



CONSERVANCY VIEWS

Spring 2023



*In this issue:
Honoring Al Campbell and Tom Yoder
WINS data drives action
Key project updates*

Photo credit: Larry Baumgardt

Message from the Chairman:



By John Bearss
Board Chair

Looking to the past is not a difficult task but mapping out the future can be a challenge. The WACF Board has taken on that challenge and updated the Strategic Plan to target our future and orchestrate how we will get there. The journey begins with our new mission statement, "To protect and enhance water quality and natural attributes in the Wawasee Area Watershed through water-related land acquisition, educational programming, and scientifically-informed action to preserve the lakes for future generations."

Our investment in land and its management has preserved beneficial wetlands and shoreline protection as well as the ability to study and improve their effects on our watershed and water quality. It also provides recreational and educational opportunities.

Education has always been a strong point in messaging the importance of preserving our water quality but our focus is growing to deliver more information and recruit involvement from our community and stakeholders.

The Wawasee Inlets Nutrient Study (WINS) has led us to new and exciting opportunities to work with others through our NWQI designation. The result has led us into new territory, by working with new and existing partners to find new approaches and practices to the benefit of all in our watershed.

We have an increased focus to further partnerships in the associations that play a role in the betterment of water quality as well as public and private leadership for the future.

Our previous practices of restoration and remediation continue as a mainstay of our operations and our discipline to measure the successes through further research and monitoring.

Walking through the strategic planning process, we learned the basics of our original plan created 30+ years ago are sound and still applicable today. However, we also learned that we must take it to the next level and that is the course we are charting for the future of WACF and our watershed.

Memorials & Honorariums

Memorial and honorarium gifts have a lasting impact, like the lives and achievements they recognize. All memorial and honorarium gifts are directed to the WACF Endowment Fund establishing a layer of stability under the Conservancy and ensuring its strong and lasting future. Interest income from the WACF Endowment fund is used for ongoing Conservancy expenses, operating costs and programs.

2022 - April 2023 WACF Memorials & Honorariums

In Memory of:

Helen Alderfer
Jim Alford
Bill Angert
Gayla Angert
Gayle Rogers Atkins
John Augsburger
Bob Baugher
Arch and Della Baumgartner
Barbara Beember
Al Campbell
Dottie Campbell
Jennifer Copeland Lilly
Brendan Pearce Cronin
Christian Michael Cygan
Carol Darr
Dr. Mark Doyle
Gus Duehmig
Elaine Eckman
Ken Ellenberger
Jim England
Gail Ernst
Alvin Fiechter
William 'Reno' Freihofer
Joni Freihofer
Mary Alice Gawronski
Ronald J. Gerling
Michael and Patrick Hanlin
Andrew and Laurie Hardie
Bill Harris
Gary Hentze
Lynne Diane Hirschman
Bob Hirschman
Don Hooley
David Edward Hunzicker
Needham S. Hurst
Don Impey
Robert and Rosalyn Jones
Patricia S. Joyce
Karen Allen Keene
Mike and Carol Kiley
Gary Kline
Cheryl Kroemer
Jon R. Lassus, Jr.
Eric Longenecker
Vance Lopp
Maurice and Lucille Lung
Debbie Macomber

Elise D. Macomber
Robert Martin
Janet Newcomer Massey
Donald 'Moto' Morris
Deceased members of the
Morrison Island Association
Bob and Nancy Myers
Sue Ann Juday Neff
Peter M. Nicholas
Charlotte Nill
Jean Owen
PADORAMA
Barbara Palmer
Leonard Penner
John and Rolene Popp
Peggy Rapp
Edward Soltau Rodabaugh
Douglas A. Schmahl
Joan Buletty Slocum
Suzanne Hipskind Kiley Southern
Michael Surso
Roger Symensma
Mary Ann Teetor
Joyce E. Truitt
Kris West
John Williams
George Witwer
Thomas Wolfrum
Patricia, Ken and Barb Woodruff
Jo and Doyle Butler
Vance F. and Deborah A. Lopp
Tom Yoder

In Honor of:

Donn Baird
John and Julia Bearss
Bob Fanning in honor of his service to WACF
Doug Grant
Tom Kelly's 70th birthday
Bridget McBride's 18th birthday
Jeff Nelson Family Day
Bailey Bearss and Dr. Craig Obrock Fathers
Walter Palmer
Andrew Warshauer and Mia Salamone
Marriage
Pam Schumm for her birthday
Jim and Karen Tranter
John and Nancy Westfall

