



CONSERVATION CONNECTION

Wood County Land & Water
Conservation Department

Volume 24 Issue 1

Wild Parsnip Update

Last year we wrote about wild parsnip and the damage it can cause to skin and that Wood County has appointed a weed commissioner to help control the species. We have learned a few things since last year.

The call for information on the location of wild parsnip has revealed many locations of infestation. We know that 9 townships have wild parsnip within their borders. Despite this, there are some positives to think about. If there are only one or two plants in an area, a shovel to that taproot will kill it. There is no need to go out and spend money on chemicals if you notice a couple near your mailbox.

The seeds of wild parsnip do not have a very long life span. Other seeds can stay dormant in the soil for 50 plus years, however wild parsnip can stay viable for only 4-5 years. This means if you stay at it for a few years, you do have a good chance of getting rid of the plant.

As long as control efforts are done before the plant produces seed, any control is good control. Even if you mow/spray too early, the plant will be stressed out and produce less seed. There is a time when mowing can be more effective. The plant has a very large root in early spring and it gets smaller as it sends the energy towards growing the plant. The root shrinks as more top growth appears. This is an ideal time to mow, cut, spray the plant because it will have less energy from the root available to put towards new growth, especially seed growth, and will likely die. This ideal control time happens around the second week of July.

Please continue to report locations of the plant to the Wood County Land Conservation Department. You can also go to eddmaps.org to report locations online. EDDMapS also has an app free to download that makes reporting very easy. A photo can be taken onsite and the GPS point is saved automatically. Call 715-421-8475 for more information.

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Wild Parsnip plant late spring, early summer.



Once seeds appear, mowing would be a bad idea because the plant would spread.

Multiple Cost-Share/Technical Assistance Opportunities Available

You may know of someone who has worked with the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) on a conservation project in the past. Or maybe you've thought about doing something to help improve the soil, waterways, wildlife, or ease of operating on your property, but didn't have money to get it done. The Wood County LWCD can assist you! Whether it is just technical assistance or cost-sharing up to half of the cost of your project, we are just a phone call away. Feel free to contact us anytime at 715-421-8475 with your ideas.

The two categories of cost-share assistance available are:

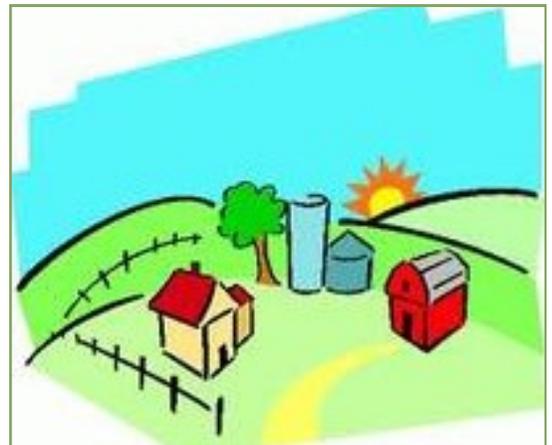
1. "Hard" practices are those that are more permanent—once constructed the benefits are seen for the designed life of the project.
2. "Soft" practices are those that are more seasonal and require repetition each year in order for them to properly make a difference in crop yields and environmental benefits.

Each year the Wood County LWCD negotiates with the State of WI to obtain roughly \$40,000 for soft practices and \$70,000 for hard practices. If we don't use it we lose it, so we are constantly working with many landowners to find the best areas that will benefit environmentally from an improvement project.

Below are some of the many examples of practices we can cost-share and/or assist with. The most common are the proper abandonment of unused wells and nutrient management. The planting of cover crops has become very popular as more and more farmers realize the benefits of the cover crops drying out fields quicker in the spring, as well as holding soil and nutrients in place (and therefore not be lost to groundwater or surface water) during rain and other erosion events.

