



# SCOTT KRUG

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 72<sup>nd</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Rep.Krug@legis.wi.gov

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Environment

FROM: Rep. Scott Krug

RE: 2019 ASSEMBLY BILL 567

DATE: December 11, 2019

My thanks to Chairman Kitchens and to the Committee for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 567. This bill is a continuation of an appropriation made in the 2017 State Budget, in support of the Little Plover River Restoration Project. Please note that AB 567 has a companion bill in SB 510.

The Little Plover River Restoration Project was designed after extensive study based on the concerns of residents on the reduced and sometimes nonexistent flow of the Little Plover River, a trout stream, in Portage County. Decades of research have gone into proving the connection between ground water levels and surface water levels. Research also shows a direct connection to lower water levels and agricultural/industrial water use especially in the summer months of any given year. For me my first introduction to this was in 2012 in the midst of a hundred-year drought event when not only the Little Plover River but other bodies of water in Central WI literally dried up.

Through much conversation, collaboration and advocacy the Little Plover River study was commissioned in 2013 and completed by 2016. Evaluation of the study brought together stakeholders from academia, conservation, agriculture and industry to discuss ways to implement strategies to improve the situation for all involved. For projects like this to be successful trust must be established on many levels. Trust between agencies and the legislature, trust between agencies and the private sector and trust between the private section and the legislature.

This project, as Dan Mahoney from the Village of Plover will be able to describe, must be seen as a success in developing those levels of trust these last few years. These ongoing

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relationships based on trust are leading to actual achievable results that are NOT mandated through government action. That is the most important aspect to this project and others we will look to create moving forward. This is based on creativity, innovation, and flexibility using targeted investment from the state to achieve a goal that no mandate could ever come close to providing.

Through my legislative career I look for local projects of importance and work to bring the eyes of the state this project and others that I advocate for are not only important to my area but are important to the state as a whole. We can take the examples of the collaboration set up on these unique projects and use them as templates to keep providing results to other projects in other areas of the state.

Thank you again for holding a hearing on AB 567 / SB 510. As I indicated, Village Manager Dan Mahoney is also here today and will be presenting additional information, and then we will both be available for questions. Questions may also be directed to my office. Thank you again.

General Government  
715-345-5250  
715-345-5253 FAX

President  
Administrator  
Treasurer  
Clerk  
Community Development Mgr  
Building Inspector  
Assessor  
GIS Manager



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(Non Emergency)  
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Police Department  
715-345-5255

Street Department  
715-345-5257

WWTP Department  
715-345-5259

Water Department  
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December 11, 2019

Representative Joel Kitchens, Chair  
Representative Loren Oldenburg, Vice Chair  
Representative Ron Tusler  
Representative Todd Novak  
Representative Tony Kurtz  
Representative Jesse James  
Representative Mike Kuglitsch  
Representative Scott Krug  
Representative Gary Hebl  
Representative Jimmy Andersen  
Representative Katrina Shankland  
Representative Greta Neubauer

RE: Assembly Bill 567

Dear Representative Kitchens, Representative Oldenburg, and Honorable Members of the Committee on Environment:

My name is Dan Mahoney and I am the Administrator of the Village of Plover. I am here today representing the Village of Plover and am testifying in support of AB 567. The Village of Plover and the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project Management Team appreciate your consideration of a possible appropriation to the Village of Plover that would be used to implement wetland restoration and watershed enhancements designed to increase the flow of the Little Plover River, which is located in the Village of Plover, Town of Plover, and Town of Stockton in Portage County.

As many know, the Little Plover River became the posterchild for groundwater withdrawal issues beginning in 2005, when portions of the Little Plover River dried up. The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point and many conservation groups called for State and local action to address groundwater quantity and quality issues. Speaking on behalf of Village of Plover efforts, our Village Board understood that its municipal wells were having an impact on the Little Plover River and directed staff to look at what the Village could do to address the effects it was having on the Little Plover River. A few of the Village's initial efforts included altering the municipal wells pumping regimen so that less water was pumped from the wells closest to the river; acquisition of 100 acres of land to create the Little Plover River Conservancy Area; and, installation of water monitoring equipment on the Little Plover River so that water flows could be measured 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (this equipment was donated by the Wisconsin Rural Water Association).

In 2016, the Village recognized that additional partnerships were needed to be more successful with its efforts to increase Little Plover River flows. In 2017, the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project Management Team was formed, and goals were revised to include improving the health of the Little Plover River Watershed. The Project Management Team is comprised of representatives from the Village of Plover, the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Montgomery Associates, Portage County Land Conservation, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. It is the first time that the Village is aware of that municipalities, agricultural growers, conservation groups, County government, and the DNR have committed to work together to use science to develop voluntary solutions to increase Little Plover River flows while also improving the health of the Little Plover River Watershed.

