

Appendix A: Farming and Conservation Together (FACT) Proposal

Return to Fairfield Marsh Environmental Assessment

**FARMING AND CONSERVATION TOGETHER
(FACT)**

**Proposal to the US Fish & Wildlife Service
Alternative to the Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge**

**Submitted on
September 28, 2000**

**Submitted by
Farming And Conservation Together Committee**

William F. Hartwig, Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1 Federal Drive
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111
September 29, 2000

Dear Mr. Hartwig:

At your direction and with your support, a committee of local landowners, elected officials, and conservation organizations has been working diligently since last February, with the assistance of county, state and federal agencies, to develop a viable alternative to the proposed Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) for your consideration.

The attached proposal for an alternative to the Refuge was adopted unanimously at the September 28, 2000 meeting of our committee (formerly known as the Fairfield-Caledonia Conservation Committee), now called the Farming and Conservation Together (FACT) committee. Even the selection of our new name is a reflection of our sincere commitment to a long-term balance of conservation and agriculture made possible through community based oversight and coordination of voluntary enhancement options.

As USFWS Assistant Regional Director John Christian stated in his letter of March 28, 2000 to FACT in response to our draft concept paper, "(it) has the potential to demonstrate a different approach to natural resource conservation...". We have developed and refined this concept into a proposal that will increase opportunities to improve wildlife habitat while protecting private property rights, encourage the continuation of farming, and provide educational and research opportunities regarding wildlife conservation and agriculture over an extended period of time.

FACT and our coordinator have already begun to establish a network of public support and widespread community interest in the implementation of our vision. This is in part due to a general recognition that the rural landscape across the county is rapidly changing and both agriculture and conservation are facing many of the same challenges. It is also because the members of FACT are a microcosm of what exists in this new century, we must work together over the long term, exploring common goals, respecting differences and engaging the interest and commitment of the public and our government representatives.

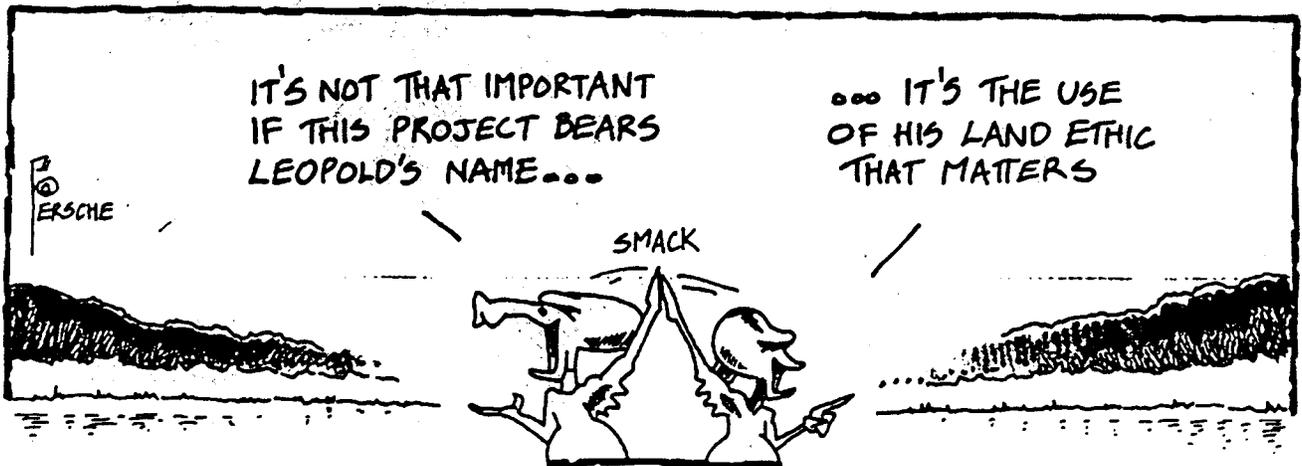
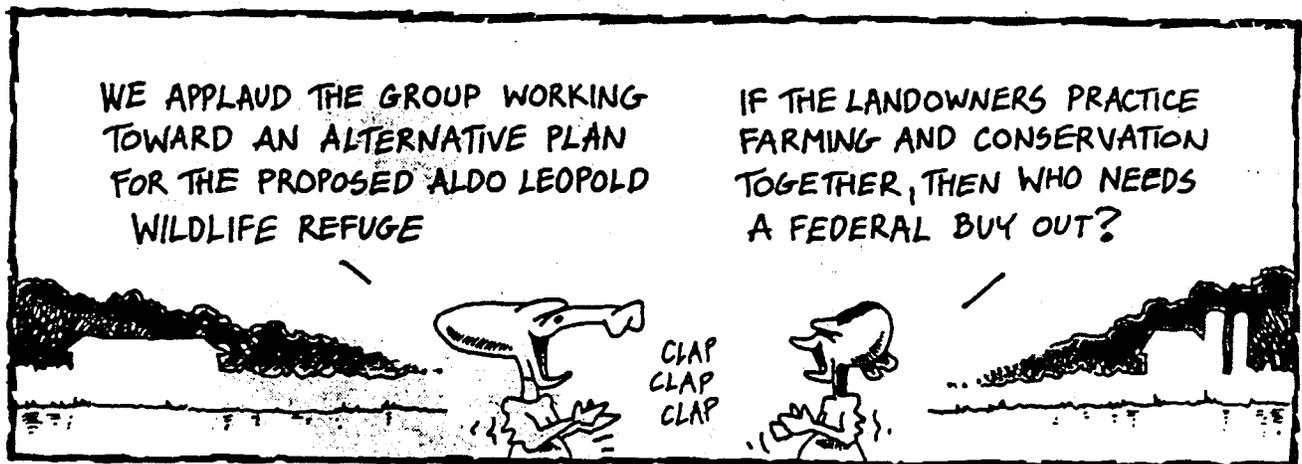
We respectfully submit our proposal to you as an alternative in Final Environmental Assessment of the Refuge. We urge you to select it as the preferred alternative.

