honey Crisp apple trees sold out). Contacted customers who submitted incorrect payments.
- Processed reimbursement payment received from DATCP for \$49,717.30 (for 14 cost-share contracts) and Innovations Grant reimbursement payment of \$199.76.
- Organized County Board packet materials and electronically submitted to the County Clerk's office.
- Ordered department supplies and processed invoices/payments.
- Processed department invoices/vouchers and deposits weekly for submission to the Treasurer/Finance.
- Completed LWCD payroll percentages and forwarded to Finance prior to the January 3rd & 22nd payrolls. Reviewed payroll reports and verified distribution by accounts/department.
- Updated Wellness bulletin board with first quarter 2026 information.
- Reserved RiverBlock auditorium for Golden Sands RC&D special meetings on January 22nd and February 5th at the request of County Conservationist.
- Compiled reports and documentation for year-end verification of all LWCD non-lapsing accounts to carryover to 2026 (for ARPA grant funds, AWO (animal waste ordinance) Permit Tracking, Earnest Money, Farm Profitability, Financial Assurance-Nonmetallic Mining, MDV funds, Surface Water Grant/DNR & Well Testing Grant) and provided to Finance Department. Provided additional information requested by Deputy Finance Director.
- Revised 2026 Wildflower/Grass Mixes Order Form and 2026 Seed Descriptions due to price increases by supplier and worked with I.T. to have forms updated on LWCD website.
- Compiled data, generated 2025 SWRM Staff and Support reimbursement request totaling \$167,730.00 and submitted to DATCP.
- Worked with I.T. to have LWCD office and staff information updated on LWCD website.
- Verified 2026 tree sale customer orders. Generated final tree order and submitted to nursery.
- Assisted with judging of 2026 Conservation poster contest. Posters were submitted by students in Wood County in grades 2-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. The 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners were selected for each category and the first place posters advanced to the area contest in Vilas County (on January 28th). Ordered gift cards & trophies for Wood County students who placed 1st/2nd/3rd place in each category.
- Processed final payment from the State of WI for the 2025 LMPN grant (\$1,309.71) (2025 revenue).
- Compiled list of 2025 revenue that remains outstanding and submitted to Finance/Treasurer. Waiting for reimbursement payments from DATCP and DNR.

- Reviewed 2025 SWRM Innovation Gulf Hypoxia Program Subaward Grant Contract (\$10,000 staff support grant) for reimbursement and reporting requirements and reviewed with County Conservationist. Compiled supporting documentation and generated reimbursement request totaling \$3,931.67. Submitted to County Conservationist for review. Submitted to DATCP prior to Feb. 15th deadline.
- Processed payment for the 2025 Wisconsin Deer Donation Program. A total of 10 deer were donated by Wood County hunters and processed by J&S Processing. 466 pounds of ground venison was donated to St. Vincent de Paul Outreach (total venison came to 533 pounds, but one deer tested positive for CWD so that 67 pounds of venison was disposed of per DNR guidelines). (The venison processing payment will be reimbursed to the County by the WI DNR.)
- Processed SWRM/DATCP reimbursement payment of \$9,284.45.
- Fielded numerous calls and emails from customers who missed the tree/shrub/seed sale deadline & started waiting list in the event there are any extra trees.
- Processed State of WI reimbursement payment of \$34,128.65 for Mill Creek Phase II TMDL grant.
- Verified amount of 2026 advance collection of nonmetallic mining (NMM) permit fees deposited to revenue liability account and submitted journal entry for those advance permit fees to be transferred to 2026 NMM budget.
- Prepped for and attended the 2026 Central WI Farmer Profitability Expo on January 27th in Marshfield. Assisted with set-up, procured morning break refreshments, assisted attendees throughout event and handled clean up.
- Verified wildlife damage general ledger and assembled all invoices and attachments for fourth quarter 2025 reimbursement request to the WiDNR.
- Processed conference and hotel reservations for the WI Land+Water annual conference. Worked with WI Land+Water Events Manager to resolve issues with obtaining hotel rooms in the block of room reserved for the conference.
- Served as point of contact for LWCD staff when Conservationist was out of the office (full days) January 6, 16, 28, 30 and (partial days) January 15, 20, 22.
- Electronically submitted staff reports/packet materials to the County Clerk's office for the CEED meeting packet and entered LWCD agenda items.

Emily Salvinski *Conservation Specialist*

- Tuesday, January 6.** Finished up gathering information from SEG contracts for 2025 SEG shapefile.
- Wednesday, January 7.** Updated mailing list and put together letters and brochures for upcoming nutrient management class.
- Thursday, January 8.** Added 2025 mill creek cost-share shapefile into DNR's tracking system, BITS. Started adding pictures, contracts, models to each practice field by field.
- Wednesday, January 14.** Filled out second NMFE grant reimbursement (checked math on all the checks that were sent out and not reimbursed yet), updated numbers to NMFE final report.
- Thursday, January 15.** Attended NMFE class in Spencer to help out with the multi-county effort.
- Monday, January 19.** Updated part of a NMP for upcoming meeting. Attended meeting to discuss water testing funds. Pooled together many maps and information to create an ARPA shapefile.
- Tuesday, January 20.** Worked on ARPA 2025 shapefile. Combined checklists to send along with second NMFE reimbursement request. Submitted NMFE final report answers by DATCP survey.
- Wednesday, January 21.** Attended NMFE class in Wausau to help farmers with nutrient management plan writing.
- Tuesday, January 27.** Attended Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo in Marshfield.

