



DANE COUNTY

Kathleen M. Falk
County Executive

DATE: June 7, 2006

TO: Scott McDonell, Chair
Dane County Board of Supervisors

Members, Dane County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Kathleen M. Falk
Dane County Executive

SUBJECT: Land and Water Legacy Fund

In Dane County we love our lakes, streams and rivers. As a region, we are committed to the idea that the essential element that we have in common – our water – will be protected. Our citizens have spoken again and again telling us that this most recognizable characteristic of the county is central to who we are and critical to protecting the quality of life that makes Dane County a great place to work and play.

- “Protecting Water Quality and Water Resources” was the most often cited comment from the over 500 citizens who participated in the Attain Dane! listening sessions I held throughout the County.
- “Water Resource Protection” was the highest priority cited in the Dane County Comprehensive Plan Survey conducted in 2005.
- “Environmental Quality, Clean Air and Water”, was the top community issue for respondents to the April 2006 DaneTrak Survey conducted by the Collaboration Council.
- Individuals throughout Dane County are involved in more than two dozen watershed and conservation organizations and regularly take individual action to protect habitat on streams and wetlands and work on flood control and watershed protection.
- With strong citizen support, we have taken nationally recognized innovative measures to reduce phosphorus (Wisconsin’s first county-wide ordinance banning use and retail display of unnecessary phosphorus in lawn fertilizer), stop manure spills (the first Wisconsin county-wide program to control winter-spreading of manure), and better control storm water (among the nation’s first county-wide storm water regulations with a thermal standard).
- With the strong support of representatives from the Dane County Towns Association, Dane County, the Dane County City and Villages Association and the City of Madison, the newly constituted Regional Planning Commission will

require proactive water quality planning in order to determine where to grow and what to preserve.

Now is the time to take the next steps building on the legacy of our historic Conservation Fund to protect our lands and waters. Many of you have worked with great energy and imagination to improve our waters. I have consulted with many of you and you will recognize your ideas as in the following proposal. In particular, Dane County Board Chair McDonnell, Lakes & Watershed Commission Chair Hulsey, and EANR Chair Richmond have been helpful in suggesting specific steps to preserve our waters.

We should create the Land and Water Legacy Fund to integrate the green and the blue in Dane County, our land and our water. We are proposing that \$1.5 million be committed to protecting the county's water and ensuring that the great work of the Conservation Fund is enhanced by recognizing what we do on the land has a direct impact on our waters.

The Land and Water Legacy Fund will have the following elements:

- Develop a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) option for landowners who want to protect and restore waters while continuing to work the land;
- Purchase permanent easements with private landowners to provide fish habitat and public access for fishing;
- Provide funding for wetland restoration on the upland wetland sites identified in the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed Plan and within Drainage Districts recommended for dissolution by the Dane County Drainage Board;
- Fund and enhance public access for the Yahara Water Trail, creating the basis for a larger water trail system in Dane County, including park and paddle sites;
- Create a North Mendota E-Way to establish flood control, wetland restoration, drinking water source protection and infiltration before pollutants make their way into our chain of lakes;
- Focus funding on preventing sediment and nutrient discharges into our lakes through the aggressive use of buffers and a voluntary program to help lakefront property owners to re-establish native plantings;

We should also improve programs and regulations to better protect and clean up our waters, especially our Yahara Lakes.

- Working with the Lakes and Watershed Commission along with our citizens, expand the weed cutting program; included will be increased weed cutting, periodic weed pick up from public beaches and assistance to lake property owners to clean up lake trash. I ask that the Lakes & Watershed Commission work with citizens and local governments to figure out the best ways these programs can work.
- Increase funding for the cost-share program with local governments to retrofit storm sewer outfalls to trap trash and sediment before they enter the lake;

- Regulate the land spreading of septage;
- Pilot the use of pervious surfaces and green roofing techniques at County facilities;
- Building on the work of the Dane County Water Classification Study, identify gaps to be filled in current regulatory programs; including shore land zoning requirements more protective than the state minimums.

These are logical next steps in our community's long history of protecting our working and recreational lands. The Land and Water Legacy fund carries out the community priority of protecting our water. It acknowledges and works with the notion that what we do on the land is essential to the health of our water. It connects our landscape to our aquifers and our waterways. Ultimately, it is a common sense approach to protecting our investments in the land and the water, recognizing that we are all in an interdependent system – land, lakes, streams, groundwater, and wetlands. Because these waters are inter-related, so must be our response.

I look forward to working with you as we refine and implement these proposals.

Thank you.