Sincerely,



Wellington B. Huffaker IV, Chair
Farming and Conservation Together (FACT)

"There is a clear tendency in American conservation to relegate to government all necessary jobs that private landowners fail to perform. Government ownership, operation, subsidy, or regulation is now widely prevalent in forestry, range management, soil and watershed management, park and wilderness conservation, fisheries management, and migratory bird management, with more to come. Most of this growth in governmental conservation is proper and logical, some of it is inevitable. That I imply no disapproval of it is implicit in the fact that I have spent most of my life working for it. Nevertheless the question arises: What is the ultimate magnitude of the enterprise? Will the tax base carry its eventual ramifications? At what point will governmental conservation, like the mastodon, become handicapped by its own dimensions? The answer, if there is any, seems to be in a land ethic..." (Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, 1949)



Todd Persche's cartoon published in the Baraboo News Republic (9/7/00) reflects local sentiment towards FACT

A PROPOSAL FOR FARMING AND CONSERVATION TOGETHER

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"There is a clear tendency in American conservation to relegate to government all necessary jobs that private landowners fail to perform. Government ownership, operation, subsidy, or regulation is now widely prevalent in forestry, range management, soil and watershed management, park and wilderness conservation, fisheries management, and migratory bird management, with more to come. Most of this growth in governmental conservation is proper and logical, some of it is inevitable. That I imply no disapproval of it is implicit in the fact that I have spent most of my life working for it. Nevertheless the question arises: What is the ultimate magnitude of the enterprise? Will the tax base carry its eventual ramifications? At what point will governmental conservation, like the mastodon, become handicapped by its own dimensions? The answer, if there is any, seems to be in a land ethic..." (Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, 1949)

INTRODUCTION

In January 1999, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed the establishment of the Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge ("Refuge"). Due to local opposition, the USFWS suspended action on the final Environmental Assessment and recommended in December 1999, that landowners and other concerned parties develop an additional alternative to its proposal. In response, landowners, affected local governments, conservation organizations, and county, state and federal agencies formed the Farming and Conservation Together (FACT) committee. This committee has met regularly since February 2000, to develop an alternative acceptable to both landowners who oppose the Refuge and to people interested in the public benefits of both conservation and agriculture.

The FACT committee submits this proposal as its preferred alternative to the Refuge proposed by USFWS. The committee developed this proposal at the grassroots level, and is committed to seeing it implemented. If selected, this alternative, and the process by which it was developed, could serve as a model for how locally generated ideas and community collaboration can provide alternative approaches to protect shared community and natural resource values.

VISION

The FACT committee envisions a long-term balance of conservation and agriculture made possible through community based oversight and coordination of voluntary enhancement options.

NATURAL RESOURCE VALUES OF THE AREA

The Lower Baraboo River area in Fairfield Township of Sauk County and Caledonia Township of Columbia County, historically contained approximately 5,000 acres of contiguous wetland, including shallow emergent marsh, sedge meadow, wet prairie, floodplain forests, and tamarack swamps. The surrounding terrestrial community included dry prairie, oak savannas and forests. Around 1837, the first farms began to

appear and settlers found the basin to contain fertile soils and an abundant water source. These small farmsteads became the foundation of agriculture in the area. In the early 1900's, the United States government, working with local farmers, began to channelize the existing historic waterways and join them with newly constructed drainage ditches to convert the wetlands to cropland. Over time, they installed underground drainage tile and straightened and widened existing waterways. This area continues to have an active drainage district.

Today, the area remains primarily agricultural and supports a number of multigenerational family farming operations. In addition to supporting numerous dairy operations, the land also produces corn, soybeans, alfalfa, potatoes, and mint. The majority of the land is cropped or pastured every year. However, the area's topography, as well as fluctuations of the Baraboo River and its tributaries, make successful farming in some areas very challenging.

Remnant historic natural communities can be found throughout the area, including dry prairies, sedge meadows, oak forests, flood plain forests, and tamarack swamp. They vary in size from less than one acre to 200 acres. These remnants, in conjunction with farmlands, provide valuable habitat for a variety of species. Wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, sandhill cranes, great blue herons, raccoons, cottontail rabbits, fox and coyotes are abundant. Stable breeding populations of wood ducks can be found on the sloughs and ditches along the Baraboo River. During the spring and fall, the area becomes an important stopping point for large numbers of migratory birds that blanket the area crop fields feeding on waste grain.

The majority of the existing structures are farming related and the area has no large residential, commercial, or industrial developments. Undeveloped space accounts for 95% of the land area.

Together, these factors combine to provide an ideal landscape for a strong partnership between agriculture and conservation. This proposal seeks to build on this partnership and work together to protect and restore the aesthetic, ecological, and social values present in this special landscape.

GOALS

The FACT Committee established five primary goals for this proposal. These goals reflect the concerns and needs expressed by the community. Specifically, our goals are to:

1. Preserve local leadership through an initiative designed to accomplish the FACT vision as an alternative to the proposed USFWS Refuge;
2. Expand and coordinate the voluntary conservation and agriculture opportunities available to landowners;
3. Provide educational and research opportunities on the relationship between conservation and agriculture;

4. Reduce conflicts between people and wildlife for both current and future wildlife population levels; and
5. Protect private property rights.

FACT COMMITTEE

FACT committee members represent the diverse people and interests that exist in the area; its vision of a balanced relationship between farming and conservation is explicit in its name (Appendix 1). Voting members on the committee include four local landowners, representatives from three local conservation organizations, and four representatives of elected local government bodies. Non-voting members serving in an advisory capacity represent the Sauk County Land Conservation Department, the USFWS, the United State Department of Agriculture--Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Other supporters of the FACT committee contributing to the development of this alternative include representatives of the Wisconsin delegation to the United State Congress, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the Wisconsin Legislature, and additional local landowners.

FACT COORDINATOR

Early in its deliberations, the FACT committee realized that even with an active corps of volunteers, development and implementation of the FACT vision required a dedicated staff position. The committee submitted a proposal to the USFWS requesting financial support for a coordinator who would assist the committee in its efforts to gather and organize data for this proposal. In addition, the coordinator would serve as a liaison between the FACT committee and the local landowners on issues related specifically to the development and implementation of the FACT alternative. The committee received funding for this position from the USFWS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and hired the FACT coordinator in July. The FACT coordinator is one of the unique aspects of this proposal, and is essential to helping establish and maintain community support for the FACT alternative. In the future, the coordinator will be a critical component to implementing FACT's vision.

AREA OF INTEREST

At this time, the FACT committee has not delineated a specific project area with formal boundaries. Rather, the committee has identified a more flexible area of interest. This area of interest is of similar scale to that of the USFWS proposal (Appendix 2). A flexible approach allows landowners to gain comfort with the process and the FACT proposal before they are asked to identify or commit to specific project boundaries. As comfort levels with the process increase, it will be easier to obtain valuable historical and ecological data from the individual landowners that will, in turn, help shape the final boundaries of this project. The FACT committee will continue to interact with landowners on a frequent basis in order to explain and refine the FACT process and

proposal. The final boundaries of this project therefore, will reflect a community consensus.

STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A. Innovative Approach to Conservation

This proposal, created through community collaboration among landowners, conservation groups, and government partnerships, attempts to balance the goals of the agricultural community, with those of the conservation community. The FACT approach demonstrates that agriculture and natural resource conservation can not only be compatible, but synergistic.

B. Long Term Commitment of the Committee

The FACT committee formed as a result of landowner dissatisfaction with the USFWS refuge proposal. The committee evolved from a group of these landowners organized at the grassroots, to a larger and more comprehensive community collaboration with all interests represented. The committee met regularly beginning in February 2000 to develop the FACT alternative to the USFWS refuge proposal. The diverse composition and grassroots nature of FACT ensures that the members have strong connections to the area of interest, and are dedicated to seeing the FACT vision become reality. The FACT members have agreed to serve on the committee in the future to provide oversight to the implementation of this alternative.