From the desk of the Executive Director

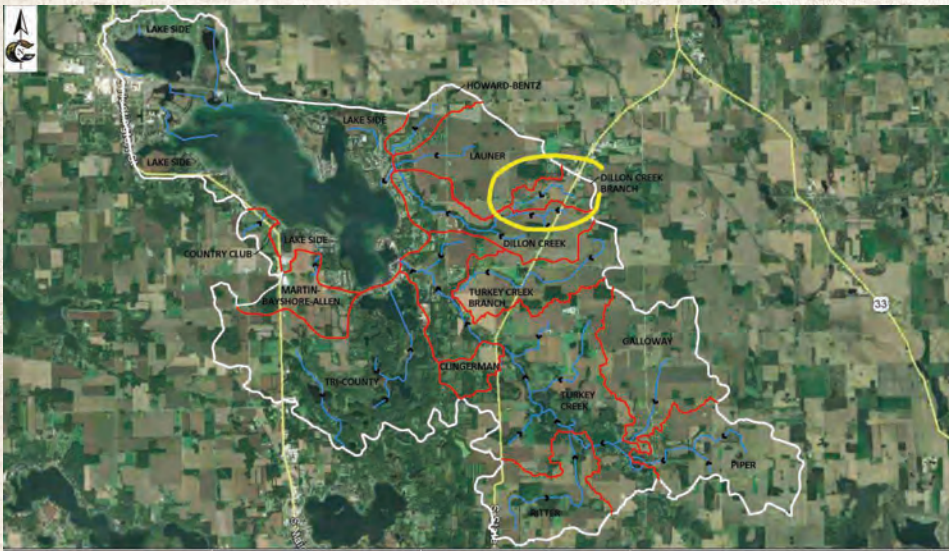


By Heather Harwood
Executive Director

Thank you for your continued support of the Conservancy. That support along with our grant partners provides opportunities for research and projects protecting water quality including restoring land and wetlands, slowing erosion, providing habitat, timber stand improvement, encourage regenerative ag, and invasive plant control.

Project Updates

Dillon Creek Branch: Our focus was on the upper watershed at Dillon Creek Branch this spring. Work included grass waterways, a water and soil containments basin, rock riffles and streambank stabilization. This work is in partnership with the DNR Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) program.



Dillon Creek Branch in the upper watershed (watershed line in white)

Riffles along a stream can help to slow the water down and let sediment settle out.



Dillon Creek Branch Work – creating riffles in the Branch

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP): To protect forest health and remove invasive plants, WACF has launched EQIP work to implement our forestry management plan for timber stand and forest health improvement. These funds will be used for improvements on 375 acres of WACF-owned land in the Wawasee Area Watershed. EQIP is overseen by the US Department of Agriculture and managed locally through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). \$280,000 has been allocated from the EQIP program for timber stand and forest improvement.

Before and after invasive plant removal.....



Before



After invasive plant removal

Wooded areas that include dense brush like honeysuckle, buckthorn and autumn olive, is a sign of an unhealthy forest. These types of brush are considered invasive plants and not only impact the trees and other native plants trying to grow, they also impact animal life as the invasives take over their natural habitat. An unhealthy woods is bad for the entire surrounding ecosystem, including the water. Simply put, in order to have strong healthy watersheds, you must have a strong sustaining ecosystem around it.

WACF Lakefront restoration – Native Planting: With the help of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the lakefront acreage at the Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center is being restored to native planting. The process of replacing the existing turf grass with natives will take several seasons to establish and improve the surrounding ecosystem native wildflower and sedge populations.

Canoe trips: The popular WACF sponsored canoe trips through Turkey Creek and the 10 lakes will resume again this summer. WACF leads the canoe trips from upstream in Knapp Lake at the Continental Divide in Noble County and downstream to Village Lake at SR5. This Creek provides 43% of the surface water supply to Wawasee and Syracuse Lakes. We're also looking for volunteers to help lead these canoe trips. Interested? Please contact us at info@WACF.com.

Launching New Partnerships: National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) federal funding is a program that WACF has been advancing with help from the NRCS. This USDA program is specifically targeting water quality efforts by incentivizing farmers to incorporate voluntary conservation practices and improve soil health. The NWQI will fund farmer's conservation practices in the Wawasee Area Watershed and will provide cost-share dollars for efforts such as cover crops, no-till farming, and filter strips in ag areas. You can read more about this exciting development in our ecology report in this newsletter.

