

## **Resolution Supporting the Increase of Riparian Buffer Zones**

WHEREAS, riparian buffers are an effective tool to protect water resources from nonpoint source pollution from chemicals such as phosphates and nitrates, provide bank stabilization, as well as aquatic and wildlife habitat, and increasing these buffers in agricultural areas will promote these functions; and

WHEREAS, a majority of water segments in Wisconsin are of fair to poor condition with over 400 segments proposed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources between 2014-2016 impaired (not meeting water quality standards) due to excessive phosphorus; and

WHEREAS, buffers have the capacity to remove up to 50 percent or more of nutrients and pesticides, and if buffers are 20 to 30 meters in width they can remove up to 100% of incoming nitrates; and

WHEREAS, The [National Water Quality Assessment](#) shows that agricultural nonpoint source (NPS) pollution is the leading source of water quality impacts on surveyed rivers and streams, the third largest source for lakes, the second largest source of impairments to wetlands, and a major contributor to contamination of surveyed estuaries and ground water;

WHEREAS, DNR spends approximately \$20,500,000 a year on water quality treatment programs;

WHEREAS, there are existing federal/state programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CRP/CREP) which incentivize farmers to create buffers;

WHEREAS, participants that contract through CREP receive combined state and federal payments of \$2000 per acre for 15 year contracts and \$2850 per acre for perpetual contracts;

WHEREAS, CREP promotes a goal of 3,700 miles of river to be buffered each year, though this has not been met annually with only 999 miles enrolled in the buffer program in 2017.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the WWF, at its Annual Meeting in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin on April 20th-21st, 2018, strongly supports statewide participation in the CREP program which incentivizes landowner implementation and maintenance of buffer strips along water bodies running through agricultural property, as well as calls upon counties to update agriculture land regulations to allocate more land towards acting as riparian buffer zones; and

NOW, THEREFORE LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the WWF should develop a comprehensive program to educate agricultural land owners about the benefits of riparian buffers to water quality, wildlife, and soil management, as well as the several state and federal programs available for landowners such as CREP; and

NOW, THEREFORE LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that WWF foster cooperation between the state of Wisconsin, federal, and private organizations such as the USDA, NRCS, Department of Agriculture, and private organizations such as Land Trust, Gathering Waters, Protect Our Waters, and Pheasants Forever to advocate water quality management through buffer conservation and development.

Submitted by the Conservation Leadership Corps:

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