A key role for the committee is to provide a forum for landowners, conservation groups, and the community to present issues, ideas, and concerns regarding implementation of the FACT alternative. To this end, the FACT committee will serve as the contact point for this alternative, and will serve as a vehicle to discuss and promote conservation opportunities that may arise in the future.

C. Strategy for Restoring and Enhancing the Resource Values of the Area

Fact's strategy for restoring and enhancing resource values of the area depends heavily upon the continuation of the FACT coordinator position. The coordinator will continue to establish positive relationships with landowners, and to encourage participation in voluntary conservation and restoration projects and programs. The coordinator also will serve as a liaison between landowners and administrators of conservation programs in order to help landowners navigate the complexities of the conservation programs and resolve conflicts. The coordinator will be the most tangible and visible link between landowners, the FACT committee, and other cooperators.

With the aid of the coordinator, landowners and conservation partners have numerous vehicles by which to enhance the resource values of the area of interest. Through discussions between the coordinator and landowners, the FACT committee knows that landowners have the interest and desire to implement conservation measures on their

land. The coordinator will provide these landowners with technical assistance and will help identify private sources of funding. The coordinator will connect landowners to cooperating agencies that have cost-sharing programs and staff expertise on design, implementation, and maintenance of conservation practices. The coordinator also will promote utilization of private conservation programs established by local conservation organizations. To assist in this process, the FACT committee compiled a matrix of current public and private agricultural and conservation programs available to landowners (Appendix 3). The committee believes voluntary conservation programs, both public and private, are key to reaching FACT's vision.

Some conservation and restoration programs landowners have already expressed interest in include: purchasing development rights (PDR)—providing financial incentives to help perpetuate farming on prime agricultural lands and preserve open space; establishing riparian buffers; establishing grasslands; restoring wetlands; and managing woodlands (Appendix 4). The FACT committee and coordinator will connect landowners to established programs or provide the technical assistance necessary to implement these practices.

The FACT coordinator will assist landowners interested in a conservation practice in investigating the restoration potential of their land. The coordinator will review the private and public restoration program options that are available with the landowners, and help the landowners select the appropriate mechanism for restoration. The committee will target restoration of historic wetland communities including shallow emergent marsh, wet sedge meadow complexes, flood plain forest and tamarack swamp. The committee and coordinator will work with ongoing farm operations to restore wetland habitat, without losing prime farmland. In addition to restoring wetlands, FACT will also assist landowners interested in enhancing degraded wetlands. To preserve this area for the future, FACT will work with willing landowners to deed restrict restored or existing wetlands. The primary tools FACT will utilize for wetland restoration and enhancement include the Wetlands Reserve Program, Partners of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Waterfowl Production Area Program, and privately funded projects.

Historic upland communities in the area included dry prairie, oak savannas, and oak forest. FACT will work with landowners to restore these components to the landscape with special consideration for areas adjoining current or restored natural communities. FACT will encourage restoration of uplands adjacent to wetlands in order to provide the necessary nesting cover habitat for waterfowl and other birds dependent on these habitat complexes. The primary tools FACT will use for upland restoration and enhancement include the Wetlands Reserve Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Waterfowl Production Area Program, Conservation Reserve Program, and privately funded projects.

Equally important, FACT will work with landowners to research and develop ways that active agricultural operations may provide desirable wildlife habitat. For example, cultivation methods and delayed harvests can provide nesting cover for some waterfowl

and other grassland bird species. Examining the applicability of this (or other) techniques to the FACT area of interest, will be an important manner in which agricultural and conservation interests can be merged.

The current amount of animal damage to cropland, frustration with the Wisconsin Damage Abatement and Claims Program, and the future potential for additional wildlife conflicts associated with future habitat restoration activities, have been cited by landowners as significant concerns. To address these concerns, FACT, immediately upon selection of this alternative, will begin assisting landowners who need help reducing conflicts with wildlife, as outlined in the Crop Damage Report (Appendix 5). The FACT coordinator can serve as the local contact point for landowners enrolled in the Wisconsin Damage Abatement and Claims Program to help manage the hunter access requirements of this program. The coordinator also will assist interested landowners establish managed deer hunts to control deer populations.

D. Public and Community Benefits

Although the fundamental premise of the FACT alternative is to keep land in private ownership, landowners also desire to provide benefits to the larger community. Implementation of this alternative creates an excellent opportunity to provide education to the community on the relationship between agriculture and conservation. FACT proposes to establish agricultural and wildlife restoration demonstration projects in the area of interest. The goal is to provide sites where school classes and community groups can view or participate in the restoration of wildlife habitat and witness the tangible benefits of agricultural conservation practices. These sites will serve as living classrooms and serve as locations for landowner workshops that demonstrate conservation and restoration projects and their related benefits. In addition, the FACT committee believes the FACT area of interest is an ideal setting for local schools, universities, agencies or conservation organizations to research the relationship between farming practices and long-term wildlife populations.

Lands enrolled in the various public and private conservation programs will provide public benefits in the form of preserved open space, enhanced wildlife habitat for many wetland and grassland dependent species. By restoring these natural communities, water quality will be improved and the impact of flood events will be reduced.

Finally, any land acquired through the Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) program is open to the public year round for a variety of recreational activities. These areas will provide the public additional opportunities to interact with the natural community, and view and support restoration activities in the area.

E. Procurement of Funding for Implementation

The FACT alternative proposes to use public and private funding to accomplish its goals. The program matrix outlines existing voluntary programs available for many of

the potential activities in our focus area. The FACT committee does recognize the limitations in availability or funding for some of these programs.

The FACT committee already has begun to address these limitations by requesting "Special Project" eligibility for the Wetland Reserve Program from the USDA-NRCS and "Conservation Priority Area" status for the Conservation Reserve Program from the USDA (Appendix 6). The committee also has inquired about the potential for the FACT area of interest to receive priority consideration for the Farmland Protection Program (Appendix 7). Early in its deliberations, the committee requested that FACT area of interest be added to the state's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) proposal. While the request was submitted too late in the CREP planning process for inclusion in the first phase of that project, the committee will pursue inclusion of the FACT area of interest in subsequent CREP proposals.

Upon the selection of the FACT proposal as the preferred alternative, the FACT committee intends to encourage the USFWS and the state of Wisconsin to establish Sauk County as an eligible county for WPA acquisition. The overwhelming local support for the FACT alternative should alleviate any concerns the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources or the Governor would have about the USFWS establishing WPA's in the area. The committee intends to work with Congress for additional funding for WPAs. The FACT committee also intends to use its collective influence to recruit the assistance of the area's Congressional delegation in an effort to secure federal financial support for the FACT proposal. These federal funds would complement existing Partners for Fish and Wildlife funding that the USFWS could target for the area of interest, and would complement other public and private funds available for projects.

Private sources of funding also will play an important role in realizing FACT's vision. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's support for the FACT coordinator is an example of the committee's ability to pursue and receive private support. The Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, a voting member on the FACT committee, is another private conservation organization that can and will raise money for habitat restoration in the FACT area of interest. Several other organizations with a history of supporting conservation work with private funds have also expressed their verbal support for the FACT alternative. Finally, a number of landowners already actively practicing conservation work in the area are willing and able to cover the cost of the conservation practices on their land. For landowners in this category, the technical assistance provided by the FACT coordinator and committee is their most critical need.