Lastly, please join us for the **WACF Annual Lakes Celebration on Saturday, July 29, at 9 a.m.** This event will be held at a new location this year: Between the Lakes Preserve. The annual meeting will include the dedication of the new **Joan M. Buletty Pavilion**. Thank you to the Channel Marker Restaurant for donating the breakfast again this year, we are grateful for you!



By Beth Morris
Ecology Chair

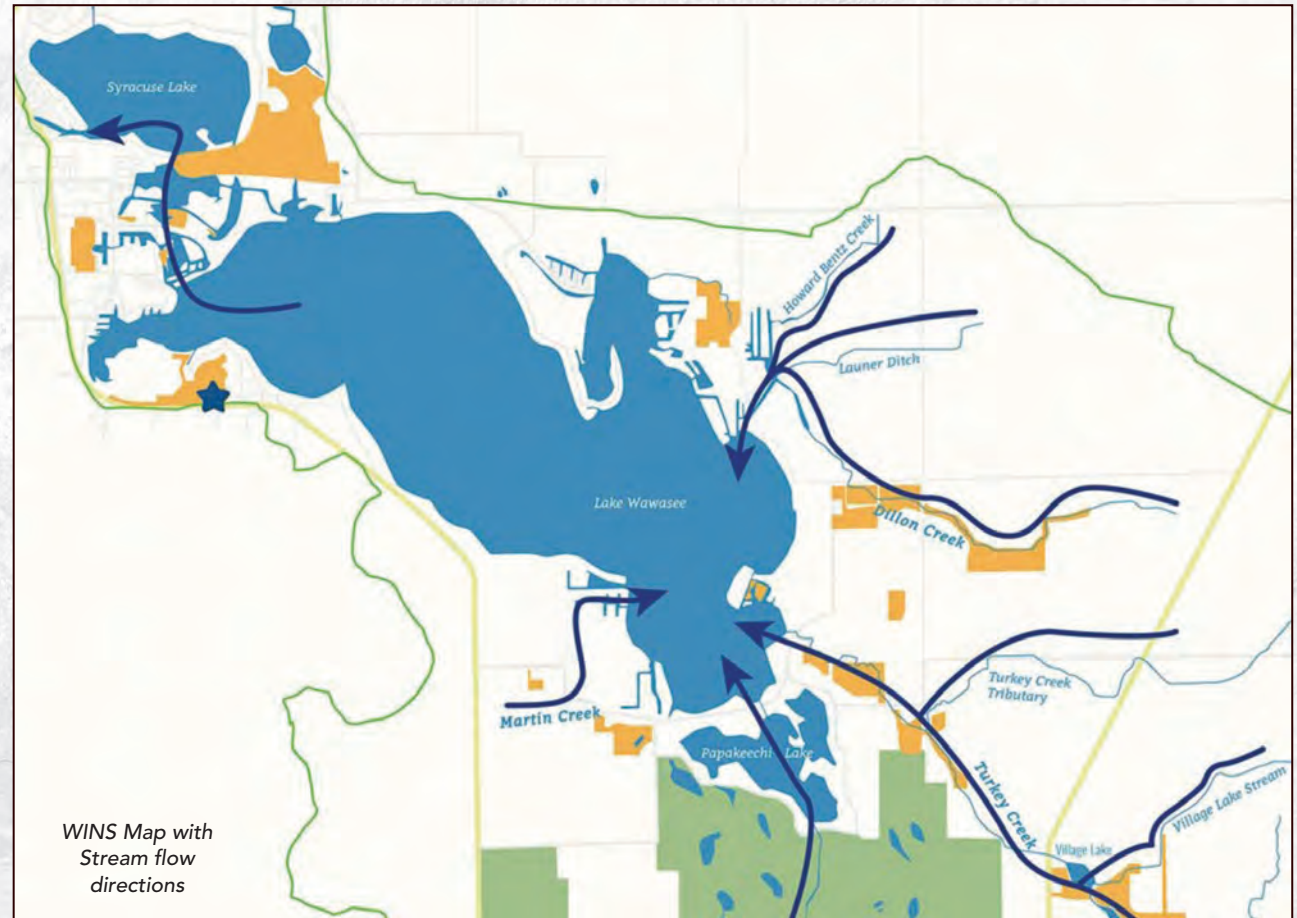
Did you know that all lakes have a life cycle, just like we do? In the case of Lake Wawasee, it was “born” when the last glaciers receded, about 15,000 years ago. Lake lifecycles are centuries long, but what we humans do on the land around them and how we use the lakes can accelerate the aging process.