Kendra Wilhelm

Conservation Specialist

- Emailed a total of 333 Wood County teachers and 4-H leaders to remind them about the upcoming deadline to submit posters for the annual Conservation Poster Contest.
- Created an aquatic invasive species identification sheet geared towards cranberry marsh operators.
- Attended the January Lakes & Rivers Partnership Meeting.
- Gave three presentations to 2nd graders at Grant Elementary School in Marshfield regarding the Conservation Poster Contest.
- Participated in a meeting to discuss details about the upcoming Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo.
 - Continuous communication with the venue, panelists, and expo collaborators occurred throughout the month.
 - Created a slideshow to help guide the Expo.
 - Created and finalized a “ready-to-go” questions set for each farmer discussion panel for the emcees to help foster active discussion if needed. Emailed final draft of questions to each emcee.
 - Created an informational flyer regarding our department’s harvestable buffer program.
 - Printed copies of all handouts that we will need to bring to the Expo.
 - Created name tent cards for each farmer discussion panelist.
- Attended the January Nepco Lake District Board meeting.
- Created an informational flyer to help ice anglers be aware of the need to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species even though it is winter.
- Provided Clean Boats Clean Water technical assistance to the Nepco Lake district.
- Participated in a staff meeting regarding the water quality testing ARPA funds that are remaining.
 - Created a document outlining the different UWSP Water and Environmental Analysis Lab Packages.
- Sent out two emails to our farmers list regarding the Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo that our department is hosting.
- Picked up completed posters from various schools for entry into the Wood County Conservation Poster Contest.
 - Created a judging sheet for all LWCD staff members to vote on posters in each age category.
 - We received posters in the following age categories:
 - Grades 2-3
 - Grades 4-6
 - Grades 7-9
 - Grades 10-12
 - Poster contest entry has increased from past years due to increased communications and promotion of the contest (82 posters submitted this year compared to 10 last year).
 - Created completion certificates for all poster contest entries.
 - Created 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place certificates for posters that placed in each grade category.
 - Sent County winning poster information to the North Central Area Land and Water Conservation Association for the winners to compete in the Area contest.
- Provided technical assistance to the Nepco Lake District at their second strategic planning meeting.
- Communicated with producers regarding their nutrient management plans.
- Participated in a meeting regarding the establishment of best management practices within the Fourmile Creek Watershed.
- Attended and helped with the 2026 Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo.
 - There were 53 participants this year.
- Attended a webinar on the “Rethinking of Invasive Species Communication.”

Kyle Andreae *Engineer Technician*

- January 1 – Holiday
- January 2 – Vacation
- January 5 – Gilbertson Design
- January 6 – Sick
- January 7 – Gilbertson Design
- January 8 – Solar Presentation Preparation
- January 9 – Ciesielski Design
- January 12 – Ciesielski Design
- January 13 – Ciesielski Design, Cohort Meeting
- January 14 – Ciesielski Design, Gilbertson Design
- January 15 – Ciesielski Design
- January 16 – Ciesielski Design
- January 19 – Ciesielski Design
- January 20 – Ciesielski Design
- January 21 – Ciesielski Design
- January 22 – Ciesielski Design
- January 23 – Ciesielski Design
- January 26 – Ciesielski Design
- January 27 – Farm Profitability Expo
- January 28 – CRP Records Keeping
- January 29 – CRP Records Keeping
- January 30 – CRP Records Keeping

Rodney Mayer *Conservation Program Manager*

- Schoechert pond exemption application review – sent comments and needed changes.
- Reviewed Harris pond completion – updates to spreadsheet.
- Multiple financial assurance update reviews – document review, update spreadsheet, software, files.
 - (Doine 2 sites, Crist, Schneider, Ladick 4 sites, Becker, Weichelt 3 sites, Bohn)
- Reviewed Earth 186 amended reclamation plan (150 pages) draft 1 – sent review to Earth with needed additions and corrections.
- Contacted Dept. of Ag APHIS (Marathon Co., Portage Co., Clark Co., and Jackson Co.) for wildlife damage crop prices.
- Correspondence with Quest Engineering for needs of Mid WI mine site permit transfer to Bach Excavation – new reclamation plan details – etc.
- Arnold Strawberry early damage to beds – Act 82 enrollment and permit application, signatures, damage pics document, field maps, database updates, sent to DNR.
- Corp. counsel meeting to discuss Brad Brehm Vision site compliance orders. Reviewed and scanned all documents and sent to Corp Counsel.
- Completed records request to JE Engineering for Weichelt Hwy T wetlands concerns.

- Earth Cepress plan review (draft 2 – 87 pages) – comments sent to Earth for clarifications.
- Picked up fox lights used for bear abatement on stored crop damage (Ethan Kieffer).
- Tork Reddin Rd. mine site wetlands restoration plan review and response to DNR.
- Launer pond extension info and discussions with owner.
- Prepared wildlife damage claim prices – processed claims in DNR database, entered calcs, prepared paperwork for claim signatures. (Marti, Raikowski, and Knuth.) Mailed Marti and Raikowski – waiting on Knuth for Meeting of 3 for missed objectives.
- Created wildlife damage enrollment objectives for 2025 spreadsheet for DNR Meeting of 3. Had 25 enrollees for 2025 – 8 not meeting objectives. Sent to DNR and scheduled meeting. Contacted enrollees to verify harvest number.
- Land & Water poster contest judging.
- Contacted three processors for 2025 deer donation invoicing. Ten deer donated with one deer donated testing positive for CWD (harvested in Richland Co.) Verified removal of positive deer. 466 lbs donated to St. Vincent De Paul. Completed final deer donation report to DNR. Submitted invoice for payment to processor.
- Wolosek discussions on change of financial assurance on mine site and info on peat mining permitting.
- Reviewed draft 2 of Earth 186 reclamation plan – sent approval email and informed of needed hard copy and review fee. Updated violation summary.
- Kolo financial assurance documents sent to Wood Trust bank.
- Reminder calls to 13 operators for deadline of upcoming fees and financial assurance due date.
- Competed Earth Cepress draft 3 amended reclamation plan review. Adjusted map layers and created current upland disturbed calcs. (This is a joint jurisdiction CH 30 site with DNR.) Sent review approval and notice of needed hard copy, review fee, and financial assurance.
- Sent Earth updated info on Biron Site financial assurance increase (reminder).
- Forwarded bank correspondence for Mid Wi and Nikolay mine sites financial assurance.
- Bruesch Act 82 enrollment for damage to stored crop. Damage pics document – silage bags ripped up, enrollment app, permit app, signatures, database, field map, etc.
- Kevin Wendt site visit for damage to stored crop – enrollment for assistance – installed fox light at stored crop area. Large herd eating open end – no damage to bags currently.

Shane Wucherpfennig

County Conservationist

- No report submitted.



Wood County WISCONSIN

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ZONING

TO: Conservation, Education & Economic Development Committee

FR: Jason Grueneberg, Planning & Zoning Director
Emmett Simkowski, County Planner
Paul Bernard, Land Records Coordinator
Brad Cook, Code Administrator
Kayla Rautio, Code Technician
Victoria Wilson, Program Assistant
Julie Mancl, Program Assistant

RE: Staff Report for February 4, 2026

1. Economic Development (Jason Grueneberg)

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point – Marshfield Campus – On January 26th I received good news that the grant application that I submitted for the Helen Connor Laird Fine Arts Center was approved by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and is going through the underwriting process. The WEDC grant award is \$2,000,000 and the Laird Endowment Foundation is providing an additional \$400,000. The renovation project includes a wide variety of ADA upgrades, renovations to better accommodate more performances and conferences, updates to outdated technology, and replacement of fixtures and finishes. At the UW Commission meeting in March I will present an overview of the project and next steps will be discussed.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission (NCWRPC) – On January 28th I participated in the NCWRPC quarterly meeting. Some of the agenda items included the Executive Committee Report, State and Federal Updates, 2025 Work Activities, and adoption of the 2026 Work Program. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region was recently completed and adopted by resolution. I served on the CEDS Committee that guided the update to remain eligible for Federal Economic Development Authority (EDA) grant funding.

Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Fund – Throughout the month of January I participated in numerous CWED Board Committee and Loan Committee meetings. Loan activity has spiked in the last few months due to CWED loan rates being between 3% and 5%. At a future CEED Committee meeting I will provide an overview of CWED as well as a status update of the fund and recent loan activity.

Triangle Development – Progress continues to be made on the Triangle Development in front of the Courthouse. We are currently working on drafting the petition to vacate Market St. and will submit the petition to the City once the timeline for the Jackson St. reconstruction is finalized. We will be meeting with the City in early February and will have a better idea of the overall project timeline and how it will impact the next steps outlined in the Development Agreement that Wood County has with Wisconsin Rapids.

2. Planning & Zoning (Emmett Simkowski)

*At National Guard Training

3. Land Records (Paul Bernard)

- Producing an official Rural Roads Map
- Parcel Mapping
- Addressing
- Building digitizing
- Coordinating with various contractors on planimetric, street centerline & scanning work
- Reached out to the Town of Saratoga for possible permit digitizing project

4. Code Administrator (Brad Cook)

1-1-2026- Holiday

1-2-2026- Vacation

1-5-2026- (3) POWTS inspection reports written and reviewed TN: 07,10, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-6-2026- (5) POWTS inspection reports written and reviewed TN/V: 03, 11, 16, 27, (1)(1)
Reviewed soils, plan review, issued permit for rec mound, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-7-2026- (15) POWTS inspection reports written and reviewed TN: 04, 07, 11, 13, 18, 20, 21, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-8-2026- ACE Leadership Program

1-9-2026- (5) POWTS inspection reports written and reviewed TN: 02, 13, 18, 19, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-12-2026- (14) POWTS inspection reports written and reviewed TN: 07, 08, 14, 18, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-13-2026- Department Staff Meeting, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-14-2025- (1) POWTS review and guidance TN: 22, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-15-2026- Answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-16-2025-(1) County Health Assessment #1 completed, created phone log/inquiry Excel spreadsheet, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-19-2026- (1) County Health Assessment #2, Clean & Organize Office, read/review POWTS, FP,

SL educational reports, books, etc, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-20-2025- (2) soil eval reviewed TN: 08,18, (1) HS letter written and reviewed TN: 18, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-21-2025- (1) SL permit reviewed and issued TN: 06, review and update POWTS Abandonment Letter & Form, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-22-2026- Review, respond to inquiries about POWTS, shoreland, floodzone issues from previous days, answer phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-23-26- (1) soils eval, HT plan permit review TN: 03, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-26-25- Review, respond to inquiries about POWTS, shoreland, floodzone issues from previous days, gather documentation and review of FP-training with Code Tech, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

1-27-2025- (1) POWTS inspection report written and reviewed TN:07, 2025 State Audit E-form review and issued to DSPS-State, answer, review, and gather information for phone calls and inquires with POWTS, SL, FL

5. Code Technician (Kayla Rautio)

- A. Reviewed and approved POWTS & well permit applications
- B. Reviewed and approved soils evaluations
- C. Completed inspection reports
- D. Created private sewage & well delegation annual reports
- E. Studied floodplain zoning
- F. Entered information from past well permits into online system and verified well abandonment from Well Filling & Sealing Reports
- G. Assisted with daily phone calls/emails/office questions
- H. Inspections/Investigations:
 - 1-12-26: Holding tank inspection TN: 01
- I. Attended Meetings/Trainings/Etc.
 - 1-6-26: Annual Safety Training
 - 1-13-26: Staff meeting

6. Office Activity (Victoria Wilson & Julie Mancl)

- a. Monthly Sanitary and Well Permit Activity – There were 0 sanitary permits, 1 shoreland permits and 2 well permits issued in January 2026. 2 CSMs were received and processed.

- b. ArcGIS Pro Software Project – Julie continues to assist Paul with various mapping projects.
- c. Attended the following meetings/trainings & activities:
 - i. CEED meeting January 7th (VW & JM)
 - ii. Economic Development grant meeting January 6th (VW)
 - iii. Staff meeting January 13th. (VW & JM)
 - iv. Biometrics screening January 27th (VW & JM)



Monday, Jan. 19, 2026 @ 2:00pm (Riverblock Auditorium, room 206)

- 1.) The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Leichtnam at 2:00 pm.
 - a. Round robin introductions of meeting attendees
- 2.) Election of Officers
 - a. Elections were run by CWG Member Bill Clendenning
 - b. Election of Chairperson.
 - i. Tom Buttke made the nomination of Bill Leichtnam for Chairperson.
 - ii. Rhona Carrell 2nd the nomination.
 - iii. Motion to close nominations and cast the vote was made by Tom Buttke. 2nd by Carrell.
 - iv. Vote was unanimous
 - c. Election of Vice Chairperson
 - i. Tom Buttke made the nomination of Bill Clendenning as a Vice Chair.
 - ii. Bill Leichtnam 2nd the nomination.
 - iii. Motion to close the nominations and cast the vote was made by Tom Buttke and 2nd by Bill Leichtnam.
 - iv. Vote was unanimous
 - d. Election of Secretary
 - i. Bill Leichtnam made the nomination of Jen McNelly as secretary
 - ii. Tom Buttke 2nd the nomination
 - iii. Motion to close the nominations and cast the vote was made by Tom Buttke, 2nd by Tim Hovendick.
 - iv. Vote was unanimous
- 3.) Public Comment
 - a. Rhonda Carrell shared that the Dean of North Central Tech College in Wausau said job well done to CWG on the work that they are currently and have done.
- 4.) Approve minutes of Dec. 15, 2025 mtg
 - a. Hovendick made a motion to adopt the Dec. 15, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Carrell 2nd the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
- 5.) Correspondence / Updates / Handouts / Reports on meetings attended
 - a. Letter from DHS regarding the letter on the Alliance for Great Lakes Nitrate on Tap Report. (DHS letter attached)
- 6.) Roles/duties of UW-Extension in protecting Wisconsin's natural resources and the CWG can participate.
 - a. Slides from the presentation are attached to the minutes.

- 7.) Discussion/Action from the floor
 - a. Chair Leichtnam encouraged CWG members to think about ways to grow CWG membership and how to become part of the community.
 - b. The association for Home and Community Education (HCE) is seeking new members.
- 8.) Possible agenda items for next meeting
 - a. Would the community access channel be a place for CWG to go and share their story and work?
- 9.) Next mtg. — Feb. 16, 2026, 2:00 pm
- 10.) Adjourn –
 - a. Motion to adjourn was made by Buttke and 2nd by Hovendick. Motion passed unanimously.
 - b. Chairman Bill Leichtnam adjourned the meeting at 3:27 pm.