F. IMPLEMENTATION

The committee already has started to implement the FACT alternative, by initiating landowner contacts, providing coordination on conservation projects, and serving as an open forum for discussions in the community related to conservation and agriculture. After notification of the selection of the FACT proposal as the preferred alternative, the committee will expedite further implementation of the plan. The FACT coordinator will

re-contact landowners who already have expressed interest in restoring a natural feature on their land in order to further explore the restoration potential. During these follow-up visits, the coordinator will work with the landowners to identify potential voluntary private and public conservation programs that can assist with implementation of this proposal.

The FACT committee will continue to pursue special standing or status for the area of interest for certain government conservation programs. To facilitate this, the committee will also explore options for formalizing itself as an official group, recognized by the state. Special standing for FACT will facilitate landowner enrollment in these conservation programs, and will result in conservation projects being implemented more quickly than without this special status. Landowners choosing to fund restoration work privately or through private conservation programs, can potentially implement their projects even more rapidly than with traditional government programs.

The coordinator will contact landowners willing to provide sites suitable for public demonstration projects soon after selection of the FACT alternative. If successful, these demonstration areas, together with neighboring landowner restoration projects, will create additional interest by landowners, which will in turn, lead to further implementation of conservation projects. The FACT committee and coordinator will continue to interact with landowners in the area of interest to provide information on the implementation of this alternative and to explore landowner interest in additional restoration and enhancement projects.

Initial contacts with landowners suggest that some people are interested in selling their development rights. A goal of the FACT committee is to secure funding and establish purchase of development rights programs for this area. Several landowners have indicated an interest in immediate enrollment in a PDR program, this would preserve the resource values of the area in perpetuity.

Outlining a specific time frame for full implementation of the FACT alternative is difficult and dependent on a variety of factors, including landowner interest and available financial resources. As with the USFWS Refuge proposal, the FACT committee recognizes and supports a long-term approach to conservation, and is realistic about what can be accomplished each year. The committee believes its alternative can be implemented more quickly and at less public sector expense than the USFWS Refuge proposal because it was developed and is supported by the community. The committee has identified landowners who are committed to restoring and enhancing the natural features of their land. As these landowners complete their initial conservation and restoration projects, neighboring landowners will have the opportunity to see and understand the value and benefit of conservation and farming together, and will seek to help the FACT committee realize its vision.

LOCAL SUPPORT

This proposal is unique because it represents the collective vision of the community. Local political leaders support this proposal because landowners helped develop the FACT alternative. The FACT committee provided each affected local government with a concept paper and gave an oral presentation that explained the FACT alternative (Appendix 8), and each of these local government bodies passed resolutions in support of the FACT proposal (Appendix 9). State legislators from the area of interest, along with local farming groups, governmental agencies, and conservation organizations, also support this alternative (Appendix 10-12).

The FACT committee used a proactive, collaborative approach to develop its proposal. The coordinator relied on this proactive approach to identify support for this proposal from landowners. As a result of early inclusion in the process and frequent interaction with the FACT committee and coordinator, landowners have expressed interest in contributing to its successful implementation. The FACT committee has established a landowner support network that is interested, committed, and willing to work through the committee and coordinator to accomplish the FACT vision. This support network combined with expanded funding opportunities for existing programs, efforts to reduce wildlife conflicts, and increased private sector involvement, represents a significant departure from the No Action Alternative in the USFWS Environmental Assessment.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACT AND USFWS

FACT

- 1) Continues to meet as a committee, provides oversight on implementation of the proposal and serves as a forum for landowners concerns
- 2) Uses collective influence to secure private and public funding
- 3) Maintains local participation and incorporates feedback
- 4) Provides technical and informational assistance to landowners
- 5) Supervises the FACT coordinator

USFWS

- 1) Includes FACT alternative in the Environmental Assessment of the Aldo Leopold Wildlife Refuge
- 2) Selects the FACT proposal as the Preferred Alternative within the Environmental Assessment.
- 3) Continues funding for the FACT coordinator
- 4) Assists FACT committee in securing public funding
- 5) Continues involvement of USFWS staff where appropriate

CONCLUSION

Agriculture and conservation can and do complement each other. The FACT alternative, developed by the community in a collaborative process, employs all available tools and programs to promote landowner-supported conservation and

restoration projects. Selection and implementation of the FACT alternative, which recognizes and respects strongly held community values, will, in the long run, lead to broader support for conservation in the area.

Landowners in the FACT area of interest have generations of knowledge about their land, and are willing to share this knowledge, and their love of the land, with the community. Individually, landowners often privately fund conservation projects because these projects serve their own interests as well as those of the public. Collectively, the FACT committee can seek additional financial resources for conservation and restoration work from applicable governmental and non-governmental programs. The flexibility of the FACT alternative allows individual landowners to meet their specific and unique needs, and will generate greater participation. The FACT committee believes that its strong local support and flexible structure is the key to conveying and building a land ethic, and promoting action on its behalf, in a lasting manner.

The FACT committee and the community it represents share strongly held values about private property rights and responsibilities. The FACT alternative reflects these shared values, as its proposal relies upon the community, rather than one institution or bureaucracy to succeed. The greatest strengths of the FACT alternative are its foundation in the community, and its community's commitment to implement the plan it developed. The FACT committee urges careful consideration of this proposal, and selection of the FACT plan as the preferred alternative.

Farming And Conservation Together
Voting Members

Jeb Barzen

Jeb Barzen

Buddy Huffaker

Buddy Huffaker

Greg Goetz

Greg Goetz

Steve Luther

Steve Luther

Richard Gumz

Richard Gumz

Jeff Nania

Jeff Nania

Robert Z. Hamele

Robert Hamele

Bill Schreiber

Bill Schreiber

Duane Hohl

Duane Hohl

Bill Turner

Bill Turner

Appendix 1. FACT Committee Members and Contributors

Farming And Conservation Together Committee -- Voting Members List

JEB BARZEN

Director of Field Ecology
International Crane Foundation
P.O. Box 447
Baraboo, WI 53913-0447
tel: 608-356-9462 x125
fax: 608-356-9465
e-mail: jeb@savingcranes.org

JEFF NANIA

Project Coordinator
Wisconsin Waterfowl Association Inc
W11360 State Road 127
Portage, WI 53901-9412
tel: 608-742-6699
fax: 608-742-1669
cell: 608-697-7002

RICHARD GUMZ

Landowner Representative
N570 6th Court
Endeavor, WI 53930
tel: 608-981-2488

BILL SCHRIEBER

Sauk County Board Representative
S5198 Hwy 113
Baraboo, WI 53913
tel: 608-356-4739

ROBERT A. HAMELE

Columbia County Board Representative
400 De Witt
Portage, WI 53901
tel: 608-742-6140

