

# Local farmers named State Conservation Farmers of Year



KEVIN AND CAROLYN PARR, of Harmony Hills Farm in rural Viroqua, have been named Wisconsin Conservation Farmers of the Year by the Wisconsin Land+Water Association. Vernon County Conservationist Ben Wojahn (left) was on hand to honor the Parrs (middle), along with executive director Matt Krueger (right) at the state convention recently in Stevens Point.

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WISCONSIN - The Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association (WI Land+Water) hosted its 67th Annual Conference this past March 4-6 at the KI Convention Center in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The conference brought together over 450 conservation professionals from various organizations across the state, including county Land Conservation Committee (LCC) members and Land Conservation Department (LCD) staff, state and federal agency staff, and both nonprofit and industry representatives.

Over the three days, attendees had the opportunity to attend professional improvement breakout sessions, a silent auction, and multiple networking opportunities. Additionally, association members took part in Area Association meetings, the Youth Education Committee's Poster and Speaking Contest, and the annual business meeting. The

association also awarded outstanding staff, supervisor, and citizens that have made profound contributions to conservation in Wisconsin.

“Our conference brought together the boots-on-the-ground conservation professionals and leaders for an inspiring three days to share our work, connect with other passionate conservationists, and honor those who go above-and-beyond to affect lasting environmental change across Wisconsin,” said Matt Krueger, WI Land+Water Executive Director. “From updates of well testing programs and chronic wasting disease to celebrating women in conservation and generational workforce solutions, our breakout sessions provided our attendees with an incredible array of professional development opportunities. It was especially empowering to see how many members were actively engaged in statewide policy discussions regarding clean water this past year as well. A big thank you to the conference’s sponsors, speakers, presenters, exhibitors, volunteers and our staff for making this conference one of our best yet.”

The conference was honored to welcome Anne Sayers, Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, as the keynote speaker. With two decades of leadership with The Nature Conservancy, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, and the International Crane Foundation, Deputy Secretary Sayers highlighted her passion for the environment and how intertwined conservation is with Wisconsin’s economy and identity.

There were 40 conservation presentations throughout the eight breakout sessions, with a wide variety of topics. Many sessions offered Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) and Professional Development Hours (PDHs) for technical staff to maintain their job certifications and licenses, as well as obtain timely knowledge of best management practices in their fields.

Following the Wednesday and Thursday breakout sessions were social hours where attendees had the opportunity to talk with exhibitors, bid on silent auction items, and vote on the Youth Education poster contest. Social hours were sponsored by Land Nav and Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards.

WI Land+Water recognized individuals and families that have made extraordinary contributions in conservation across the state, during a lively Conservation Awards Banquet ceremony. Recipients of the 2020 Conservation Awards are:

- Kevin and Carolyn Parr of Harmony Hills Farm – Conservation Farm Family of the Year



KATRINA SHANKLAND, Wisconsin State Representative from the 71st Assembly District in Stevens Point, was named as a 'Friend of Conservation,' by Wisconsin Land+Water at their annual awards ceremony. Shankland, along with Representative Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville) chaired the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality.

- Representative Katrina Shankland – Friend of Conservation
- Seth Ebel – Outstanding Conservation Employee, Engineer
- Eric Fehlhaber – Outstanding Conservation Employee, County Conservationist
- Zach Wilson – Brad Matson Youth Education Award

The Parr Family will host the 2020 Conservation Observance Day on their farm in Vernon County. The celebration this summer will include tours and presentations on their farm.

The Youth Education Committee hosted the 63rd Annual Conservation Awareness Poster and Speaking Contest during the conference. During the speaking contest, students deliver topical speeches of their choice, and the winners perform their speeches during the opening luncheon. For the poster contest, student artwork is on display and voted on by our membership during the conference. Winners advance to the national competition.

WI Land+Water concluded the conference with the association's annual business meeting, where counties voted on two resolutions and one floor resolution. The approved resolutions by our association can be found [here](#).

The conference would not have been possible without the incredible support from our sponsors, exhibitors, and partners. Special thanks to our:

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