The biggest threat to any

lake is the sediment and nutrients, mainly phosphorus and nitrogen, that come into the lake and stay there. Phosphorous and nitrogen are key ingredients for plant and algae growth, and in excess they can drive an increase in aquatic weed infestation and in a worst case, lead to harmful algal blooms. This process of a lake’s aging and decline in water quality is known as eutrophication. WACF’s main objectives involve taking action to slow this natural process.

Since its founding in 1991 as an outgrowth of WPOA, WACF has focused on land acquisition and management, education, and restoration and remediation of riparian areas on Lake Wawasee’s tributaries to protect the lakes. Over the years WACF has received grants totaling over \$1,000,000 to complete projects to limit erosion and improve water quality in the Wawasee Area Watershed, thanks to the support of more than 400 annual partners in this work.

After commissioning a study in 2017 to identify “hot spots” in the watershed, areas that contribute to the nutrient and sediment loads entering Lake Wawasee, we realized that there was much more work to do. We needed a way to prioritize the many projects identified. So, in 2019, the Wawasee Inlets Nutrient Study was initiated, an investment to scientifically characterize the amounts of nutrients and sediment coming into the lake



from each of the four inflows, staying in the lake, and exiting the lake at the Turkey Creek Dam. This study, now starting its fifth year, involves intensively sampling each of the inflows and the outflow every four hours from April through June when the surrounding farmland is most vulnerable during planting season. This is done using highly sophisticated automated gage stations. For the remaining nine months of the year, each inflow is sampled weekly. The data is analyzed annually by our colleagues at Ecosystems Connections Institute. Using

this information, WACF is gaining an understanding of the seasonal and annual variability in rainfall and land use and its impact on water quality.

The amount of water entering the lake in any given year is an important driver of nutrient and sediment loading. Phosphorous binds to clay particles and moves with the sediment into streams and lakes during rain events where soil erodes from upland areas or streambanks or even construction sites.

ent Study Drives Action

The WINS data clearly shows that sediment and phosphorous are the biggest concerns to be addressed to protect and maintain our lake's health. Precipitation is the main driver of sediment and phosphorous movement. *Rainfall intensity, amount, and time of year are key variables with big impact.* In the four years of WINS, we've had a wet year, a dry year, and two years in between. The **residency time**, or how long a drop of water stays in the lake, has varied from **2.01 to 3.59 years**. A related measure is **flushing rate** or the percent of water that is replaced every year. Over the four years, the Flushing Rate has ranged from **28% to 50%**. In 2022, both measures were impacted by the amount of time the Turkey Creek Dam in Syracuse was opened relative to other years. Related to that, last year was the first time that more water went out of the lake than came into it.

What happened to **phosphorous** in 2022 compared to other years? Because of the time of year and amount of rain, the amount of Phosphorous coming into the lake was 43% less than in 2021. And because the dam was open a lot during those high spring rainfalls, more phosphorous flushed out of the lake than in previous years. Similarly, 12% less **sediment** came into the lake in 2022 than in 2021. In contrast, previous years showed an uptick in phosphorous and sediment. The data over the four years shows year to year variability and underscores the importance of long-term monitoring.

WINS Data Drives Action

National Water Quality Initiative

The WINS data was key to the Wawasee Area Watershed being named a National Water Quality Initiative. This U.S. Department of Agriculture program provides cost-share dollars to farmers who implement Best

Management Practices (BMPs) like planting cover crops, buffer strips, and other measures to keep nutrients and sediment on the fields instead of streams. In December 2022, USDA allocated \$1.245 million over the next 3 years to be used solely in our watershed. **Every dollar goes to farmers and not a penny to WACF.** Use of these BMPs over time will help to shut off the tap of incoming nutrients and sediment.

Targeted Restoration and Remediation Projects

WINS data have confirmed that Dillon Creek and Turkey Creek are the biggest contributors of nutrients and sediment to Lake Wawasee. Those sub watersheds are priorities for remediation projects. In 2022, WACF co-sponsored a project with the Enchanted Hills Community Association to install a weir (a sheet pile dam) on Launer Creek as it enters Enchanted Hills. This weir will capture sediment and slow down water movement into the channel, Dillon Creek, and lake. Another project is focused on Dillon Creek near Cromwell at the top of the Dillon Creek sub watershed. Working

with local farmers and a LARE grant from DNR, the project will install grassed waterways, stabilize the creek shoreline, and slow down the water flow in the creek. These measures will reduce the sediment and nutrients coming into the lake.

