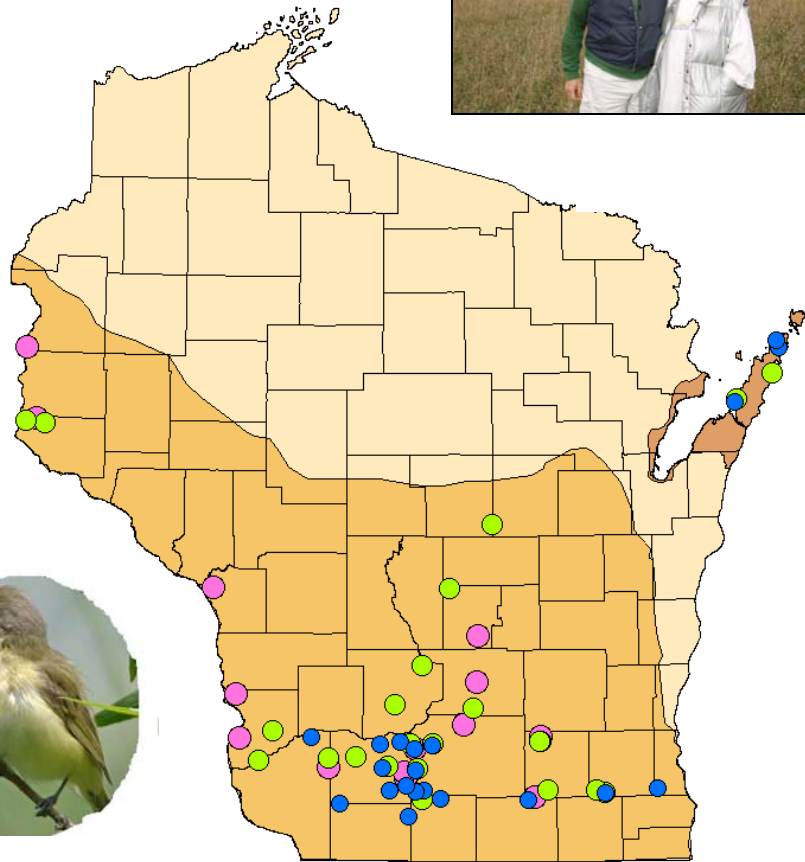




# WISCONSIN'S LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAM



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Endangered Resources

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## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Wisconsin's Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) was developed to help private landowners manage and restore habitat for at-risk (rare) species on their land. The implementation approach is two-fold:

- 1) A **financial assistance** grant program to provide up to 75% of the project cost
- 2) Provides **technical assistance** to landowners (independent of funding)

Private landowners, individuals or groups (e.g., land conservancies or trusts, watershed councils, community organizations, or conservation organizations) proposing projects that will take place on **privately owned** (non-government) land may apply.

Projects must provide a measurable **benefit to one or more at-risk species (Fed listed, END, THR, SC, SGCN)**. Eligible projects under LIP include conducting prescribed burns, restoring native vegetation, and removing invasive and woody species. Projects must also occur in one of the LIP Priority Areas: the historic range of Prairie and Savanna, or the Door County and Green Bay coastal zone.

In Wisconsin, LIP was designed to help implement the (then-draft) **Wildlife Action Plan**. By focusing specifically on managing habitat on private land for at-risk species (including Species of Greatest Conservation Need), the Landowner Incentive Program complements the broader-focus of the State Wildlife Grant program by implementing the WAP-defined private land Conservation Actions.

## PROGRAM GOALS

- Support & encourage private landowners to conserve and manage critical habitat
- Recover listed species, and prevent rare or declining species from becoming "listed"
- Encourage & facilitate protection of habitat through conservation easements

## LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR PROGRAM AND FUNDING SOURCES

Grants In, Grants Out: The Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) program was created by Congress in **The Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2002**, in order to distribute \$40,000,000 through matching, competitively awarded grants to States, the District of Columbia, Tribes, Puerto Rico, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. This funding is to establish, or supplement existing landowner incentive programs that **provide technical and financial assistance**, including habitat protection and restoration, to private landowners for the **protection and management of habitat to benefit federally listed, proposed, or candidate species, or other at-risk species on private lands**.

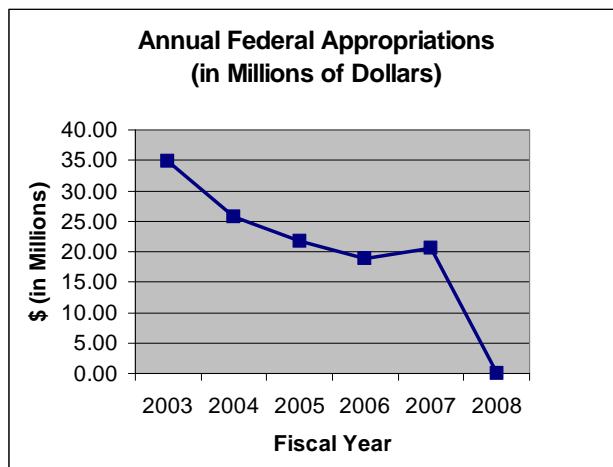
Wisconsin's legal authority was established in February 2006 through legislative approval of **ch. NR 58, Wis Admin. Code**. The purpose of the LIP rule (subchapter III) is to establish rules for the implementation and administration of a grant program to **fund management, restoration and protection** activities **pertaining to Wisconsin's natural communities and rare flora and fauna on private land**.