Present in the meeting: Bill Leichtnam, Jen McNelly, Rhonda Carrell, Bill Clendenning, Bruce Dimick, Tom Buttke, Shane Wucherpfennig, Lance Pliml, Tim Hovendick, and Sandy Cain.

Respectfully submitted by Jen McNelly on January 26, 2026

RE: 8 Recommendations of the Alliance for the Great Lakes & Clean Wisconsin regarding groundwater contamination

From DHS Constituent Relations <DHSConstituentRelations@dhs.wisconsin.gov>
To bill and nancy <sespotsy@wctc.net>
Cc DHS Constituent Relations <DHSConstituentRelations@dhs.wisconsin.gov>
Date 2026-01-12 15:04

Good afternoon, Citizens Water Group of Wood County,

Thank you for sharing your letter and for your continued efforts to highlight groundwater and drinking water concerns in Wood County and across Wisconsin.

DHS recognizes the concerns you highlighted. As you noted, DHS has issued [health-based recommendations](#) for lowering Wisconsin's groundwater enforcement standard for nitrate, and we remain committed to providing scientific and health-based guidance to our partner agencies.

The regulatory authority for groundwater standards, surface water standards, agricultural performance standards, and farm monitoring requirements falls primarily under the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). DHS will continue to collaborate with DNR, DATCP, and local partners as needed, and we look forward to remaining engaged should rulemaking or legislative discussions proceed.

Thank you again for your advocacy and for bringing these concerns forward.

Best regards,



Constituent Relations Team
Wisconsin Department of Health Services



NOTICE: [Get the most up to date confidentiality statement here.](#)

From: bill and nancy <sespotsy@wctc.net>
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 8:27 AM
Subject: 8 Recommendations of the Alliance for the Great Lakes & Clean Wisconsin regarding groundwater contamination

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the organization.
Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Morning,

Attached you will find a letter to all recipients above from a decade-old citizens group in Wood County which is concerned with groundwater contamination of rural, private wells.

After reading the attached letter, you will see that we are calling for state agency, association, and legislative action concerning this important health-related issue.

I chair this group and am a 5-term Wood County Board Supervisor and also chair of the counties' Land & Water Committee. The residents I represent would greatly appreciate your comment and attention to this important state-wide issue.

Sincerely,

Bill Leichtnam, District # 19 Wood County Board Supervisor

Water Natural Resource Educators

Jen McNelly



Natural Resources Institute
DIVISION OF EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



► Purpose

Based in watersheds across the state, Water Natural Resource Educators increase understanding of water resources and work with groups to collaboratively address water quality issues. Through targeted outreach and training, we connect conservation practices to water quality outcomes, build leadership capacity, and expand access to information on surface water, groundwater, and emerging contaminants—to support practical, community-driven solutions.



Natural Resources Institute
DIVISION OF EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Extension's Work Reaches Across Wisconsin

We help more than 200,000 farmers, parents, youth leaders, neighbors and businesses through our six program areas

Agriculture **Community Development**

Human Development & Relationships

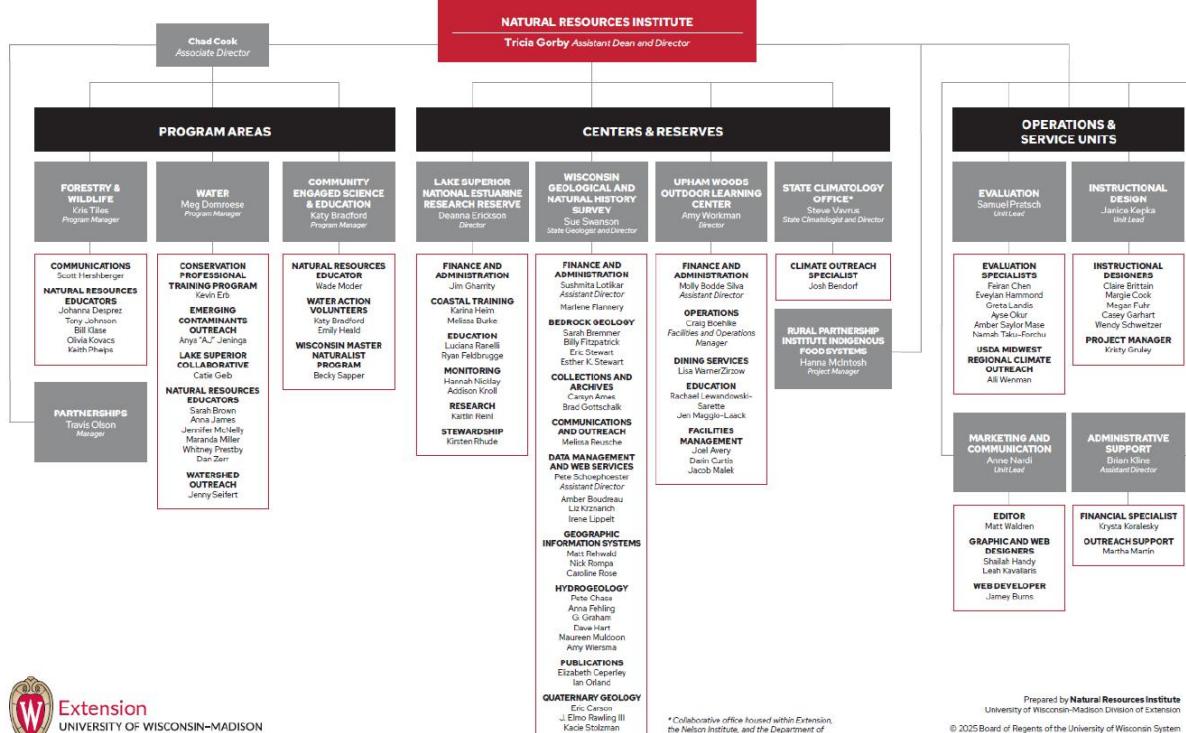
Health & Well-Being

Natural Resources

Positive Youth Development



Natural Resources Institute
DIVISION OF EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



*Collaborative office housed within Extension, the Nelson Institute, and the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences

Prepared by **Natural Resources Institute**
University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension
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September 10, 2022

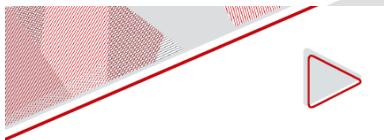


► Central Wisconsin and Wood County

- Jen McNelly
 - Groundwater & Drinking Water
 - Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative
- Anna James
 - Farmer Led Watershed Groups
 - Surface Waters
 - Agriculture