DR. RUSSELL C. SMITH

Landowner Representative
121 Lake Road
Portage, WI 53901
tel: 608-742-6014

GREG GOETZ

Caledonia Township Representative
N4235 County Rd U
Portage, WI 53901
home: 608-742-3514
work: 608-742-9094
ggoetz@chorus.net

BILL TURNER

Fairfield Supervisor
S2466 Gillem Rd
Baraboo, WI 53913
tel: 608-356-6485

DUANE HOHL

Landowner Representative
W11941 State Road 33
Portage, WI 53901
home: 608-356-8640
farm: 608-356-4582

BUDDY HUFFAKER

Executive Director
Aldo Leopold Foundation
P.O. Box 77
Baraboo, WI 53913-0077
tel: 608-355-0279
fax: 608-356-7309
e-mail: buddy@aldoleopold.org

STEVE LUTHER

Landowner Representative
E12434 State Road 33
Baraboo WI 53913
tel: 608-356-9228

Farming And Conservation Together Committee -- Advisory (non-voting) Members

Representative Sheryl K. Albers
P.O. Box 8952
Madison, WI 53708-8952
tel: 608-266-8531
fax: 608-266-7038
e-mail: Rep.Albers@legis.state.wi.us

Alan Anderson
UW-Extension
Lowell Hall, 3rd Floor
610 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53715
tel: 608-265-8256
fax: 608-263-4999
e-mail: anderson@aae.wisc.edu

Jeff Bord
Wisconsin Waterfowl Association
PO Box 180496
Delafield, WI 53018

John Christian
USFWS Region 3
1 Federal Dr
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056
tel: 612-713-5101
fax: 612-713-5182
e-mail: john_christian@fws.gov

Garrett J. Huffman
WI Dept of Agriculture
PO Box 8911
Madison WI 53708-8911
tel: 608-224-5036
fax: 608-224-5034
e-mail: garret.huffman@datcp.state.wi.us

Salvor Jonsdottir
UW-Extension Columbia County
PO Box 567
Portage, WI 53901-0567
tel: 608-742-9681
fax: 608-742-9862
e-mail: salvor.jonsdottir@ces.uwex.edu

Pat Leavenworth
Natural Resources Conservation Service
6515 Watts Rd Ste 200
Madison, WI 53719
tel: 608-276-8732
fax: 608-276-5909
e-mail: patleavenworth@wi.usda.gov

Steve Lenz
Refuge Manager, Leopold Wetland Mgmt Dist
W4279 Headquarters Rd
Mayville, WI 53050
tel: 920-387-0336 x15
fax: 920-387-2973
e-mail: steve_lenz@fws.gov

Andy Morton
Wisconsin DNR
3911 Fish Hatchery Rd
Fitchburg, WI 53711
tel: 608-275-3311
e-mail: mortoj@dnr.state.wi.us

Ted Pyrek
Wisconsin DNR
W7303 CNTY HWY CS
Poynette, WI 53955
tel 608-635-8108
e-mail: pyrekt@dnr.state.wi.us

James J. Ruwaldt
USDI – FWS, WI Private Lands Office
Private Lands Coordinator
4511 Helgesen Dr
Madison, WI 53718-6747
tel: 608-221-1206 ext. 14
fax: 608-221-1375
e-mail: james_ruwaldt@mail.fws.gov

Senator Dale W. Schultz
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
tel: 608-266-0703
fax: 608-267-0375
e-mail: Sen.Schultz@legis.state.wi.us

Representative Joan Wade Spillner
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53701-8953
tel: 608-266-7746
fax: 608-282-3642
e-mail: Rep.Spillner@legis.state.wi.us

Tom Thrall
Natural Resources Conservation Service
6515 Watts Rd Ste 200
Madison, WI 53719
tel: 608-276-8732
fax: 608-276-5909
tom.thrall@wi.usda.gov

Joe Van Berkel
Sauk County Land Conservation Dept
505 Broadway
Baraboo, WI 53913
tel: 608-355-3245
email: jvanberkel@co.sauk.wi.us

Senator Robert T. Welch
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
tel: 608-266-0751
fax: 608-267-4350
e-mail: Sen.Welch@legis.state.wi.us

Farming And Conservation Together Committee -- Other Interested Parties Mailing List

Daniel M. Ashe
USFWS - Assistant Director
Refuges & Wildlife
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
tel: 202-208-3100

Katie Crawley
South-Central Regional Coordinator
Senator Russell D. Feingold
8383 Greenway Blvd
Middleton, WI 53562
tel: 608-828-1200
fax: 608-828-1203
e-mail: katie_crawley@feingold.senate.gov

Eve Galanter
Madison Office Director
Senator Herb Kohl
14 W Mifflin St Ste 207
Madison, WI 53703
tel: 608-264-5338
fax: 608-264-5473
e-mail: eve_galanter@kohl.senate.gov

Anthony Hardie
Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin's Office
10 E Doty St Ste 405
Madison, WI 53703
tel: 608-258-9800
fax: 608-258-9808

William Hartwig
Regional Director
USFWS Region 3
1 Federal Dr
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056
tel: 612-713-5301
fax: 612-713-5280

Tom Michele
Baraboo News Republic
219 1st
Baraboo WI 53913
tel: 608-356-4808

Jacob Parker
Portage Daily Register
309 De Witt St
Portage WI 53901
tel: 608-742-2111 ext 319

Mike Frank
Local Landowner
S3396 County RD U
Baraboo, WI 53913

Nita Fuller
USFWS Region 3
1 Federal Dr
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056

Mary Frances Repko
Senator Russell Feingold's Office
716 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
tel: 202-224-8648

Melvin Rose
Chair, Sauk County Board of Supervisors
505 Broadway
Baraboo, WI 53913

Erick Wakiaga
Portage Daily Register
309 De Witt St
Portage, WI 53901
tel: 608-742-2111

Bob Weihrouch
Natural Resources Conservation Service
6515 Watts Rd Ste 200
Madison, WI 53719
tel: 608-276-8732
fax: 608-276-5909

Bill Weitzel
Local Landowner
E13735 State Rd 33
Baraboo, WI 53913
tel: 608-356-3874

Suzi Yenchesky
WPDR / WDDC
PO Box 300, Portage WI 53901
tel: 608-742-8833

David Leatherman
WRPQ Radio and Television
407 Oak
P.O. Box 456
Baraboo, WI 53913