We must continue to be vigilant and proactive to protect our beautiful lakes. WACF is committed to using scientifically informed action to preserve the lakes for future generations.



Our Summer Education Calendar



By Pam Schumm
Education Officer

We have an exciting slate of events for this summer, for kids and adults alike! Most are held at the Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center located at 11586 N SR 13, Syracuse, IN 46567. Below is a quick review of what is coming up – and remember, you can visit our calendar on WACF.com or Facebook for any updates.

June 3 – Lake Talk & Eats Native Plant Program & Sale

9 a.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
Martha Ferguson of Riverfront Nursery in Fort Wayne will share how native plants can play nicely with your current landscaping. After the 9:00 a.m. talk and light breakfast, native plants from area nurseries will be available for purchase.

June 6 – Play Day at WACF

9 a.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
This free event is for elementary and preschool children with an adult. Join us for structured activities then take a walk in the woods, overlook the wetlands, and spend time in nature with your children.

June 19 - Snapshot Water Testing Day

Noon to 5 p.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
Calling all citizen scientists who want to know how we test for water quality! We will provide the materials and teach you how to do the water tests. Next you go out to test two tributaries that drain into Lake Wawasee or Syracuse Lake. Return to the Education Center and give us your results. When all are completed we will have a snapshot of water quality in our entire watershed for June 19, 2023. Choose your time between Noon – 5 pm. Register with pamschumm@gmail.com.

June 19 – Pollinator Workshop

7 p.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
The first 30 registrants will receive free pollinator packs of six plants. Listen to Brad Clayton of Clayton Garden Center and The Watershed Foundation explain the value of planting native pollinator plants. Register with pamschumm@gmail.com.

June 23 – The first Canoe Trip

7:30 a.m. If you haven't taken this trip to see the continental divide and the headwaters of Lake Wawasee you are missing out on a great experience! Consider taking this trip through the 10 lakes that feed into Lake Wawasee this summer! Register at info@wacf.com.

Remaining Friday morning canoe trips: **July 7, 14, 21 & 28** as well as **August 4 & 11**.

June 23 – Tiger Trivia Fun Night at WACF

7 p.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
Event is held outside in the Ruddell Pavilion. \$100 per table of eight will get you into the festivities! Snacks and a cash bar will be available. Register at info@wacf.com.

July 1 – Lake Talk and Eats Annual Bug Catch

9 a.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
Bring the kids and grandkids out to learn about water macroinvertebrates, then head to the lake and try to catch some. Bring water shoes and life jackets for the kids, we have nets but feel free to bring your own. A snack breakfast will be available.

July 5 – Fish with the DNR

9 a.m. - Between the Lakes
Meet at the new Buletty Pavilion across from Channel Marker Restaurant. The DNR will provide the poles and bait. Kids should bring an adult to help bait the hooks and remove the fish. It's free and fun! Don't delay, we are done by 11 a.m. and release all the fish we catch.

July 12, 19, 26 – Wetland Adventures

9 a.m. - Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center
Geared to kiddos elementary age and preschool, each week features different nature activities and adventures. Join us at 9 am for the opening fun, then we will break into groups to complete the other activities. A canoe scavenger hunt is always available so please bring a life jacket for the young ones.

July 29 – Annual Lake Celebration

9 a.m. - Between the Lakes, across from the Channel Marker
Enjoy brunch beginning at 9 a.m. and join us as we dedicate the new Buletty Pavilion. We will also share the exciting work we have underway as well as the strategic plans for the future. Hope to see you there!

August 2 – Agricultural Tour

9:30 a.m. - Anderson Farm
Register for this free event at pamschumm@gmail.com. We will learn about modern farming techniques and how farming can be done with water quality in mind. Thank you to Russell Anderson for sharing his farm and his expertise with us!



Two extraordinary men with remarkable legacies

An impassioned leader, historian and architect of WACF

We recently lost a bedrock of WACF, Tom Yoder.

It's an understatement to say that Tom will be missed. He has been a critical leader with WACF, working his way through often-times tricky land acquisition deals. Tom served on the WACF Board 1997-2006, 2007-2016, 2018-2023 and as Chairman 2001-2002. His work with WACF may have been the most critical, most valuable, and longest in our history, in preserving this watershed's pristine lands.