As part of the 2017- 2018 State Budget, the Village of Plover was provided \$100,000 in support for Little Plover River efforts. This support was used to develop science-based options that would increase Little Plover River flows and improve the health of the Little Plover River Watershed and was also used as the basis for developing public private partnerships. As a result, the Project Management Team has been successful in using the science-based information that was developed to obtain more than \$3 million in public/private investments for the following projects: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Prairie Restoration Project on the Little Plover River Conservancy Property; Little Plover River Habitat Restoration Project on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource and Little Plover River Conservancy Property; Soik Restoration Project; Integrated Watershed Management in Central Wisconsin Promotion Project (new project in 2019); and the Little Plover River RCCP Project (through the U.S. Department of Agriculture). Each of these projects was designed to either increase Little Plover River flows or enhance the Little Plover River Watershed.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Prairie Restoration Project on the Little Plover River Conservancy Property has been completed. 100 acres of land were removed from ag production and converted to wetland scrapes or upland prairie.

2019 work on the Little Plover River Habitat Restoration Project on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource and Little Plover River Conservancy Property is complete. Highlights of our first-year efforts include an immediate response by native plants recolonizing the floodplain wetland habitats previously choked by brush; rapid re-establishment of river form and floodplain connection in areas where work days have occurred; and native grass communities emerging in areas where they had been lost for decades. Similar work will continue through 2020.

The earthwork portion of the Soik Restoration Project is complete as is upland prairie planting. Additional plantings will occur in 2020 and 2022. Maintenance on the property will be ongoing for 8 years.

Work will begin in earnest in 2020 on the project Promoting Integrated Watershed Management in Central Wisconsin.

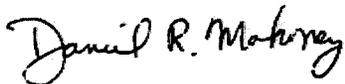
The Little Plover River RCCP Project is a five-year project, with work beginning in earnest in 2020.

If AB 567 is approved by the State Legislature, the Village and Project Management Team would use the support as follows:

1. Continue to run/evaluate scenarios through use of the Bradbury Groundwater Flow and Optimization Model to develop additional science-based solutions that will be used to develop additional public/private investments that will increase Little Plover River flows and improve the health of the Little Plover River Watershed. The Project Management team is confident that an additional \$3 million in public/private investments can be leveraged for new projects.
2. Compare expected results from the Bradbury Groundwater Flow and Optimization Model with actual results achieved. This will require the monitoring of existing projects so that actual results can be compared to expected results. These results will be shared with the public to illustrate the success of these projects.
3. Utilize the results achieved from the Little Plover River Habitat Restoration Project to continue similar project along the Little Plover River corridor. This Project has been highly successful in the minds of adjacent property owners to the point that they have expressed interest in projects on their property, including both public (DNR) and private property owners.
4. In conjunction with the EPA grant, develop and implement an iterative landowner education and outreach strategy to encourage agricultural landowner participation in wetland restoration, water conservation and other soil and water management practices to advance Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project goals; promote the benefits of integrating voluntary wetland restoration and management practices to other watershed management efforts using articles and handouts to document and promote methods and results, an ArcGIS story map to illustrate the landscape issues and completed/planned interventions, and a short video to showcase how focusing on integrated and voluntary stream, wetland, floodplain, and groundwater management has transformed the community's ability to collaborate; and, assess regional opportunities to integrate wetland restoration and management goals in other local watershed management programs and projects.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my support for AB 567 which the Village of Plover would use to implement wetland restoration and watershed enhancements designed to increase the flow of the Little Plover River. The increase in Little Plover River flows and improvements to the watershed that have, and are occurring, because of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Prairie Restoration Project, the Little Plover River Habitat Restoration Project, and Soik Restoration Project are a direct result of the initial support provided by the State Legislature to the Village. Great work has occurred, but many additional projects will be necessary for the Project Management Team to attain its goals. Approval of AB 567 can provide the foundation for additional private/public partnerships, provide documentation that we are achieving our goals, and provide the tools to share our successes with others communities so they that they can begin voluntary efforts to improve their watersheds by addressing groundwater quantity and quality issues.

Sincerely,



Daniel R. Mahoney  
Village of Plover Administrator



December 11, 2019

To: Chairman Kitchens and Members and Assembly Committee on Environment  
From: Tracy Hames, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wetlands Association  
Re: Support for Assembly Bill 567 – Little Plover River Watershed project

Thank you for the opportunity to present information on the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project (LPRWEP). Wisconsin Wetlands Association **supports** AB567, authorizing WDNR funding to the Village of Plover for continued LPRWEP work. This support, though it may seem small, will be leveraged to help bring in additional funding from other sources. We are confident that the water conservation, habitat, and physical restoration actions being accomplished through LPRWEP will meet our goals of improving the health of the Little Plover River and the quality of life of the surrounding community.

The LPRWEP is a comprehensive public/private initiative to restore health to this Central Wisconsin watershed using voluntary action. Partners represent state and local government, the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, agricultural and conservation organizations, and private landowners. Goals of this voluntary, partnership-based effort involve increasing the flow and aquatic health of the Little Plover River, improving surface and groundwater connections, alleviating storm water-driven flooding, and improving conditions for fish and wildlife habitat and public use. Engaging local residents, conservation organizations, and university students through volunteer work days is another important goal. Wisconsin Wetlands Association is proud to be a partner in this work.