Philip Lehman
Local Landowner
E14085 Hwy 33
Baraboo, WI 53913

Adam Seifiert
Local Landowner
1605 Bristolcone Dr.
Hartland, WI 53029

Jeff Hill
Local Landowner
E13028 Fairfield Rd
Baraboo, WI 53913

Appendix 2. Area of Interest

Lower Baraboo River Watershed

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles



b

PORTAGE
Lower Baraboo
River Watershed

FACT Focus Area

Baraboo River

GALETONIA

SAUK COUNTY

WISCONSIN COUNTY

GREENFIELD

WATERVILLE

LAKE DELTON

DELTON

FAIRFIELD

ABOO

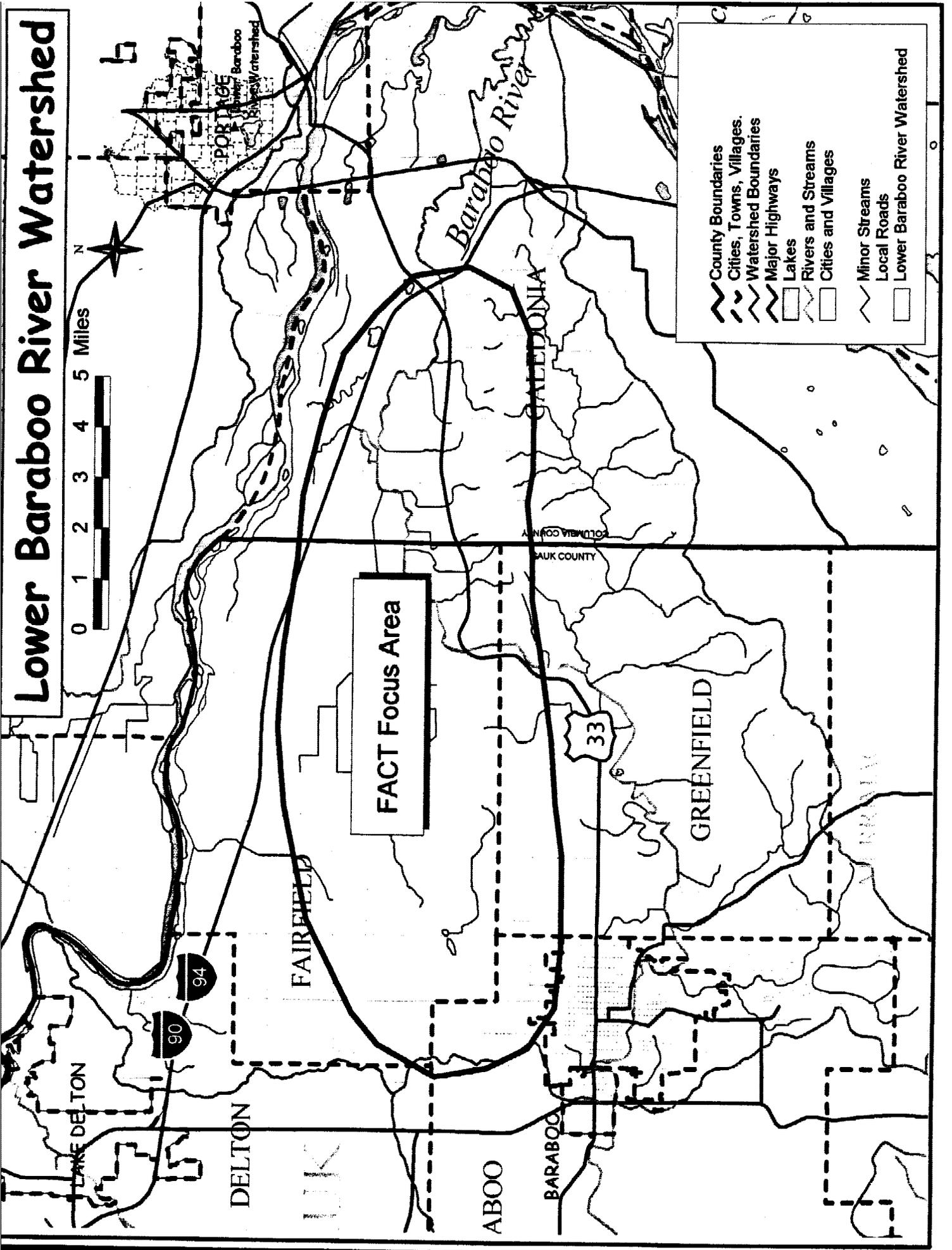
BARABOO

90

94

33

- County Boundaries
- Cities, Towns, Villages
- Watershed Boundaries
- Major Highways
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams
- Cities and Villages
- Minor Streams
- Local Roads
- Lower Baraboo River Watershed



Appendix 3. Conservation and Agriculture Program Matrix

AGRICULTURAL AND CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

Farming and Conservation Together

Program	Sponsor Agency	Description	Practices	Contract Length in years	Public Access Required	Notes and Availability
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)	NRCS	Assistance & cost sharing for soil erosion & water pollution practices	Up to 75% cost sharing for soil erosion & runoff pollution control	5 to 10	No	Highly Competitive, very limited, up to \$10,000/year and \$50,000 for life of contract
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)	NRCS & FSA	Set aside cropland for soil, water and wildlife conservation	Annual rental payments for set aside acres	10 or 15	No	Periodic signups competitive, Continuous open signup for buffers
Land & Water Resource Management Plans	LCD	Cost-share dollars to install practices for nonpoint pollution control	Most agricultural practices are available for cost sharing to address soil erosion & runoff pollution control	annual	No	Contracts required; cost share includes 10 year maintenance of practices
Priority Watershed Program (PWP)	DATCP LCD & DNR	Address nonpoint pollution control	Up to 70% cost-sharing for soil erosion & runoff pollution control	10	No	Program is being phased out, 10 yr maintenance required
Targeted Runoff Management (TRM)	DNR	Address nonpoint pollution control	Cost-sharing for soil erosion & water pollution control	10	No	Competitive grants on watershed basis, replace PWP
River Protection Grants	DNR	Grant program to protect water resources, including wetlands	Cost sharing for soil erosion & runoff pollution control	2	No	New program; competitive grants, 2 year contract for practice with 10 year maintenance required
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)	DATCP	Riparian area and wetland restoration	Annual rental payments for set aside acres, cost sharing for soil erosion & runoff pollution control	15	No	<i>NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE in FACT area</i>
Stewardship Program	DNR	Land acquisition for habitat restoration & recreation	Up to 50% funding for land acquisition	NA	YES	Competitive grant, possibly used in conjunction with other programs
Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)	NRCS	Assistance and cost sharing to develop fish & wildlife habitat	Up to 75% cost sharing for seeding, fencing, fish habitat, and other practices	10	No	Other organizations can provide remaining 25% of cost for implementing the practice
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)	NRCS	Assistance & cost sharing for wetland restoration	Variable length easements and 75% to 100% cost-share for restoration practices	10, 30 or permanent	No	Can be used with other programs, possible Special Project Status for FACT area
Partners for Fish & Wildlife	USFWS	Assistance & cost sharing for restoring fish and wildlife habitats	Up to 100% cost-share for a wide variety of practices on restorable land	10	No	\$50,000 has been allocated to FACT area for this project
Waterfowl Production Area	USFWS	Restore wetlands & grasslands for waterfowl production & hunting	Acquisition from willing sellers at fair market value based on appraisal, restoration up to 100% of costs	permanent easement	YES	<i>CURRENTLY ONLY AVAILABLE IN COLUMBIA COUNTY</i>