Tom Yoder

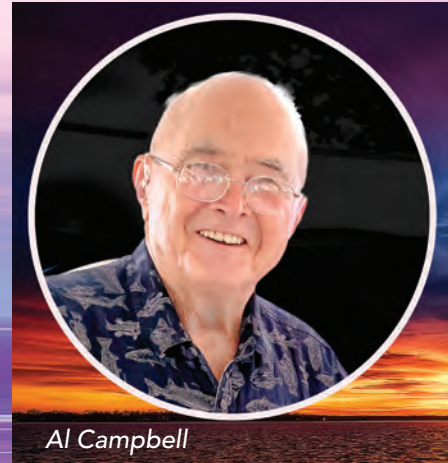
Since Tom joined the Board, he led land protection in this watershed in important wetland areas – areas determined to be critical to the health of our watershed, from approximately 50 acres in 1998 to over 997 acres today.

Tom recently quoted Mark Twain *"What are the two most important days in your life? The day you are born and the day you find out why."*

And Tom went on to say: "I think for me there were a lot of days that I found out why I was born. One of them was when I took that first walk into the woods at Campbell's Overlook. The whole experience of something called the Wawasee Watershed opened my eyes. I have thoroughly enjoyed my association with WACF. Making many friends like yourselves and acquaintances like property owners and professionals has been a gift from heaven."

Tom will be missed by so many. We will all have lived fuller lives for having known him, and we can all be grateful that he shared so much of his time and talent with WACF.

Tom received the Tom Yoder Exceptional Service Award, July 25, 2020. The Award is given every five years to a WACF Director deemed by the Board and Staff to have been indispensable to the success of WACF. This award is named for Tom in recognition of his exemplary volunteer spirit and boundless dedication to WACF and its goals. He will be truly missed.



Al Campbell

This spring WACF lost a dear and loyal friend, Al Campbell.

Al was an early Board member joining in 1996, and serving as Chairman in 1997 – 1998. Al led with foresight to anticipate the benefits of protecting the watershed lakes and surrounding pristine wetlands. He walked the walk by bringing people together, leading canoe trips through the 10 lakes, and promoting the education of the history and value of the top of the watershed. His leadership including sharing history, ecology, geography and wildlife.

Whether leader or logistics coordinator, Al shared history of the lakes, the importance of the watershed and Native Americans. Al was a driving force and pursued doing what he could do to further the mission of protection of the watershed through land protection, education and being a good neighbor.

The beautiful oak hill was named the 'Campbell Overlook' in his honor, located near the outflow of Turkey Creek into Wawasee with views of Turkey Creek wetlands. Al was a dear friend to many, and a leader that made a difference with WACF, the lakes and our community.



*A visionary,
educator, and
supporter of
WACF from
its early years*



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Working Together to Create a Vibrant, Sustainable Community



By Emily Maggart
Development Officer

As a graduate of Wawasee and Purdue with over eight years of nonprofit experience in Fort Wayne and South Bend, I am excited to return home to work with an organization close to me. WACF has been working for 32 years to preserve and protect the Wawasee Area Watershed, where I learned to swim and enjoyed many lake activities.

Creating a new donor program that showcases our community engagement in the Corporate Partner program. We connect with local businesses to continue the mission of protecting and conserving the waters surrounding us. As we continue to build our community relationships, I look forward to creating more opportunities for the public to enjoy our Levinson-LaBrosse Lakes & Wetlands Education Center, Jorgensen Amphitheater, and the Ruddell Pavilion with concerts, trivia nights, and business networking events.

Growing up in a small town, I always felt the community's connection and support. I look forward to

Over the years, the town landscape has changed, with new businesses coming and going. The lakeside landscape has changed with more generations of families coming to enjoy the lake. I cannot wait to meet and get to know the neighborhoods by offering private mini cocktail and stewardship events at their beautiful lake homes. We love to share our donor's stories of their philanthropic giving to WACF and their impact on the community.

In my years of working with nonprofits, I have always felt the need to ensure everyone in the community feels a sense of belonging. We are working on starting a monthly giving program that allows donors of all economic levels to have an opportunity to give monetarily. Our new online monthly giving program will have gift options as small as \$10/month. Any generous gift made allows us to keep up the work of preserving the watershed many of us call home.

I am so fortunate to be coming into an organization with strong support from the board members. I cannot wait to work together as a team to continue the conservation of the watershed for years to come.