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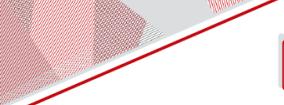


► 2025 Projects

- Stakeholder involvement in the state Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy
- Nepco Lake District Planning
- Marathon County Groundwater Management Planning
- Farmer-Led Watershed Groups
 - Workshops
 - Field Day
 - Facilitated Discussions
 - Leadership Trainings
 - Regional Gatherings



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2025 Projects

- Science by the River
- Educational Programming
 - High Schools
 - County Conservation Days
 - Field Days
- Groundwater Policy Presentations
- Groundwater Management Planning
- Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative
- Groundwater Tools
 - Nitrate Risk Mapping
 - Groundwater Transport Flow Model
- Health and Conservation Working Group



2025 Partnerships



- Producer Led Watershed Groups
- DNR
- DATCP
- WGNHS
- Schools
- Community Organizations
- County Departments
- UW-Madison and UWSP
- Agricultural Producers



Jen McNelly
Natural Resource Educator

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► 2026 Projects

- Nepco Lake District Strategic Planning
- Nepco Lake Watershed Management
- Marathon County Wellhead Protection District
- Producer Led Watershed Group Partnerships
- Science by the River
- Educational Programming

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**RESOLUTION#**DATE
Effective
Date

February 17, 2026

February 17, 2026

Page 1 of 1

Conservation, Education, Economic Development & Operations Committee

Introduced by _____

Motion:	Adopted: _____	
1 st _____	Lost: _____	
2 nd _____	Tabled: _____	
No: _____	Yes: _____	Absent: _____
Number of votes required:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Majority <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Two-thirds		
Reviewed by:	NF, Corp Counsel	
Reviewed by:	PY, Finance Dir.	

		NO	YES	A
1	Schulz, W			
2	Rozar, D			
3	Buttke, T			
4	Perlock, R			
5	Hovendick, T			
6	Breu, A			
7	Voight, W			
8	Hahn, J			
9	Brehm, S			
10	Thao, L			
11	Penzkover, J			
12	Valenstein, L			
13	Hokamp, J			
14	Polach, D			
15	Clendenning, B			
16	Pliml, L			
17	Zurfluh, J			
18	Hamilton, B			
19	Leichtnam, B			

INTENT & SYNOPSIS: To amend the 2025 Land Water Conservation Department of Agriculture, Trade, Consumer Protection (DATCP) (56122) grant budget for additional expenditures not anticipated during the original budget process.

FISCAL NOTE: No cost to Wood County. The source of the funding is unanticipated DATCP State Aid grant revenues and use of DATCP grant fund balance. The adjustment to the budget is as follows:

Account	Account Name	Debit	Credit
43586	State Aid	\$7,054.00	
34112	Fund Balance – DATCP	\$11,104.64	
56122	DATCP Grant		\$18,158.64

WHEREAS, the Land Water Conservation DATCP grant (56122) budget incurred unexpected additional 2025 expenditures for nutrient management farmer education (NMFE) incentives, and

WHEREAS, unanticipated DATCP State Aid revenues and the existing DATCP grant fund balance are sufficient to fund the additional expenditures, and

WHEREAS, Rule 5.03 of the Wood County Board of Supervisors states that an amendment to the budget is required any time the actual costs will exceed the budget at the function level, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, to amend the 2025 Land Water Conservation DATCP grant (56122) budget by appropriating \$7,054.00 of unanticipated revenues from DATCP State Aid (43586) and

\$11,104.64 of existing DATCP fund balance (34112), and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pursuant to Wis. Stats. 65.90 (5), the County Clerk is directed to post notice of this budget change within 15 days.

Adopted by the County Board of Wood County, February 17, 2026

County Clerk

County Board Chairman

**RESOLUTION#**DATE
Effective
Date

02-17-2026

02-17-2026

Page 1 of 1

Conservation, Education, Economic Development and Operations Committee

Introduced by _____

Motion:	Adopted: <input type="text"/>	
1 st	Lost: <input type="text"/>	
2 nd	Tabled: <input type="text"/>	
No: _____	Yes: _____	Absent: <input type="text"/>
Number of votes required:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Majority <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Two-thirds		
Reviewed by: _____	, Corp Counsel	
Reviewed by: _____	, Finance Dir.	

INTENT & SYNOPSIS: To amend the 2025 Planning and Zoning Land Records (56320) budget to reflect additional expenditures funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

FISCAL NOTE: No additional cost to Wood County. The source of funding is American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The adjustment to the budget is as follows:

Account	Account Name	Debit	Credit
43300	Other Federal Grants	\$63,000	
56320	Land Records		\$63,000

WHEREAS, the ARPA Funding Ad Hoc Committee has previously authorized funding for the Planning and Zoning Land Records LiDAR project, and

WHEREAS, payments received from ARPA funding will be sufficient to cover the additional expenditures for the approved project, and

WHEREAS, Rule 5.03 of the Wood County Board of Supervisors states that an amendment to the budget is required any time the actual costs will exceed the budget at the function level, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, to amend the 2025 Planning and Zoning Land Records (56320) budget by appropriating \$63,000 of ARPA funding from Other Federal Grants (43300).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pursuant to Wis Stats 65.90(5) the County Clerk is directed to post a notice of this budget amendment

change within 15 days.

Adopted by the County Board of Wood County, February 17, 2026

County Clerk

County Board Chairman



**Wood County Economic Development
(Planning & Zoning/Extension)**
400 Market Street/ P.O. Box 8095, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-421-8466

2026 Wood County (WI) Economic Development Funding Request

Proposal Title:

Applicant Organization:

Website:

Mailing Address:

Street Address: (if different)

Contact Name & Title:

Phone:

Email:

Proposal Narrative

1. REDI Alignment (select one)

If selected other, please describe:

2. Please provide a summary of your proposal. Explain how it is consistent with and supports the Wood County REDI (Rural Economic Development Initiative) Plan.

3. Have you received funds through this grant in the past? (if yes, check box)

Have you applied in the past? (if yes, check box)

If yes, in which years did you receive funds and in which years did you apply?



The \$50,000 CEED funding will be used for the following purposes to prepare for breaking ground and construction. \$21,000 to purchase the 2nd lot from HayCreek/Gardner Properties, \$10,000 for consultative services to finalize business plan and proforma, \$19,000 for final design and engineer work. CranCity Corner a newly approved non-profit organization will raise \$1,250,000 in funding from 1/1/2026-12/31/2027 from the following sources: \$500,000 WEDC and other grants, \$250,000 local foundations, \$250,000 naming rights, \$250,000 individual donors.