Program	Sponsor Agency	Description	Practices	Contract Length in years	Public Access Required	Notes and Availability
Wildlife Damage Abatement & Claims Program	USDA & DNR	Abatement & financial assistance to farmers receiving crop damage	Fencing, cannons, shooting permits & damage compensation	annual signup	YES	Up to \$15,000 in compensation, limited public hunting access required
County Agricultural Purchase of Development Rights	County P & Z	Purchase development easements	Easement to protect farmland from development	permanent	No	County will designate priority areas for program
Farmland Protection Program	NRCS	Purchase development rights to protect farmland	Purchase of development rights	30 +	No	Federal 50% match of local purchase of development rights, use with above program
WI Farmland Preservation Program	DATCP & LCD	Tax relief to preserve farmland through planning and zoning	Promote soil conservation with a required conservation plan	zoning or 10-25 yr contracts	No	Must own 35+ acres and produce gross farm profits of \$6,000 in previous year
Managed Forest Law	DNR	Promote good forest management through property tax incentives	Requires an approved management plan, 80% of land must be able to produce merchantable timber	25 or 50	YES	80 acres can be closed to public, transferable to new owner, 5% yield tax for any wood products harvested
Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program	DNR	Cost sharing to restore & protect forests, prairies and waters	Up to 65% cost-share for eligible practices outlined in Forest Stewardship Plan	10 +	No	Contact DNR forester for guidance prior to filling out application
Forestry Incentives Program	DNR & NRCS	Provide cost sharing to restore and protect forest resources	Cost sharing for tree planting, site prep for natural regeneration, timber stand improvement	10	No	SAUK COUNTY ONLY, must maintain practice for 10 years, must own at least 10 acres, requires management plan
Special Environmental Grants	EPA	Variety of special grant programs available	Practice depends on goal of landowner and grant stipulations	NA	YES/NO	Competitive grant process
Private Grants & Programs	various nonprofit groups	Wide variety of grant programs	Funding available for wide variety of programs	NA	YES/NO	Usually very competitive, often supplement existing programs or fund nongovernmental programs

Key to Agencies:

DATCP Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection
DNR Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
EPA U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FSA Farm Service Agency
LCD County Land Conservation Department
NRCS USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
P & Z County Planning and Zoning
USDA U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

A goal of the committee is to increase the funding and availability of existing programs to increase landowner voluntary participation in programs that reward long-term agriculture and conservation practices.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: FACT COORDINATOR
Mike Jones at (608) 355 - 0279 OR (608) 963 - 2433**

Appendix 4. Landowner Contact Report

Landowner Contact Report

The success of this proposal is dependent on the participation and support from the local community and landowners in the area of interest. The FACT committee has engaged the community and landowners in a variety of ways to gather support and identify interest in implementing conservation practices. This report outlines that support and the interest of the landowners in the area to participate in the pursuit of FACT's vision.

Informational Meetings

The FACT committee invited all landowners from the area of interest to an informational meeting where FACT's outline of goals and objectives were presented. Approximately 60 landowners attended. Those in attendance indicated a clear support for FACT's approach to conservation. Several landowners also indicated a commitment to implement future conservation practices on an anonymous and voluntary survey.

Landowner Visits

The FACT coordinator is meeting with landowners individually to identify current conservation activities as well as interest in implementing future conservation projects on their land. Of the 196 total private property owners in the area of interest, the FACT coordinator has met with 68 landowners. These landowners comprise over 85% of the land ownership in the area of interest. Two additional responses have been received from a mailing to 28 absentee landowners. They were sent a letter and survey asking about current conservation practices and their interest in doing more conservation work in the future. The FACT coordinator also has identified that 64 property owners own only a house lot and/or less than 10 acres of land. Future contacts will include these smaller landowners in addition to 36 landowners with at least 10 acres in the area of interest that have not been contacted to date.

These interactions have clearly identified a resistance to ownership and control of the area by a government entity. The majority of the landowners feel that they are good stewards of their land and are not only doing conservation work but are committed to caring for the land into the future.

Evidence of the potential protection and increase of the natural resource values in the area is illustrated by landowners interested in future conservation work. The table below outlines landowner interest in implementing a conservation practice or enrolling in conservation or agricultural program. Forty-four percent, (31 of 70), of landowners contacted indicated an interest in implementing at least one of the conservation practices or programs listed below.

<u>Conservation Practice or Program</u>	<u>Landowners Interested</u>
Purchase of Development Rights	8
Wetland Restoration	11
Forest Management	17
Riparian Buffers	6
<u>Upland Restoration</u>	<u>5</u>
Total Future Potential Projects	47

Currently, the focus is on building relationships with the landowners. Therefore, they have not been asked to provide acreage totals or make commitments to specific practices. Upon selection of this proposal by the USFWS, the restoration potential of each landowners site will be investigated further to determine the feasibility and scope of each project.

Appendix 5. Crop Damage Report

Crop Damage Report

Introduction:

Conflicts between people and wildlife were a critical issue raised by people in the project area and by members of FACT. It was our task to identify what problems exist in this area, what is currently being done about those problems, and what additional actions could be taken in the future. Our remedies suggested below reflect what is currently available to landowners through government programs as well as what our collaboration may be able to add in addition to these governmental programs. Specific information regarding damage problems that were identified as being important in the project area are listed in the addendum.

Importantly, it is recognized that shortfalls still exist in the way that problems between people and wildlife are solved and that these shortfalls occur at scales that extend beyond what FACT or what landowners can alone control. Specifically, ways need to be found that: 1) allow for all wildlife damage to be compensated for; 2) given that farms are becoming larger, lift caps on total claims; 3) develop mechanisms to deal with damage caused by non-game species; 4) maximize landowner control over solving wildlife damage problems; and 5) balance the deer population goals in the deer management unit of this area with other conservation and agricultural goals for this project. Clearly these shortfalls cannot be solved through this regional process alone but FACT is committed to dealing with damage caused by wildlife on an on-going process.

Goal:

To reduce conflicts between people and wildlife for both current and future wildlife population levels.

Remedies:

1. Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP)

This program addresses many of the needs that landowners have with respect to wildlife damage. This program will be used where appropriate and where it meets specific needs of landowners. This includes:

- a) Providing compensation for damage claims
- b) Providing cost-sharing programs that reduce damage (e.g. constructing fences)
- c) Providing abatement tools (e.g. provision of "cannons")
- d) Providing advice to landowners directly or to the FACT Coordinator (see below)

2. FACT Coordinator (Who will focus primarily on lands within the project area)

Where the WDACP does not wholly or partly meet landowner needs (e.g. public hunting access is not wanted or where damages exceed funding caps) the FACT Coordinator will work with landowners towards accomplishing additional solutions:

- a) Operate managed harvests on private land during the legal hunting seasons (Sept. - Dec.) that are designed to reduce local deer herd populations to levels that produce fewer conflicts with landowners. These managed harvests will be most effective where adjacent landowners cooperate. This would include programs such as earn-a-buck.
- b) Coordinate the linking of people who can use ag tags to remove problem animals with farmers who have the tags and need animals removed. This will be especially true if obtaining ag tags will no longer be tied to allowing public access (this proposal is part of the DEER 2000 process). Note that, under current law, the FACT coordinator can be listed as the contact person instead of the actual landowner for public hunting access requirements. This would reduce harassment of private landowners who participate in WDACP programs that require public access.
- c) Facilitate and coordinate the exchange of crop damage abatement and compensation information between landowners and conservation organizations (both governmental and non-governmental)
- d) If needed for chronic problems with non-game, abatement tools can be purchased through FACT to be used by landowners in the project area for no charge. Other options with non-game wildlife include coordination with trappers to remove problem mammals. Species of concern listed in our area include: beaver and muskrat (for burrowing in dikes), sandhill cranes, raccoons, and blackbirds (crop damage), and possible cougar or bear (livestock disturbance).