Hard Practices:

- Manure storage structure construction
- Barnyard runoff control systems/sediment basins
- Abandonment of unused manure storage structures
- Abandonment of unused wells to prevent groundwater contamination
- Waste transfer/treatment of manure/milkhouse waste
- Feed leachate transfer, treatment, and storage
- Grade stabilization structures to prevent erosion in waterways
- Streambank/shoreline improvement projects/cattle crossings
- Wetland restoration or development
- Agricultural field edge filter and buffer strips
- Grassed waterways
- Roof runoff structures/gutters
- And many more!



Soft Practices:

Trying new agricultural field methods can be risky, especially when money is involved. To help overcome this risk, cost-sharing can be used to help overcome the learning curve. This is especially helpful when trying to plant the increasingly talked about cover crops. Money is available to anyone in Wood County and/or in the Mill Creek Watershed. There may be additional money available in the future for those in the Mill Creek Watershed.

If cover crops aren't your thing, there are other conservation possibilities. There is stripcropping for those long and gradual slopes or steep slopes, no-till systems, and nutrient management.

Cost-Share Amount for 2018

| | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Contour Farming: | \$9/ac |
| Cover crops: | \$25/ac |
| Stripcropping: | \$13.50/ac |
| Nutrient Management: | \$10/ac |
| No-Till: | \$18.50/ac |

Getting started with a nutrient management plan has never been more attractive. New for this year, the cost share rate has increased. Previously it was \$7 per acre each year for four years. Now it is \$10 per acre each year for four years. You may want to have a nutrient management plan to know what nutrients a crop needs, to avoid over-application (and therefore avoid wasting money), to use on-farm nutrients such as manure before purchasing commercial fertilizers, to save money and increase farm profitability, to improve surface and groundwater quality, to have documentation that manure is supposed to go on a field if there are complaints, and more.

Acoustic Bat Monitoring

Have you been trying to enjoy campfires, do some gardening in the yard, or enjoy sunsets by the water this summer? Have you found yourself swatting a lot more mosquitos than you remember in years past? There is a reason for it, and it's called White nose syndrome.

We have eight species of bats in WI; four species are cave bats and four species are tree bats. WI tree bat species include Silver-haired bat, Hoary bat, Eastern red bat and the newest Evening bat (found in Rock County in 2016). These tree bats migrate to warmer climates, so aren't as affected by White nose syndrome. WI cave bat species include Little Brown bat, Big Brown bat, Northern Long-eared bat and Eastern pipistrelle. Cave bats hibernate in large groups in caves or underground mine sites throughout the winter, which makes them all susceptible to the unforgiving disease called White-nose syndrome.

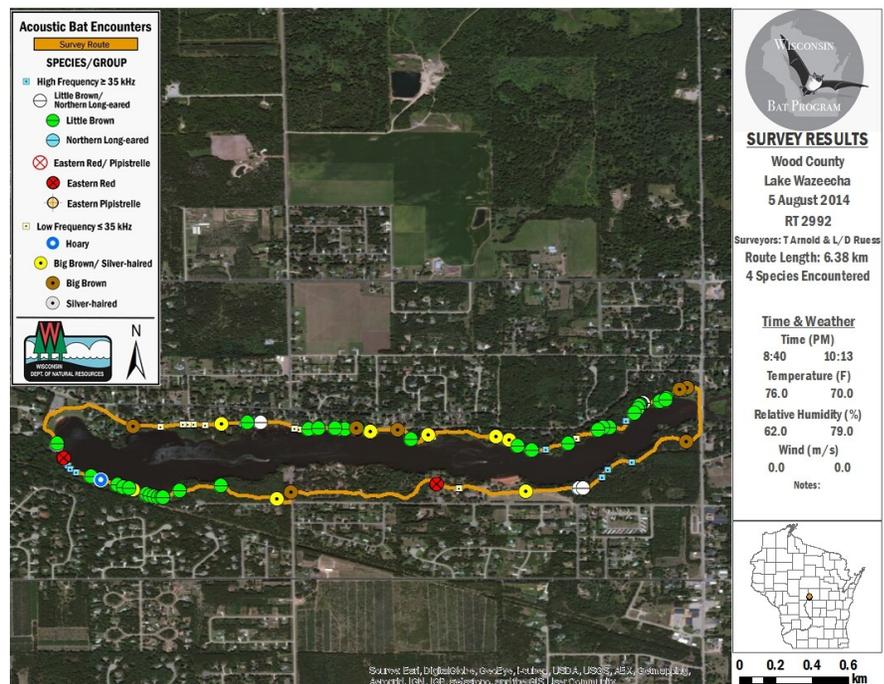
White nose syndrome was first discovered in the United States in 2007 in a cave of hibernating bats in New York. This disease has a 95% mortality rate in infected sites. The fungus grows on hibernating bats causing them to use up critical fat reserves and wake up during the winter. With no bat food sources around in winter the bats aren't able to build the fat reserves back up and the bats die. The WI bat population has taken such a drastic decline that in 2011 cave bats in the State of Wisconsin were placed on the state-threatened list.

