

Conservation/UW-EX Education Committee
Monday, April 14, 2025 Minutes
Oneida County Courthouse, County Board Room and Virtually by ZOOM

Committee Members: Chair Collette Sorgel, Linnaea Newman, Robb Jensen, Lenore Lopez and Chris Schultz.

Others Present: Beckie Gaskill, Tom Wiensch, Stephanie Boismenu, Karl Jennrich, Michele Sadauskas, and Jessica Young. Amber Rehberg, Michael Tautges, Eric Rempala, and Jonna Jewell on Zoom.

1. Call to order and Chairperson's Announcements:

Chair Sorgel called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. The meeting was properly posted and handicapped accessible and ADA compliant.

2. Approve Agenda: A motion by Newman/Lopez to approve the April 14, 2025 Agenda with the order of items at the Chair's discretion. All ayes; motion carried.

3. Approve Minutes: A motion by Jensen/Newman to approve the minutes of March 10, 2025 as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

4. Dates/Location of Future Meetings:

Monday, May 12, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. Oneida County Courthouse; County Board Room.

5. Public Comment:

Beckie Gaskill (Marshfield) highlighted an upcoming event organized by the group, Covering Climate Now, called the "89 Percent Project," which is scheduled for next week. The project aims to raise awareness about the fact that 89 percent of the world's population desires more governmental action on climate change. Gaskill invited everyone to utilize social media platforms to support the initiative by posting with the hashtag *#89percent*. The group's overall objective is to increase awareness that climate change is a pressing issue and proactive measures can be taken to address it. They advocate for greater governmental involvement in these efforts.

Tom Wiensch (Oneida County Clean Waters Action -OCCWA) commented that the OCCWA supports the resolution under consideration to endorse the Knowles-Nelson funding. This important bipartisan program, often perceived as a land-purchase initiative, extends its benefits far beyond that scope. It has funded the purchase of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest and has funded numerous recreational projects, including playground equipment and courts in Sugar Camp, lake treatment for invasive species in Minocqua, the boat landing on the Pelican/Wisconsin River, and the Bearskin bike and snowmobile trails.

6. LWCD Upcoming Events:

Sadauskas noted that the list of events has been updated and invites any questions regarding the changes. No further comments were made.

Chairperson Announcement: Chair Sorgel congratulated Stephanie Boismenu, the AIS Coordinator for Oneida County, on being the recipient of the 2025 Invasive Species Action Award.

7. CUW Committee Ag Representative Update:

Chair Sorgel has not yet contacted the Agricultural Representative applicants but will be reaching out to them shortly. The goal is to have a recommendation ready by the May CUW Committee meeting.

8. Advocating for Conservation Staffing in State Budget:

There is uncertainty about the status of the state budget at this time. The CUW Committee will advocate for the inclusion of conservation staffing in the state budget as the process unfolds.

a. Joint Finance Committee State Budget Hearings:

There will be two upcoming Joint Finance Committee budget meetings:

- **April 28 in Hayward:** Sadauskas plans to attend along with other staff members in other counties.
- **April 29 in Wausau:** A member of the CUW Committee is requested to attend to represent Oneida County. The meeting will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., but Sadauskas suggests getting there early. Newman has expressed interest in attending on behalf of the County, pending scheduling availability. Committee members will check their schedules to determine who can attend.

b. Resolution for Staffing Increase:

- The resolution is currently under review by Corporation Counsel and is being prepared to advance to the County Board, should the Committee choose to proceed.
- Jensen noted state-level funding issues but is not opposed to moving forward with the resolution. He believes individual voices at the county-level may have a greater impact than a resolution but is supportive of advancing the resolution.
- The Committee agreed to move the resolution forward for consideration by the full County Board.

Sorgel/Jensen made a motion to take the recommendation for support of increasing base funding for conservation and move it to the full County Board for consideration. All ayes; motion carried.

9. Town of Lake Tomahawk Knowles-Nelson Stewardship resolution:

The funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship is in jeopardy. Lopez emphasized the significance of supporting the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship, highlighting its benefits, such as land acquisitions and supplying grants for other projects in towns, and is advocating for the Committee to endorse resolutions for its reauthorization. Lopez emphasized that the more supportive voices present, the stronger the stewardship will become.

Sadauskas noted that \$629,000 had been allocated to towns within Oneida County for conservation projects and suggested that a draft resolution could be prepared for Oneida County if the Committee wishes to proceed in that direction.