We've accomplished a great deal of work during this first couple of years of implementation. In the 2017-19 Biennial Budget the Wisconsin legislature provided \$100,000 to help jump-start this effort. These funds were critical in allowing the partnership to develop the planning and implementation goals needed to begin the multi-year process of restoring health to the Little Plover River watershed. By leveraging the funds provided by the legislature and partners, what began as an initial \$100,000 investment, quickly grew to over \$3 million.

#### **Funding Sources to Date:**

Public and private organizations and agencies providing funding include the following:

- All of the LPRWEP partners – Village of Plover, Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Portage County, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, MARS-EOR Engineering Firm
- State of Wisconsin - Legislative appropriation, Wisconsin Wetlands Conservation Trust, Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Program
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Pittman-Robertson Grant, Partners for Fish and Wildlife

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Wetlands Program Development Grant

### **Accomplishments through 2019:**

#### Planning and Guidance

An important initial step in restoring flow to the river and health to the watershed involved conducting the hydrologic analysis needed to establish science-based water conservation and restoration priorities. This work has been completed and is currently guiding the physical actions being taken in the watershed and the targeted water conservation outreach among landowners.

#### Implementation

Most of the actions taken so far occur in the upper two miles of the river channel (40-50% of the total river miles). These include:

- Village of Plover - The Village is taking a leadership role in coordinating the conservation actions in the Little Plover River watershed.
  1. Water Conservation – The Village has adjusted their municipal well management, using a well located away from the river in the drier, summer months to help retain river flow. They are also repairing leakage in their water delivery system. More efficient municipal water delivery is helping conserve river flow.
  2. Village Conservancy Land – The Village has purchased more than 150 acres within and adjacent to the river corridor for restoration. Actions include well decommissioning, floodplain reconnection, and river channel, wetland, grassland, and forest restoration.
  3. Wetland Restoration – In partnership with WDNR’s Wisconsin Wetland Conservation Trust (In Lieu Fee Mitigation), ditch removal, wetland and grassland restoration, and well decommissioning is restoring 60 acres in the northern portion of a large wetland in the river’s headwaters.
- WDNR LPR Fisheries Area – Actions here include river channel repair and floodplain reconnection, forest and pine/oak barrens rehabilitation, wetland restoration, and brook trout population and habitat use monitoring.
- Private agricultural landowners – Landowners along the river corridor are implementing grazing management and other on-farm conservation practices to help improve groundwater recharge. There is also growing interest among landowners in establishing groundwater recharge basins, and wetland, forest, floodplain, grassland, and channel restoration. We have secured \$250,000 from NRCS to conduct water and soil conservation actions on private land in the Little Plover River watershed.
- University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point – UWSP is beginning to look at this area as a natural classroom. They are participating in planning, monitoring, research, long-term management, forest restoration, channel, wetland, and floodplain restoration activities.
- Local conservation organizations – Nine local conservation groups have put in more than 1,000 voluntary work hours so far helping with channel and floodplain restoration.

Highlights of the LPRWEP efforts include a great increase in river flow in the headwaters channels, an immediate narrowing of the river channel and floodplain reconnection in areas where work days have occurred, native plant recolonizing in the floodplain wetland habitats previously choked by brush; and native grass communities emerging in areas where they had been lost for decades. Habitat improvements will benefit native brook trout, migratory birds,

deer, small game, furbearers, and many other species. Long-term management and monitoring plans are being developed to ensure the flow and watershed health benefits persist.

**Future Action:**

Actions planned for the next 2-3 years include expanded channel/wetland restoration and floodplain connection, on-farm conservation to increase groundwater infiltration, pine/oak barrens restoration, invasive tree and brush thinning in wetland areas, and grassland planting.

**Statewide Implications:**

The public/private partnership approach being used by this project is receiving strong interest by others as an example of how communities can come together to cooperatively address the water quality/quantity, watershed, and habitat issues they face. In October 2019, the partnership was awarded a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to continue and expand this work into other Central Wisconsin communities. Specific work will involve landowner outreach promoting water conservation, creation of a water conservation “ledger” to document the river flow benefits that result from conservation actions, and exporting this voluntary, partnership-based approach in two other communities in Central Wisconsin.

This project utilizes a watershed-based approach to hydrologic restoration. With increasing stress put on our water resources, more and more communities are looking to the partnerships created and the hydrologic restoration methods used here as a model for other parts of the state.

We are excited about this project and feel it is a great example of how we can develop community-based, voluntary solutions to the water challenges we face across the state. We are happy to provide site visits and/or presentations highlighting the work of this project. I’ve included a progress report from last year and some photos of this year’s work to help illustrate these comments. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me at (608) 250-9971.

Thank you for the opportunity to brief you on this very important and exciting collaborative effort.