## ISSUES, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND IDEAS

### Loss of Federal Support

Despite the success of LIP in Wisconsin and across the country, the Administration chose to eliminate LIP from their FY 2008 budget request. This budget was approved by congress in December of 2007, resulting in no additional funding becoming available for state LIP programs in 2008. The justification reads:

“The President’s Budget proposes to eliminate the landowner Incentive Program in FY 2008. While cooperative conservation remains a significant part of the Departments and the Service’s efforts, recent evaluations have indicated that the program is duplicative of other programs and does not obligate funds in a timely fashion. Species at-risk species will still benefit by shifting resources from this program to others that can demonstrate results such as the national Wildlife Refuge System, Partners for Fish and Wildlife and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act programs.”



The stated evaluations do not accurately portray the need for this program or its accomplishments. In Wisconsin and across the county, funds are being spent and obligated and the resulting species benefit is unique and has been demonstrated. What these comments do illustrate is a failure of the program to actively promote its activities, and an increased need for the states to coordinate efforts to assure that the program is able to be evaluated collectively across different implementation strategies.

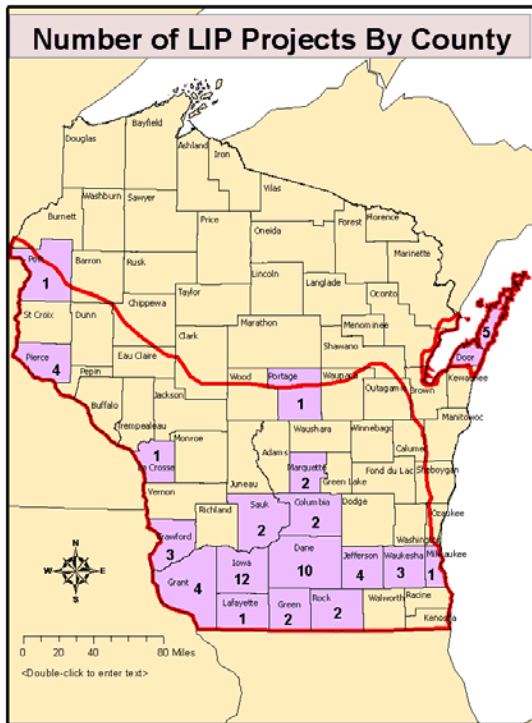
### RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES, AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR LIP

- Still have LIP staff = technical support (similar to the old Landowner Contact Program)
- Still have some \$ for a 2009 awards cycle currently in process
- Program moving towards securing other sources of financial support (grants, possible Climate Bill allocation)
- State support of the program? Some states, have moved in this direction
- Nationwide: many programs view it as back to square one in building a program to support efforts on private lands

LIP continues to seek support for the program from other sources. In response to the initial budget cut, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) circulated a white paper detailing nation-wide LIP accomplishments, and many Congressional Members indicated initial support for the program’s continuation, including IL Senator Durbin and the Senator from Wisconsin. However, acceptance of an omnibus budget bill in 2008 did not offer the opportunity for introduction of an amendment to save LIP.

Without federal support, Wisconsin LIP continues to pursue other sources of funding through federal, state, and third party sources. Currently, the program has several grant applications under consideration which would extend the benefits to landowners for additional cycles. LIP has also submitted budget initiatives with the hopes of adoption by the state. Other opportunities will continue to be pursued as they arise, as the importance of state support for private lands initiatives cannot be understated.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES GENERATED



- Since 2006, **60** Restoration & Management projects have been initiated across **18** Wisconsin Counties.
- Approximately **1,900 acres** of privately owned Prairie and Savanna habitat is being actively restored and/or managed. This contribution is highly significant when considered against Wisconsin's estimated 8000 acres of prairie and 500 acres of oak savanna remaining.
- The management required to maintain and restore these systems is being conducted for **~\$186.00/acre**. This is in part a result of private landowners contributing a significant portion of the work themselves.
- Direct, on-the-ground benefits to **193 at-risk species**, including 5 Federally Listed species, 70 State Listed species, 101 State special concern species, and 17 Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

- **LIP participation is 100% voluntary**, and since all LIP requests require a minimum of 25% in matching funds or labor, this interest corresponds to a **voluntary offer of at least \$200,000 annually** towards conservation from the pockets of Wisconsin citizens. The financial assistance requested continues to outpace the available LIP budget by 200% to 400%
- Projects range from **1.5 acres in size to 150 acres**, making LIP accessible to a wide range of landowners
- LIP biologists provide **technical assistance to private landowners regardless of their funding status**, including education, networking with other programs, and personal consultations or site visits