Newman expressed that the breakdown of the number of projects and the investment in various areas around Oneida County was educational. Sadauskas suggested attaching the bullet point document, outlining the breakdown of projects and investments, to any resolution sent to the County Board. Jensen noted that the issue is controversial and emphasized the need to review the exact resolution before agreeing. Chair Sorgel suggested the Committee publicize their efforts towards conservation in a press release, which would also include a thank you to the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship for their conservation efforts. Schultz and Lopez both supported the idea of drafting a resolution instead. Lopez further recommended that Committee members identify and share the projects completed in their communities through the stewardship funding to raise awareness of its benefits. Schultz stressed the necessity of advertising to support the issue, highlighting the significant financial investment in projects, without which the resolution might lack impact. Sadauskas will collaborate with Lopez to draft a resolution that endorses funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship, and will have it ready for the May CUW Committee meeting.

10. Conference Attendance Update: - M Sadauskas & S Boismenu

Boismenu highlighted her role as a moderator for a Climate Adaptation presentation given by the DNR and also co-presented on Internet Landing Installed Devices (ILID), an electronic monitoring system at boat landings. The ILID sensor detects boat activity, whether launching or retrieving, and initiates a voice recording to remind visitors to clean their boats to help maintain water quality. Additionally, a camera captures images of boats during launch, noting the boat registration number and license plate number, which is used to notify the lake president and local sheriff's office if the boat owner has evidence of invasive species on its bottom. The system is effective and intended for educational purposes only, not punitive measures. Currently, there are two ILID systems in Oneida County: one at Pelican Lake and another at Town Line Lake. The initial investment is \$17,000 to \$18,000, with annual maintenance and viewing expenses. The costs are substantial but covered under surface water grants through the DNR.

Sadauskas attended the County Conservationist Land & Water Conference, where the Oneida County speaker secured second place. Sadauskas mentioned it was nice to see

the shift towards non-technical presentations, and that this year they were engaging and easy to follow. The conference was well-attended with many new faces.

11. Lake District Reports:

Mid Lake:

- Currently working on their Comprehensive Plan and seeking feedback due to uncertainty about the stakeholder survey scheduled for the following year.
- Onterra is waiving some fees in their grant writing process.

Horsehead Lake:

- Considered Slate Scout monitoring system, which uses cell towers, but found it too expensive and decided against it.
- They will skip stocking this spring and will consider fall stocking.
- Will be joining a coalition of 80 other organizations that are opposed to wakeboats.

Bear Lake:

- Searching for new vendors for Walleye stocking.
- The insurance company has dropped coverage for the dam, leading to difficulties in finding liability insurance.
- Exploring Nanobubble technology to clean the lake, but facing high costs and seeking grants.

Squash Lake:

- Experienced a successful year of milfoil control through handpicking, starting early in the spring and continuing throughout the year.
- Allocating funds for a new custom-made dive boat designed to meet divers' specifications.

Crescent Lake:

- Unable to obtain a permit last year, resulting in increased milfoil in various regions. Assessing the impact if a permit is not obtained again this year.

12. PFAs Update:

No updates.

13. Office Reports: – March 2025.

- a. Budget Actual.
- b. Invoices Paid.

14. LWCD items to include on next agenda:

- Agricultural Representative

15. Area 4 Extension Director Update: – A Rehberg.

○ UWEX Status Update:

UWEX is strengthening its partnership with Nicolet. Anne Williams, the Oneida County 4-H educator, will facilitate the Youth Summer Theater

Program at Nicolet's Lakeside Center in July. Additionally, Sharon Krause, the Positive Youth Development educator, is collaborating with a Nicolet professor to facilitate a screening of a mental health documentary.

○ Annual Report Highlights for Full County Board:

Rehberg provided an overview of the annual report she plans to present to the full County Board at its April meeting.

Highlights:

- In 2024, youth development educators (1.0 FTE) had over 2,900 educational contacts in Oneida County through initiatives such as, Teen Court, Youth Mental Health Clubs, Camps, and specialized programs like Lego Robotics and the Youth Summer Theater Program. These programs foster hands-on learning experiences, build leadership, responsibility, and team work, helping youth grow into productive adults and strong leaders.
- Extension educators secured more than \$20,000 through mini-grants and donations, ensuring all youth, regardless of socio-economic background, have the opportunity to participate in Extension programming.
- Another key focus is supporting families in community health: Extension's Health and Well-Being educator and FoodWise educators had over 5,400 educational contacts promoting health and wellness across the lifespan.
- Extension acts as a link between Oneida County and the UW system, leveraging state-wide expertise for local impact by connecting UW system research and resources to the local community and creating local solutions. In 2024, Extension collaborated with more than 165 different community members and organizations in Oneida County, addressing Broadband updates, insect research and diagnostics, plant disease assistance, soil and water testing, non-profit strategic planning, coalition support, and more.

16. UWEX Office Reports: – March 2025.

- a. Budget Actual.
- b. Invoices Paid.

17. UWEX items to include on next agenda:

- Comments from the County Board about the 2024 Annual Report.

18. Public Comment:

None.

19. Adjournment: Chair Sorgel adjourned meeting at 1:54 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Young, Recording Secretary