# Restoration actions occurring along the Little Plover River - 2019



Figure 1. Floodplain wetland site before and after invasive tree and shrub thinning.



Figure 2. UWSP forestry students thinning trees and brush along river corridor.



Figure 3. Brush is piled for rabbit habitat, for burning, or to be bundled for river channel placement.



Figure 4. Bundles are held together with twine.



Figure 5. Brush bundles are placed along banks of the river to promote natural narrowing and deepening of the channel. A narrower and deeper channel helps improve floodplain connectivity, wetland conditions, and native brook trout habitat.



Figure 6. In the first spring after restoration work began, native vegetation is thriving within the floodplain wetlands in areas that have been thinned and where bundles have been placed along the banks of the river channel. Wetland vegetation recolonizing these areas include native ferns, grasses, sedges, rushes, and skunk cabbage.

# Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project

## What is the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project (LPRWEP)?

The LPRWEP is a multiparty collaboration convened by the Village of Plover to improve the health of the Little Plover River and the quality of life of the surrounding community. The LPRWEP aims to use best available data and voluntary conservation actions to achieve the following goals:

**Increase the flow and improve the aquatic health of the Little Plover River.**

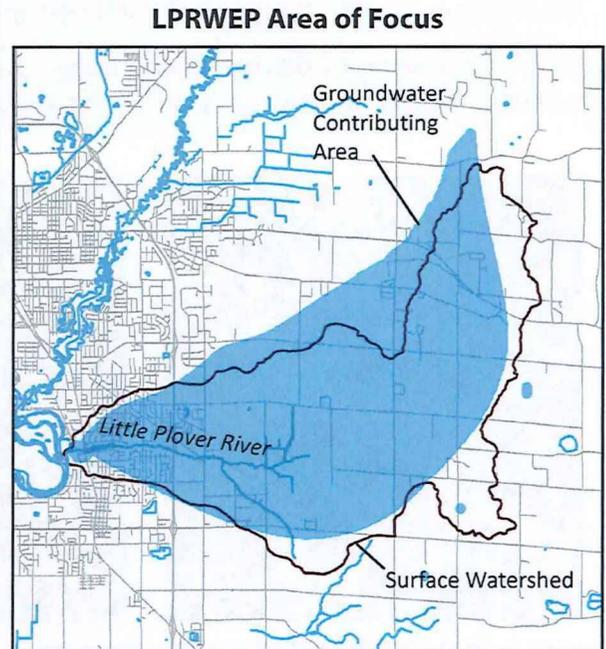
**Improve surface and groundwater connections and water retention across the Little Plover River Watershed.**

**Alleviate storm water-driven flooding.**

**Improve and expand fish and wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities and access.**

## The LPRWEP is organized around these three principles:

1. Restoring the health of the river requires an array of on-the-ground practices and voluntary landowner participation.
2. A balanced approach will maintain opportunities for urban development and meet the needs of municipal, agricultural, industrial, and private water users.
3. Monitoring is essential to improve our understanding of local hydrology and the effectiveness of installed practices.



## Project Area and Approach

Improving the health of the Little Plover River requires shifts in how we use and manage both surface and groundwater, and the re-establishment of healthy interactions between the two. To ensure project activities address resource concerns across the entire hydrologic system, the Project Area includes the Village of Plover, the entire Little Plover River Watershed, and the river's groundwater contributing area as identified in recent studies. The extended project area opens the door to a broader range of partners and practices.

## Project Team

The Village of Plover developed the LPRWEP plan in collaboration with the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Montgomery Associates is supporting the project with hydrologic and ecologic fieldwork and analysis.

These groups, along with staff from the Portage County Land Conservation Department and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, represent the core team of project advisors. Each group was strategically selected to address one or more critical project need.



## Planned and Proposed Activities

The project will use a combination of protection, restoration, and management activities.

Potential activities include:

**Water conservation and management** such as well removal, reduced pumping, repair of leaky infrastructure, improved infiltration, and other activities to reduce water usage.

**Large-scale projects** such as wetland restoration, drainage management, and other practices designed to enhance groundwater recharge and improve connectivity between the river, wetlands, and groundwater.

**On-farm conservation practices** such as cover crops, buffers, precision nutrient application, and other practices to retain soil, reduce runoff, increase infiltration, and improve water quality.



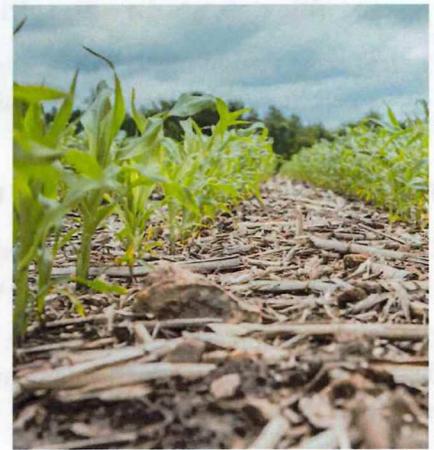
Friends of the Little Plover River

The project aims to maintain and improve the flow of the Little Plover River.



