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Contact: *Jennifer Western Hauser, WWA Policy Liaison*

Email: policy1@wisconsinwetlands.org

Wisconsin Wetlands Association Applauds Passage of Pre-Disaster Flood Resilience Grant

The Wisconsin Wetlands Association applauded the Wisconsin Assembly's vote on Thursday to pass Senate Bill 222, which creates a pioneering flood resilience grant. The Pre-Disaster Flood Resilience Grant will help Wisconsin communities take proactive steps to assess flood vulnerabilities and pursue strategic restoration of wetlands, streams, and floodplains to reduce flood risks.

According to WWA Executive Director Tracy Hames, ***"Degraded conditions and loss of storage in wetlands, streams, and floodplains upstream often intensify flood damages. This legislation recognizes the important role that healthy wetlands, streams, and floodplains play in reducing flood risks."***

The program makes competitive assessment or implementation grants available to flood-prone local governments. *Assessment grants* (capped at \$300,000) support gathering vulnerability data at the watershed, catchment, or stream-reach scale to understand how water is flowing and contributing to flood risks. *Implementation grants* (capped at \$250,000) enable hydrologic restoration projects that reduce flood damage and protect important infrastructure like roads.

Healthy conditions in upstream wetlands, streams, and floodplains offer stable flood storage and opportunities to slow the energy of flood flows. Erosion into wetlands and along streams has the opposite effect, leading to rapid and flashy flooding downstream. The projects enabled through an implementation grant restore the landscape's natural ability to store, infiltrate, and slowly release runoff.

Funding of \$2 million has been set aside for this program in the 2023-25 state budget through the Joint Committee on Finance's supplemental appropriation. The Division of Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) will administer the program.

WWA appreciates the work of legislative authors on this important legislation. This legislation was authored by Representative Oldenburg (Viroqua), Representative Novak (Dodgeville), and Senator Romaine Quinn (Cameron) and had the broad, bipartisan support of more than 30 legislators as cosponsors. SB 222 will next be sent to Governor Evers for his consideration.

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