

RESOLUTION NO. _____ - 2021

**SUPPORT FOR ACHIEVING BASE FUNDING GOAL FOR COUNTY CONSERVATION
STAFFING**

Background: Wis. Stats. § 92.06 and § 92.07 create and define the powers of Land Conservation Committees (LCCs), and Wis. Stat. § 92.09 empowers Land Conservation Departments (LCDs) to administer county soil and water conservation programs and may exercise the powers granted to the land conservation committee. County LCDs are the local delivery mechanism for a wide range of Wisconsin's natural soil and water and other resource management programs including non-point pollution control, farmland preservation, reclamation of non-metallic mines, invasive species control, woodland management, lakes protection, and more.

LCD professionals work as trusted, technical advisors to support producer-led watershed groups, assist waterfront property owners, help farmers develop and implement nutrient management plans, respond to natural disasters like floods, and spend years building the trust to be able to successfully do so. The conservation practices that LCD professionals help landowners apply to farm fields, forests, and shorelines have numerous water quality benefits, including: preventing soil erosion and promoting soil health, increasing infiltration into groundwater aquifers, protecting drinking water supply, reducing surface runoff and flood severity, and more.

The State of Wisconsin establishes in Wis. Stat. § 92.14(6)(b) a base funding goal for county conservation staffing at an average of three positions at 100, 70, and 50 percent support, respectively, for each LCD. The return on investment in county LCDs is high—leveraging federal and private grant dollars into more conservation on the land and more dollars into local economies, and multiplying several times over the state's existing investment. Support of county LCD funding is a bipartisan issue, supported by farm, conservation, environmental and local government groups alike, and was a top priority voiced by Wisconsinites at statewide Water Quality Task Force hearings in 2019. An increase of base state funding for county conservation staffing will result in more conservation on the landscape, and better protection of water quality.

Fiscal Impact: ☒ None ☐ Budgeted Expenditure ☐ Not Budgeted

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Sauk County Board of Supervisors, does hereby urge the Wisconsin Legislature and the Joint Committee on Finance to provide \$13.0 million in base funding for county conservation staffing, in fulfillment of the state's base funding goal and in recognition that county LCD professionals are among the best and most cost-effective solutions we have to improving water quality, achieving clean and safe drinking water, and supporting a viable agricultural industry at the same time.

For consideration by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors on May 18, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

SAUK COUNTY LAND RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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Fiscal Note: Increased state funding for land conservation professionals would decrease amount of tax levy needed to fund conservation personnel.

MIS Note: No information systems impact.