Wisconsin Wetlands Association

Restoration of wetlands like these help improve the health and quality of the Little Plover River.



Natural Resources Conservation Service - WI

No-till farming can increase water infiltration and improve soil health.

## Project Timeline

Project implementation began in July 2017 with the identification of several potential demonstration sites. Site design and fundraising for the restoration of these parcels has begun, with an analysis to evaluate the benefits of additional potential water conservation and restoration opportunities also underway. Implementation of on-farm conservation practices is expected to begin summer 2018. Outreach to promote voluntary participation by landowners, monitoring to evaluate conservation outcomes, and communications to export lessons learned will be ongoing throughout the project.

## How Will Activities Be Selected?

The Project Team will rely on a combination of modeling, site visits, and best professional judgment to identify and prioritize the best opportunities to meet project goals. Landowner interest and the availability of cost share and technical support will also influence the types and locations of projects implemented.

## How can you help?

Community and stakeholder engagement is critical to the success of this project. Members of the Project Team are meeting with community leaders, landowners, technical experts, and other stakeholders this summer and fall to talk about project goals, answer questions, and discuss opportunities for you or your group's involvement.

**Your participation is welcome!** Direct inquiries, ideas, and requests for meetings about the LPRWEP to the Village of Plover Administrator, Dan Mahoney at: [Dmahoney@ploverwi.gov](mailto:Dmahoney@ploverwi.gov) / (715) 345-5250.

# Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project Update

Activities Update April 2017 – June 2018



When the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project Team first convened in February, 2017 to discuss projects that would meet the Team's goals, the Village of Plover saw great potential, but our progress has far exceeded Village expectations. With just a little more than 1 year of work under our belts, our Project Team has secured more than \$2.67 million in new investments for the design and implementation of on-the ground river and watershed restoration projects.

Restoring flows to the Little Plover River remains our highest priority. We are also committed to supporting restoration actions that will further improve the fishery, local wildlife habitat, water quality, and quality of life in the Little Plover River Watershed.

We are fortunate to be working with many great collaborators, from our community and beyond, to restore the health of local waters. We are also grateful to have support from the Wisconsin Legislature and other federal, state, local, and private funders, and for the enthusiastic participation of many partners and volunteers.

The work reported on here also builds upon the efforts and investments of many, many others. We are working on lands purchased with support from the state, Portage County, and the Village itself; using data and models produced by regional water experts; trying to address concerns shared and studied by industries, organizations, and individuals alike.

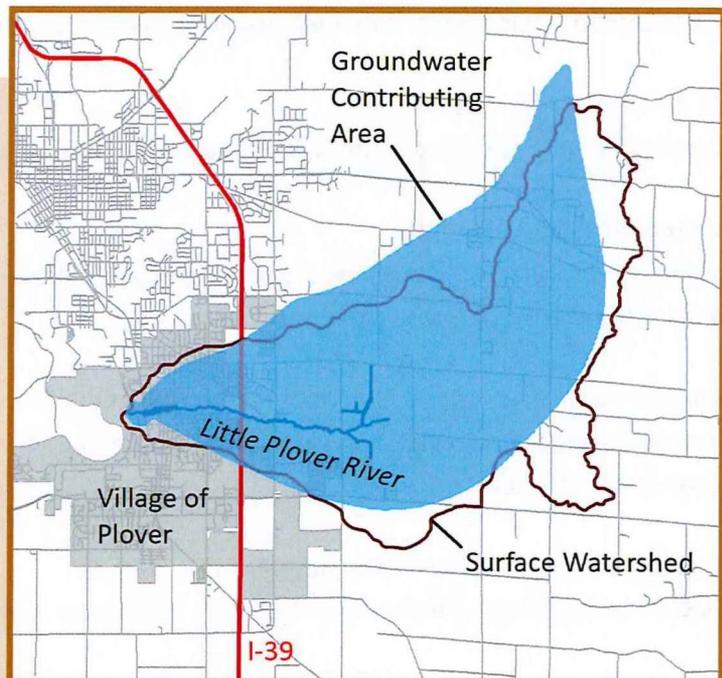
As we prepare to break ground on the first of these projects, I am pleased to share the details of our progress and information on how you can get involved.