**Wood County Economic Development
(Planning & Zoning/Extension)**
400 Market Street/ P.O. Box 8095, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-421-8466

Funding Considerations/Request Summary

(provide separate spreadsheet/budget if needed)

Budget Summary		Budget Detail
Total Organization Budget	\$	Revenue/Income
Total Proposal Cost	\$	
Total Amount Requested	\$	
Total Match *	\$	Total Revenue/Income \$
* Please provide a match explanation in question 6.		Expenses
		Total Expense \$

Project Reporting Requirement

As a reporting requirement of receiving an Economic Development Grant, a one-page summary project report will be prepared and presented to the CEED Committee. **This report must be submitted no later than Tuesday, October 1, 2026.** Funding will not be released to the applicant prior to the reporting requirement being met. Please also note that funds are not able to be carried over into the following year.

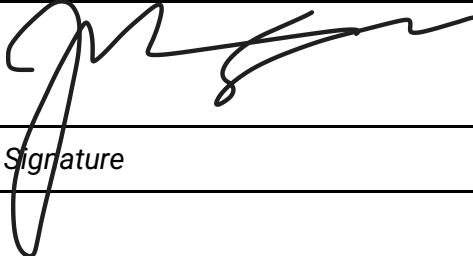
Signatures

I attest that the information in this application submitted to Wood County is true and correct.

Applicant

		
Signature	Printed Name	Date

Highest Organization Elected Official/Board Chair

		
Signature	Printed Name	Date

I have a programmatic update for the Central Wisconsin Catch a Ride funding application through the CEED Committee. Following additional planning with our transportation partners and a closer review of early implementation priorities, we are adjusting our approach from purchasing a wheelchair-accessible van outright to leasing vehicles and covering vehicle maintenance. This shift enables us to steward CEED's investment in a way that maximizes impact and long-term sustainability.

This approach allows us to:

- Launch service more quickly and retain flexibility to scale or adapt as rider demand evolves
- Ensure vehicle maintenance and servicing needs are fully supported in the critical early years, rather than being tied to a single vehicle asset
- Maintain service continuity for riders by accessing a pooled fleet of vehicles through our partners at Via, so if a wheelchair-accessible vehicle is temporarily out of service for maintenance, we can deploy a replacement immediately at no additional cost. As Feonix Mobility Rising has learned through prior deployments, repairs on accessible vehicles can take two to three weeks or longer due to limited specialized repair facilities; leasing allows us to avoid service gaps that would otherwise leave riders without access.
- We remain fully committed to delivering safe, reliable, and dignified accessible transportation. Leasing enables us to secure the appropriate vehicle types, including wheelchair-accessible options, while ensuring consistent maintenance, uninterrupted service, and responsible use of CEED's investment.

In addition to this change, we would also like to change our funding match, as we are no longer receiving fleet vehicles from Nelson Jameson. We would like to use a \$10,000 grant from the Marshfield Area Community Foundation instead. We are still keeping the Opportunity Development Center's in-kind match of \$12,000 for this grant.

With these changes, are we still set for funding? I know this can be harder to handle over email, so please feel free to call me, or we can set up a meeting if you'd like to discuss further. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or if additional information would be helpful. We are grateful for the CEED Committee's support.

Thank you,

Kayleigh



**Wood County Economic Development
(Planning & Zoning/Extension)**
400 Market Street/ P.O. Box 8095, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-421-8466

2026 Wood County (WI) Economic Development Funding Request

Proposal Title:

Applicant Organization:

Website:

Mailing Address:

Street Address: (if different)

Contact Name & Title:

Phone:

Email:

Proposal Narrative

1. REDI Alignment (select one)

If selected other, please describe:

2. Please provide a summary of your proposal. Explain how it is consistent with and supports the Wood County REDI (Rural Economic Development Initiative) Plan.

3. Have you received funds through this grant in the past? (if yes, check box)

Have you applied in the past? (if yes, check box)

If yes, in which years did you receive funds and in which years did you apply?





**Wood County Economic Development
(Planning & Zoning/Extension)**
400 Market Street/ P.O. Box 8095, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-421-8466

Funding Considerations/Request Summary

(provide separate spreadsheet/budget if needed)

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Signatures

I attest that the information in this application submitted to Wood County is true and correct.

Applicant

Kayleigh Mengel		
Signature	Printed Name	Date

Highest Organization Elected Official/Board Chair

		
Signature	Printed Name	Date

Central Wisconsin Catch a Ride Pilot Program

Wood County Economic Development Funding Request

Executive Summary

Access to transportation is a critical social determinant of health and a foundational pillar of economic development. In Wood County and surrounding rural areas, many residents, particularly those facing aging, disabilities, financial hardship, and substance use challenges, lack reliable and affordable transportation. This gap leads to missed medical appointments, lost job opportunities, and educational disadvantages, ultimately reinforcing cycles of poverty and poor health.

To address these pressing issues, Leadership Marshfield and Wood County Health Department, in partnership with Feonix Mobility Rising, propose a community-based transportation initiative that will improve the quality of life for underserved populations and strengthen the region's workforce, healthcare system, and educational institutions. The initial service area connects Marshfield to Wisconsin Rapids and rural communities in parts of Clark, Marathon, and Wood Counties. Routes outside the service area will be considered as capacity allows. Rides are prioritized for healthcare, work, and school. A local leadership circle will guide strategy, with service operating Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. The program begins with three vehicles, four drivers, and one mobility manager. To ensure affordability and buy-in, the pilot program proposes a modest rider fee of \$3–\$5 for vulnerable populations. This model not only supports accessibility but also introduces a sustainable framework for cost recovery.

This proposal requests the purchase of one handicap accessible van to transport riders to various businesses. The service area connects Marshfield to Wisconsin Rapids and rural communities in parts of Clark, Marathon, and Wood Counties. Routes outside the service area will be considered as capacity allows. Rides are prioritized for healthcare, work, and school. Ridership data will be reviewed quarterly to evaluate the service. Opportunity Development Center has agreed to match \$12,000 (in-kind) in 2026 for office space and parking for the program. Nelson Jameson has agreed to donate two used fleet vehicles, valued at just over \$15,000 each, for a total match from Nelson Jameson of approximately \$30,000 (in-kind). The grand total match for this proposal is \$42,000.

Project Timeline:

- February 2026 - Additional funding from other community partners is due
- April 2026 - The vehicle from this proposal will be purchased by the end of this month.
- May 2026 - Rides will begin.

The initiative supports the REDI plan's goal of economic growth, workforce development and retention, and quality of place by helping residents maintain steady employment, providing access to health services, reducing congestion at local hospitals, enhancing attendance for rural students, and encouraging regional connectivity.