WI DNR, along with numerous other agencies, have studied White nose syndrome trying to find a solution to the declining bat population. For more and up to date information on these efforts, please visit <http://wiatri.net/Inventory/Bats/>.

The Wood County LWCD has been conducting acoustic bat monitoring since 2014. In the four years we have been involved the drastic population decrease of bats is alarming and very present here in Wood County. Bats use echolocation to search and capture food. Echolocation is when a bat sends out sound waves in search of prey. When those sound waves bounce off the prey and back to the bat it can zero in on the prey until it's close enough to capture. The frequency bats use during echolocation is above what the human ear can hear but the acoustic monitoring equipment can bring down the frequency so we can hear it. The acoustic equipment also collects other data to be mapped out by the WI DNR bat experts. Each of the eight bat species in WI has a different frequency and pattern specifically to that species. Starting thirty minutes after sunset, you turn the equipment on and start walking. It really is that easy! You have to walk for at least an hour for an acoustic survey but can walk longer if wanted. Once data is collected, we send it off to the WI DNR bat experts for a map of exactly where we walked along with what species of bats we found along the route.

Over the last four years here in Wood County we have seen a drastic decrease in the bat population. According to the WI Bat Program "It is estimated that bats in Wisconsin save farmers up to \$658 million every year in the form of pest control services." If you think you're not affected by bats, keep an eye on your grocery bill over the next year or two.

While you're trying to enjoy a beautiful WI summer evening, whether it be sitting by a campfire, gardening, or watching the sunset you might want to get use to the amount of swatting due to our loss of the bat population. If you are curious about acoustic bat monitoring surveys or want to help with them please contact Tracy Arnold at tarnold@co.wood.wi.us.



Above is a map of a bat survey completed in 2014 around Lake Wazeecha.

Meet the Land & Water Conservation Department Summer Intern



Hello, my name is Alex Delaney and I am the 2018 summer intern at the Wood County Land and Water Conservation Department. First, let me tell you a little about myself. I was born and raised in the small city of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, which is located in the Southwest corner of the state. My hobbies include hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and cracking open a cold one with the boys on the weekends. I graduated from Mineral Point High School in 2015 with an interest in wildlife management and soil conservation. After graduation, I decided to enroll at UW- Stevens Point due to their great reputation as being a leader in natural resources education. I am a soil and land management major plus I am pursuing a wetland science certificate.

I am very excited to begin my internship at Wood County LWCD and be given the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience in my future career field. This summer, my main focus will be to utilize the GIS tool by mapping various agricultural fields in the Mill Creek Watershed located in Wood County. This project will be used as a future reference point for how fields change over time and can be updated every year according to the changes made. If you have any questions about me, feel free to stop by the office any time. I look forward to working with all of you this summer.

Cover Crop “Try Before You Buy” Tool

The Cover Crop Economic Decision Support Tool, launched by NRCS, allows farmers to try different cover crop scenarios on paper and then view the costs and benefits short-term. The tool and demonstration on-demand webinar can be found here: <http://www.conservationwebinars.net/webinars/cover-crop-economics-decision-support-tool/>

Please feel free to call our office at 715-421-8475 to schedule a time to come to the LWCD office and we'll walk you through the tool using your own farm data.

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