Sincerely,

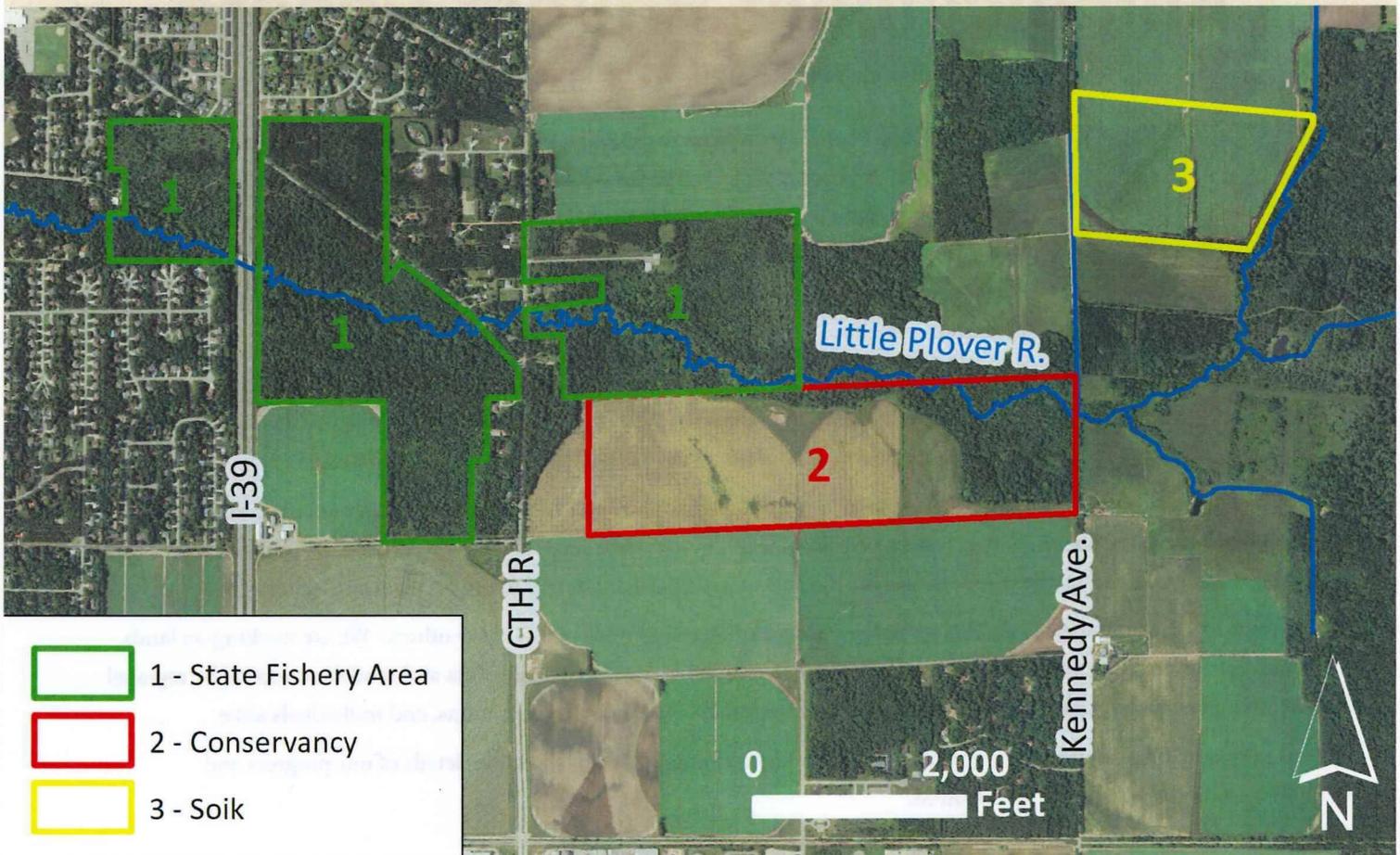
Dan Mahoney  
Administrator, Village of Plover

## PROJECT GOALS

- Increase the flow and improve the aquatic health of the Little Plover River.
- Implement voluntary water management projects that improve the health of the Little Plover River Watershed.
- Improve and expand fish and wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities and access.



# BREAKING GROUND



## Little Plover River Fishery Area (#1)

Channel improvements, riparian forest management, pine and oak forest management.

## Little Plover River Conservancy (#2)

Wetland and prairie restoration, channel improvement, and riparian forest management.

## Soik Property Restoration (#3)

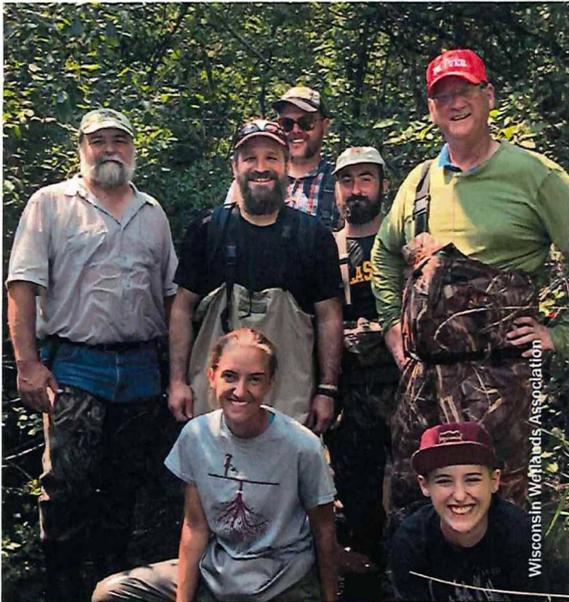
Purchase and retirement of ~60 acres of irrigated farmland in a headwaters area of the LPR, decommissioning of a high capacity well, wetland and prairie restoration.

## NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Project (not shown)

Numerous voluntary on-farm soil and water conservation practices within the project area (see map pg 1). Locations and practices to be determined.

## Watershed Restoration Action Plan (not shown)

Applied modeling to help evaluate and design viable solutions to increase flow in the Little Plover River.



# INVESTMENTS

## GRANTS AND OTHER AWARDS:

**Natural Resource Conservation Service**  
Regional Conservation Partnership Program  
\$295,000

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/ Wisconsin DNR**  
Pittman Robertson Grant via Wisconsin Habitat Partnership Fund  
\$228,988

**State of Wisconsin**  
Legislative Appropriation  
\$100,000

**Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association**  
\$64,400

**Wisconsin DNR**  
Wisconsin Wetlands Conservation Trust  
\$1,450,790

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
Partners for Wildlife Program  
\$14,500

**Total: \$2,155,678**

## IN-KIND MATCH

Several of the grants we have secured require the applicant to commit matching funds and will require more work than the awards actually support. The following entities and organizations have generously agreed to donate valuable time and talent to ensure we have the resources needed to meet these requirements and complete these ambitious projects.

Montgomery Associates:  
Resource Solutions, LLC  
Portage County  
University of Wisconsin Stevens Point  
Village of Plover

Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association  
Wisconsin Wetlands Association  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

**Total: \$524,000**

**Total Grants and Awards + Match**

**= > \$2.6 million investment**

\* The dollars reported here reflect commitments secured through accepted grants and signed agreements for work that will be completed over the course of the next few years.

# MOVING FORWARD IN COLLABORATION

## Watershed Restoration Action Plan

Fixing a river takes a watershed approach. With support from the Wisconsin Legislature and others, we've launched an applied science project to develop a collaborative groundwater management plan. We're also out in the community working with producers, the university, and local conservation groups to design and implement new projects.

## Farmer engagement

With seed money from NRCS and the WPVGA, we're working with producers to implement additional soil and water conservation practices across the project area and to help showcase innovative practices already in place. Watch soon for more news about field walks and demonstrations projects.



David Palmer

## Work days

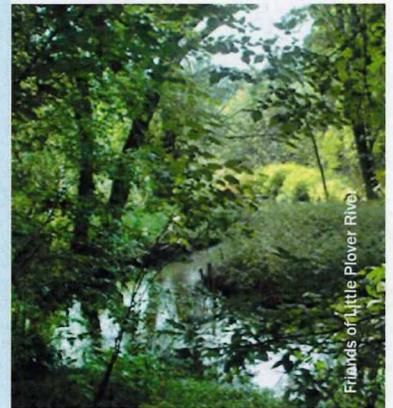
We will host the first of many River Management Work Days this fall in collaboration with local conservation organizations. Dr. Kyle Herrman (UWSP - Kyle.Herrman@uwsp.edu) and Jerry Knuth (Wisconsin Wildlife Federation - knuth0628@sbcglobal.net) will coordinate logistics with student and community groups, respectively. Many hands make light work – please join us!

## UW Stevens Point

A healthy river and productive fishery needs more than just flow. We've convened a team of fishery, floodplain, and forestry experts from UW Stevens Point to help design and implement restoration and management practices to improve channel structure and reconnect the river to its historic floodplain.



NRCS



Friends of Little Plover River

## PROJECT TEAM



I am here as a citizen of Wisconsin and an individual in support of AB 567.

I know this bill has the support of many local and state organizations

Central Wisconsin farmers,

Village of Plover,

UW-Stevens Point

Wisconsin Wetlands Association

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

But it is important for this committee to know that this bill also has strong support from individual citizens from that area and throughout the state.

The health of the Little Plover River is critical to the area. But I would like to make this committee aware that this is not only a local impact project.

What is referred to as the central sands area of Wisconsin - which the Little Plover River is part of - has a unique and delicate water ecology.

As a former student of UW Stevens point I have had the opportunity to understand some the hydrology of the area and its uniqueness.

For most of my life I have Trout fished this area extensively. This committee might be amazed by the number and the diversity of people that I have met doing this, some of whom traveled to the area we discussing, to use this unique water resource. I have met individuals from all around the US as well as Brazil, Finland and other countries.

Therefore, in conclusion, I feel this committee should approve the funding so this project can move forward to continue to improve the Little Plover water shed. The impact will be much greater than just a local committee and watershed.

Christopher Gultch

2802 woodview ct

East troy wi 53120

## Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

December 11, 2019

Good morning Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on the Environment. My name is Jerry Knuth from Plover, Wisconsin and I am here today representing the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. As many of you know the Federation is composed of over 200 sporting organizations from around the state that are engaged in hunting, fishing and trapping. The protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat is critically important to the many scores of thousands of members that belong to our affiliate clubs. We strongly support the adoption of Assembly Bill 567.