In February 2025, a stakeholder engagement session was led by Leadership Marshfield and the Wood County Health Department to identify the transportation needs and economic implications affecting residents of Wood County. The session included voices from local healthcare providers, schools, nonprofit organizations, and employers. Three primary challenges emerged:

- **Employment Instability:** Residents reported missing work or losing jobs due to unreliable transportation. For many, a single late ride puts their employment and financial independence at risk.
- **Healthcare Accessibility:** Local hospitals reported that patients often remain in hospital beds longer than medically necessary, simply because they lack transportation home. This delays care for other patients and strains healthcare resources. Local clinics also noted that patients frequently miss appointments and arrive late due to unreliable transportation.
- **Educational Barriers:** Schools and community organizations reported that students frequently miss school or enrichment programs due to a lack of transportation, particularly in rural areas.

These findings confirm that transportation barriers are contributing directly to economic stagnation, health disparities, and community disconnection.

Proposed Program and Implementation

The initiative's vision is a community where all residents, regardless of income, age, or ability, can travel safely and affordably. Feonix Mobility Rising will oversee program operations, including staffing, capital equipment, and the establishment of a local "leadership circle" to guide long-term strategy. The overall goal is to expand hours and service area in the future as funding and capacity allow.

Primary Objectives

- **Enhance mobility for vulnerable populations**, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and households experiencing financial insecurity.
- **Connect residents with employment, healthcare, education, and social services** through affordable transportation options.
- **Establish a sustainable service model** that can be scaled and adapted to meet the long-term needs of the community.
- **Foster regional economic development** by increasing access to the workforce and critical services.
- **Collaborate with current transportation providers** to address gaps and facilitate cross-agency ride coordination through the integration of technology.

Lead Partners

- **Wood County Health Department:** Program oversight, community health integration, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Feonix Mobility Rising:** A 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a successful record of implementing transportation programs for underserved populations across the nation, including the rural "Catch a Ride" service in Waupaca County, Wisconsin.

Geographic Focus

- Primary route: **Marshfield to Wisconsin Rapids**

- Additional coverage: **Marshfield Area United Way service area** (includes parts of Wood, Clark, and Marathon County)
- Additional locations outside of the service area, based on capacity

Budget and Sustainability

The pilot program requires an initial investment of approximately \$580,979 in the first year to cover:

- **Personnel** (drivers, coordinators)
 - Approximately **\$290,839** for covering one Community Development Coordinator, two full-time and two part-time drivers, driver dispatch, call center management, business management, and fringe benefits.
- **Operational Costs** (vehicle maintenance, fuel, software)
 - Approximately **\$115,992** for vehicle maintenance and insurance, Catch a Ride booking platform, language translation service, dispatching platform, vehicle phones and tablets, volunteer mileage reimbursement, and vehicle safety equipment.
- **Capital Equipment** (vehicles)
 - Approximately **\$156,750** for 3 vehicles (2 ambulatory, 1 accessible), office space, and vehicle registration.

Feonix Mobility Rising will be responsible for securing long-term sustainability through grants, partnerships, and local engagement. In addition to the in-kind donations from Opportunity Development Center and Nelson Jameson, we are awaiting responses from local businesses and both local health systems regarding pending funding requests for operating and personnel expenses. Community buy-in and public-private support are essential to covering pilot phase costs and demonstrating program viability. To date, we have collected thirteen letters of support from the following:

1. Opportunity Development Center
2. Aging and Disability Resource Center
3. Soup or Socks
4. Marshfield Medical Center Credit Union
5. Centergy
6. Family Health Center
7. Inclusa
8. Personal Development Center
9. United School District of Marshfield
10. Forward Bank
11. North Central Community Action Program
12. Marshfield Area United Way
13. Marshfield Area Respite Care Center

Economic Development Impact

This transportation initiative supports Wood County's economic growth by:

- **Strengthening the local workforce:** Helping residents maintain steady employment increases productivity and income stability.
- **Reducing public service strain:** Faster hospital discharge reduces system congestion and costs.
- **Improving educational access:** Dependable transportation enhances attendance and achievement for rural students.
- **Enhancing regional connectivity:** Linking surrounding towns to Marshfield encourages commerce and access to essential services.

In short, this is not just a transportation program; it is a community-wide investment in economic opportunity, health for all, and social interaction. The proposed transportation initiative is a transformative opportunity to address long-standing mobility barriers that limit economic and personal growth in Wood County. Through strong collaboration, local leadership, and evidence-based strategies, this program will help ensure that no resident is left behind due to a lack of transportation.

We invite stakeholders, funders, and community members to join us in building a healthier, more connected, and more prosperous future for all.



May 8, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Centergy, I am writing to express our full support for the Central Wisconsin Catch-A-Ride Pilot Program, an initiative led by Leadership Marshfield in partnership with the Wood County Health Department and operated by Feonix Mobility Rising.

As a regional economic development organization, our mission is to advance prosperity and vibrancy in the five-county region of Central Wisconsin: Adams, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, and Wood Counties. Reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation is critical to the economic infrastructure needed to achieve these goals. The Catch-A-Ride Pilot Program directly addresses this need by bridging transportation gaps that currently prevent many individuals from fully participating in the regional economy.

A lack of transportation is more than a personal inconvenience—it is a barrier to employment, workforce retention, and upward mobility. Businesses across our region report difficulty hiring and retaining employees due, in part, to transportation challenges. This program offers a practical and scalable solution, ensuring that workers can reliably get to their jobs, students can attend school and training programs, and residents can access the services they need to remain healthy and productive contributors to the local economy.

The success of the Catch-A-Ride model in neighboring Waupaca County demonstrates its potential to deliver measurable economic outcomes. We are investing in a stronger, more prosperous workforce by replicating and expanding this model into Wood County and the Marshfield Area United Way service region. This initiative will reduce absenteeism, increase job access, and improve economic mobility for underserved populations—factors that contribute directly to our region’s competitiveness and prosperity.

We applaud the collaborative leadership behind this initiative and are proud to support the Central Wisconsin Catch-A-Ride Pilot Program. It represents a vital step toward ensuring our communities have the transportation infrastructure necessary to support current and future economic growth.

Sincerely,



Angelnia (Angel) Laidlaw
President & CEO
Centergy

Return on Investment Analysis for Central Wisconsin Catch a Ride

Program Budget: \$1.5 million over 3 years

Service Area: Wood County, Wisconsin and surrounding rural communities

Service Purpose: Healthcare, Employment, and Education Access

Overview

The Central Wisconsin Catch a Ride program is a three-year, \$1.5 million investment designed to address transportation barriers for rural and underserved households in Central Wisconsin. With a fleet of three vehicles, staffed by two full-time and two part-time drivers operating Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, the program will provide reliable transportation for approximately **350 unique riders**—an estimated **350 households** and **801 individuals**, based on Wood County's average household size of 2.29 persons [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2023](#).