3. Wisconsin Waterfowl Association (WWA)

When damage compensation claims exceed the WDACP cap and there is no other means of preventing the damage, the WWA will work with other conservation organizations to obtain funding to provide additional compensation.

4. International Crane Foundation (ICF)

ICF has been exploring solutions to prevent damage that cranes cause in crops. This research will continue and results will be provided to landowners and the FACT coordinator as soon as they become available. ICF will obtain funding for this continued research.

Appendix 8. Concept Paper

FARMING AND CONSERVATION TOGETHER
- FACT -
CONCEPT PAPER

INTRODUCTION

Due to local opposition, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service recommended that landowners and other concerned parties develop an alternative to its proposed Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge. In response, a committee formed comprised of landowners, various leaders of local governments and conservation organizations. Every month since then, the group has been meeting every two weeks to develop a viable alternative that would be suitable to landowners who oppose the refuge, as well as people interested in the public benefits of both conservation and agriculture.

The following is a working draft of this committee's vision, goals, and objectives. We feel if the items included in this concept paper are implemented, this initiative could serve as an important model for how locally generated ideas can provide alternative approaches to protect community and natural resource values as well as demonstrate the connections between agriculture, wildlife populations and healthy environments.

We present this working draft to local levels of government and the USFWS for review. Upon being selected as the preferred alternative of the Environmental Assessment by USFWS, our next steps will be the following: 1) implement projects to further demonstrate our objectives 2) continue seeking comments from the public, local landowners and governments on our progress 3) establish the long-term framework of the FACT committee. It is imperative to have the assistance of the FACT Coordinator for this committee to be successful. In this regard, we ask the USFWS to continue funding of the FACT Coordinator position and consider project proposals as submitted.

VISION

To establish a program that creates a voluntary framework of community based options and coordination to enhance a long-term balance of conservation and agriculture.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The FACT Committee, supported by a fulltime Coordinator, will serve as a resource for local landowners as well as a mechanism to accomplish the following goals and objectives.

1) Preserve local leadership through an initiative designed to accomplish FACT vision as an alternative to the proposed USFWS Wildlife Refuge

- A. Establish and maintain a locally based oversight committee of landowners, elected officials, conservation organizations, and government representatives.

- B. Secure funding for FACT Coordinator to implement committee's vision and work with landowners to restore and maintain the long-term balance of conservation and agriculture.
- C. Convince USFWS to include and select FACT Committee's recommendation as the preferred alternative in the Environmental Assessment of the proposed Aldo Leopold National Wildlife Refuge.
- D. Secure official standing for committee from Wisconsin State Legislature.

2) Expand voluntary conservation and agriculture opportunities for landowners

- A. Provide landowners with technical assistance on implementing wildlife and agricultural conservation practices such as: grassland & wetland restoration, forest management, riparian buffer strips, conservation tillage, etc..
- B. Facilitate the enrollment of interested landowners into government and private conservation programs.
- C. Obtain Special Project Status from USDA-NRCS for the Wetland Reserve Program for the Lower Baraboo River Area (see attached map)
- D. Obtain Conservation Priority Area designation for landowner enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program for the Lower Baraboo River Area
- E. Secure funds for the Farmland Protection Program (purchase of development rights funds).
- F. Gain inclusion for project area into the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program from USDA & WDATCP.
- G. Secure availability and funding for USFWS Waterfowl Production Area in the project area.
- H. Secure increased funding for project area from USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.
- I. Generate financial and technical assistance from non-governmental organizations to supplement, compliment and where necessary replace the need of governmental programs, i.e. crop damage funds, cost sharing restoration, etc.
- J. Identify nontraditional sources of income for landowners for agricultural or conservation practices such as: lease hunting, native seed production, etc.

3) Provide educational and research opportunities for the community regarding the relationship of conservation and agriculture

- A. Implement agricultural and wildlife restoration demonstration projects in the project area to serve as: school projects, living classrooms, field tour sites, etc.
- B. Provide access for local schools, government agencies, or conservation groups to research the relationship between conservation and agriculture such as: university research, crane crop damage research, etc.
- C. Secure joint funding and participation from USDA and DOI to accomplish this goal

4) Reduce conflicts between people and wildlife for both current and future wildlife population levels

- A. Investigate outstanding issues of cooperation and conflict between conservation and agriculture, i.e. crop damage due to wildlife, conservation tillage, etc.

- B. The Coordinator can assist landowners in managing public hunting requirements of current damage and forestry programs, relieving landowners from having to deal directly with hunters
- C. The Coordinator can assist landowners not participating in government programs but interested in managing wildlife populations, to reduce conflicts between wildlife and agriculture

5) Protect Private Property Rights

- A. Utilize FACT Committee as a vehicle to pursue landowners' needs and interests related to conservation and agriculture
- B. Ensure that highest and best use is used as the mechanism for appraising property values for land purchases as standard procedure for any public land purchases

FACT Committee

The names listed below constitute the members of the committee with their affiliation. These members and their commitment to the FACT vision are willing and interested in serving on the committee into the future. We recognize there are numerous others who have participated and contributed to the development of the FACT alternative. The committee appreciates their past involvement and request that they continue to provide the committee with their valuable insight and perspective.

Voting Members

- 2 - Township Representatives
Caledonia - Greg Goetz Fairfield - Bill Turner
- 2 - County Board Representatives
Columbia - Bob Hamele Sauk - William Schreiber
- 4 - Local Landowners
Richard Gumz, Duane Hohl, Steve Luther, Dr. Russell C. Smith
- 3 - Private Conservation Organizations
Aldo Leopold Foundation - Buddy Huffaker
International Crane Foundation - Jeb Barzen
Wisconsin Waterfowl Association - Jeff Nania

Non-voting Members

- 1 - DOI; US Fish & Wildlife Service - Jim Ruwaldt
- 1 - USDA; Natural Resource Conservation Service - Tom Thrall
- 2 - WI Department of Natural Resources - Andy Morton & Ted Pyrek
- 1 - Sauk County Land Conservation Department - Joe Van Berkel
- 1 - Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection - Garrett Huffman & Jennifer Heaton

Support Staff

- FACT Coordinator - Mike Jones