We are here today with the Village of Plover and the Wisconsin Wetlands Association as part of a coalition to support the restoration of the Little Plover River in Portage County. The Coalition includes the Potato and Vegetable Growers Association, Portage County and the DNR. Its purpose is to restore the Little Plover, a trout stream in Portage County which has been significantly impacted by the drawdown of high capacity wells and by loss of adjacent fish and wildlife habitat.

As you can see this is not the typical group of partners working together on conservation and environmental matters. Our groups have often disagreed on matters affecting the regulation of high capacity wells and no doubt there are still such differences. But we have all come together to actually get something done on the ground that in the Central Sands area of Wisconsin and by working together on a voluntary basis we can actually improve the environment in a positive and cooperative manner. We consider this a possible demonstration model that can maybe be used in watersheds throughout the state.

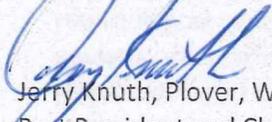
We sincerely appreciate the \$100,000 that the Legislature funded for this pilot effort in the 2017-2019 budget to help get this project off the ground. As the Village and the Wetland Association can share there has been extensive work already done on this project and significant other funding brought to the table as the result of the work of the partners involved.

I would like to share briefly one part of the project that has been special to the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. This part of Phase One involved a one mile stretch of stream between County R and Kennedy Avenue which had not been maintained for several decades. Runoff had widened the stream, reducing flow causing water temps to rise. This was a unique opportunity for local volunteers to work with UWSP Students from the Forestry and Water Resources Departments in the College of Natural Resources. The Forestry Students thinned trees, tag alders & buckthorn along the buffer areas. The Volunteers used the cuttings to create bundles that were then inserted and secured in several 600 foot segments of the stream. We had the benefit of Graduate Student, David Palme, who for two years monitored, evaluated and helped design the project area. He then guided Phase One Operations.

Our volunteers came from a number of Conservation organizations; affiliate Clubs of the WiWF along with members from the Bill Cook Chapter of IWLA, Trout Unlimited and Ducks Unlimited. The Yellow River KAMO Kids pitched in as well. All total, our volunteers accumulated some 200 hours on the project. Adding in The Forestry and Water Resources students, we have logged 1,000 hours.

We capped things off in early August with one last work party and some 24 workers on hand. We put Senator Testin in the steam helping to install bundles which were then covered with grass mats. Sedge Plugs were inserted and we had created a pretty neat display area next to Kennedy Avenue. If you drive by and look west off the Kennedy Avenue Bridge you will see Phase One at work providing a narrower stream with cool deep water and improved habitat for Brook Trout. I'm also pleased to hear that the UW Forestry and Water Resources Departments are looking to continue working west on the Little Plover River to improve fish & wildlife habitat and create a larger Oak Savannah.

Again, I thank you for allowing this opportunity to talk about Activities on the Little Plover River; still a Class 1 Trout Stream and worth saving.



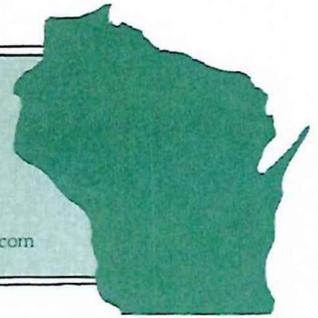
Jerry Knuth, Plover, Wisconsin (715) 340-5414 {c}

Past President and Chair of the WiWF Forests, Parks & Recreation Committee

# Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, Inc.

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December 11, 2019

TO: Chairman Kitchens and Members and Assembly Committee on Environment  
FROM: Tamas Houlihan, Executive Director, WPVGA  
RE: **Support for Assembly Bill 567 –Little Plover River Watershed Project**

Dear Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 567, legislation that would provide \$100,000 to the Village of Plover in Portage County for the purpose of implementing wetland restoration and watershed enhancement designed to increase the flow of the Little Plover River. The Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA) strongly **supports** this legislation.

The funding provided in this legislation will support the next phase of the Little Plover River Watershed Enhancement Project (LPRWEP). The LPRWEP is a multi-party collaborative project by the Village of Plover, the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Montgomery & Associates, Wisconsin DNR, UW-Stevens Point, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and others to improve the health of the Little Plover River (LPR).

The LPRWEP is an example of local partners coming together to engage in voluntary conservation actions to:

- Increase the flow and improve the aquatic health of the LPR;
- Improve surface and groundwater connections and water retention across the LPR watershed;
- Alleviate stormwater-driven flooding; and
- Improve and expand fish and wildlife habitat and public recreation opportunities and access.

The 2017-2019 Biennial Budget Bill provided \$100,000 to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to use to provide a grant to the Village of Plover for the purpose of employing an engineering firm to design solutions to increase flow in the Little Plover River. This engineering work is complete and the wetland restoration project that will further support the goals of the LPRWEP has been designed.

Assembly Bill 567 will provide an additional \$100,000 to the Village of Plover through the DNR to **implement** that wetland restoration project. We ask that you support AB 567 and further support this groundbreaking example of local stakeholders working together to succeed at restoring one of Wisconsin's surface water resources.