The transportation service is projected to facilitate access to three critical domains:

- **Healthcare (50% of rides)**
- **Employment (40% of rides)**
- **Education and other essential services (10%)**

To accurately evaluate the program's public value, we provide a three-part **Return on Investment (ROI) analysis**: (1) Financial ROI, (2) Taxpayer ROI, and (3) Social ROI. Each model incorporates conservative assumptions and is informed by Wisconsin-specific labor market data and national economic research on transportation and employment interventions.

1. Financial ROI: Increased Earnings for Workers

While 350 riders will receive mobility services, we conservatively estimate that only **30% (105 individuals)** will secure or retain employment solely due to this transportation support. This assumption mirrors best practices for conservative public investment modeling, focusing only on directly attributable outcomes.

Wage Estimates

Employment access is projected to primarily support roles in **healthcare, manufacturing, and support services**.

According to the **Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD)** and the **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)**:

- Average wages in Wood County:
 - **Healthcare Support Occupations:** ~\$19/hour
 - **Manufacturing/Production Occupations:** ~\$25/hour
 - **Education and Support Services:** ~\$20/hour

Weighted average wage = **\$21.50/hour**

With benefits (25%), total compensation = **\$26.90/hour**

- Annual full-time compensation: $\$26.90 \times 2,080 \text{ hours} = \$55,950/\text{year}$

Total Earnings Impact

- $105 \text{ workers} \times \$55,950/\text{year} \times 3 \text{ years} = \$17,586,750 \text{ in total earnings}$ directly tied to program access

ROI Calculation

- Financial ROI = $\$17.6M \div \$1.5M = 11.7:1$

Conclusion:

For every dollar invested, **\$11.70 is generated in worker wages and employer-paid benefits**, contributing to household economic stability, increased consumer spending, and reduced poverty risk.

2. Taxpayer ROI: Public Revenue and Cost Savings

Increased Tax Revenue

Newly employed individuals generate revenue through income taxes, payroll taxes, and sales taxes. [CBO and the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center](#) report average total tax burdens for low- to middle-income households of approximately **10–13%** (federal income and payroll taxes), rising to **15–20%** when state and local taxes are included. Marginal tax rates on additional income are higher (~30%).

- $105 \text{ workers} \times \$55,950 \times 20\% = \$1,118,000/\text{year}$ in new taxes
- Over three years: **\$3,354,000 in tax revenue**

Reduced Safety Net Dependence

While SNAP benefits average about \$1,600 per recipient annually, when combined with other forms of public assistance such as Medicaid, housing aid, and unemployment insurance, **total support for unemployed low-income individuals often reaches several thousand dollars per year.**

We conservatively assume:

- 40% of significantly impacted riders (42 individuals) avoid \$5,000/year in benefits
- $42 \times \$5,000 \times 3 \text{ years} = \$630,000 \text{ in taxpayer savings}$

Total Taxpayer Benefit

- $\$3.35M \text{ (taxes)} + \$630K \text{ (cost savings)} = \3.98 million

ROI Calculation

- Taxpayer ROI = $\$3.98M \div \$1.5M = 2.65:1$

Conclusion:

Each dollar invested yields **\$2.65 in fiscal returns** through increased tax contributions and reduced public benefit expenditures.

3. Social ROI: Health, Safety, and Economic Ripple Effects

Social ROI captures broader public value, including community health, reduced criminal justice involvement, and economic multiplier effects.

A. Health Savings

Reliable transportation reduces missed appointments and promotes access to preventive and chronic care. According to a [randomized evaluation published in a research journal for Internal Medicine \(2022\)](#), addressing unmet social needs—including transportation—led to an **11% decrease in hospital admissions** and a **4% reduction in emergency department (ER) visits** among Medicaid patients who received social needs case management for one year (Annals of Internal Medicine via Axios).

While this study was conducted in an urban California setting, the results are highly applicable to rural programs where transportation barriers are often more severe and alternatives more limited. To remain conservative in our estimate, we assume that **8 riders avoid costly emergency events valued at \$10,000 per occurrence**, generating:

- **\$240,000 in health system savings over 3 years**

B. Criminal Justice System Avoidance

Evidence indicates that stable employment and correctional education reduce recidivism and incarceration. A [RAND meta-analysis](#) found that investment in correctional education **returns \$4–5 in incarceration cost savings per \$1 spent**, primarily through reduced reincarceration costs over a three-year period

Estimate:

- 2 incarcerations avoided = $2 \times \$40,000 \times 3 = \$240,000$

C. Economic Multipliers

Local income leads to local spending. [The Economic Policy Institute's 2019 study](#) demonstrates that durable manufacturing acts as a catalyst in regional economies: *for every 100 direct jobs in durable manufacturing, approximately 744 indirect jobs are supported*'. We use a **conservative multiplier of 0.5**:

- $\$17.6M \text{ in wages} \times 0.5 = \$8.8 \text{ million in induced economic activity}$

Total Social Benefit

- Participant earnings: \$17.6M
- Taxpayer benefit: \$3.98M
- Health + justice savings: \$480K
- Local economic ripple: \$8.8M
- **Total: \$30.86 million**

ROI Calculation

- Social ROI = $\$30.86M \div \$1.5M = 20.6:1$

Conclusion:

Every \$1 invested produces **\$20.60 in total societal value**, capturing economic, health, and safety impacts for the region.

ROI Models for Central Wisconsin Catch a Ride

ROI Model	Key Components	Total Benefit (3 years)	ROI Ratio
Financial ROI	Increased wages + benefits for significantly impacted workers	\$17.6 million	11.7 : 1
Taxpayer ROI	Tax revenue + reduced public assistance usage	\$3.98 million	2.65 : 1
Social ROI	Full community impact: health, safety, economy	\$30.86 million	20.6 : 1

Conclusion

This return on investment analysis confirms that the Central Wisconsin Catch a Ride program is a **high-yield, low-risk public investment**. Even under conservative assumptions, the initiative demonstrates the potential to:

- **Empower residents with job access**
- **Reduce emergency healthcare and justice costs**
- **Circulate millions in wages through the local economy**
- **Deliver more than 20 times its value in public good**

These findings are aligned with national studies that demonstrate transportation access as a social determinant of health, economic stability, and educational attainment. With a modest investment of \$1.5 million over three years, the program delivers a compelling case for funding based on sound economic principles and proven public returns.