



Collaboration, and Networking among High Quality Water Lakes in Southeastern Wisconsin, USA

High Quality Waters Workshop

May 3rd, 2025

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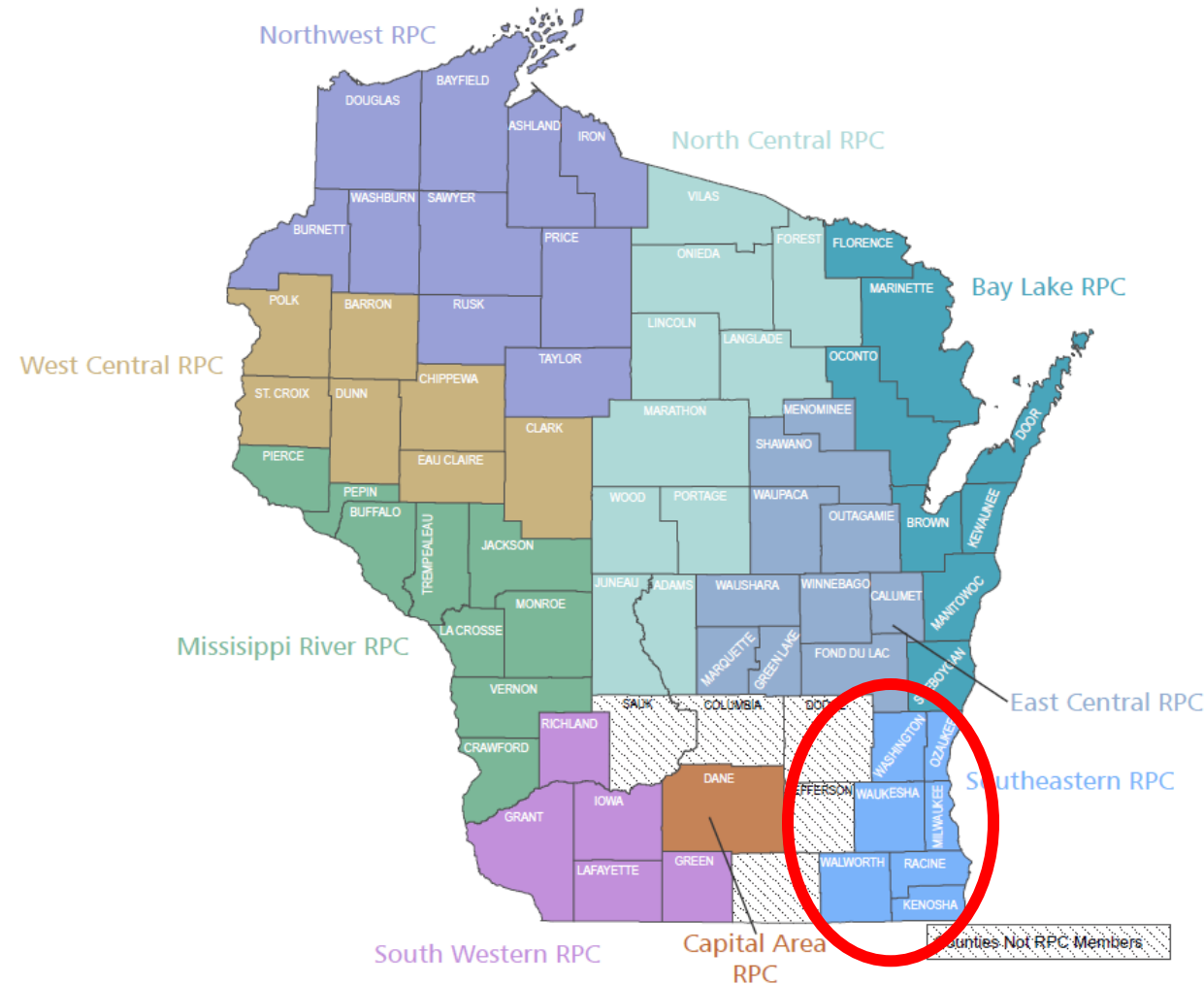
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The Commission is a regional planning organization:

- Tasked with developing lake and watershed management plans in the most densely populated area of Wisconsin
- One of nine such commissions within Wisconsin
- Established in 1960 – the Commission pre-dates the Clean Water Act (1972)

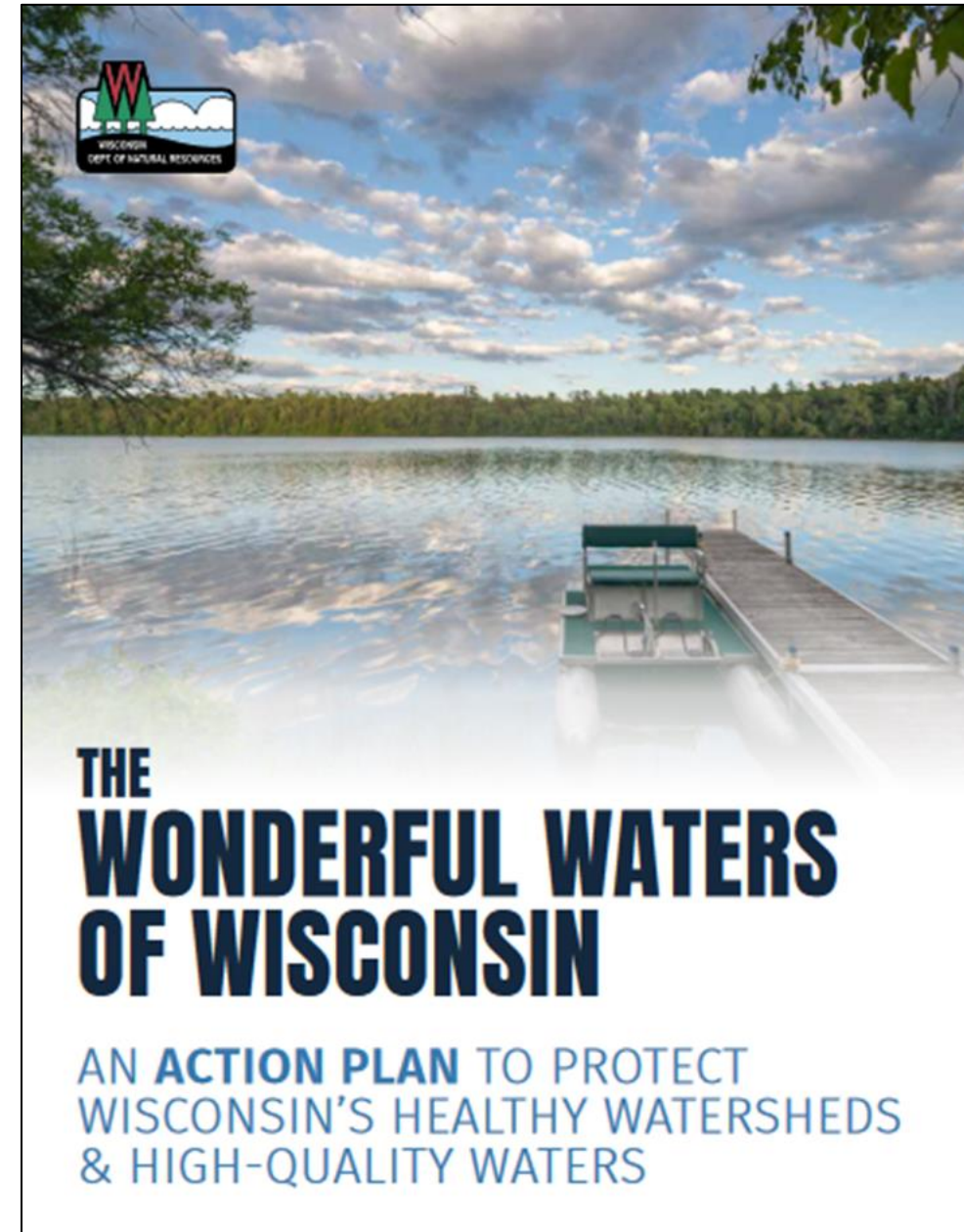
Three basic functions:

- Intergovernmental Coordination
- Inventory
- Plan Preparation

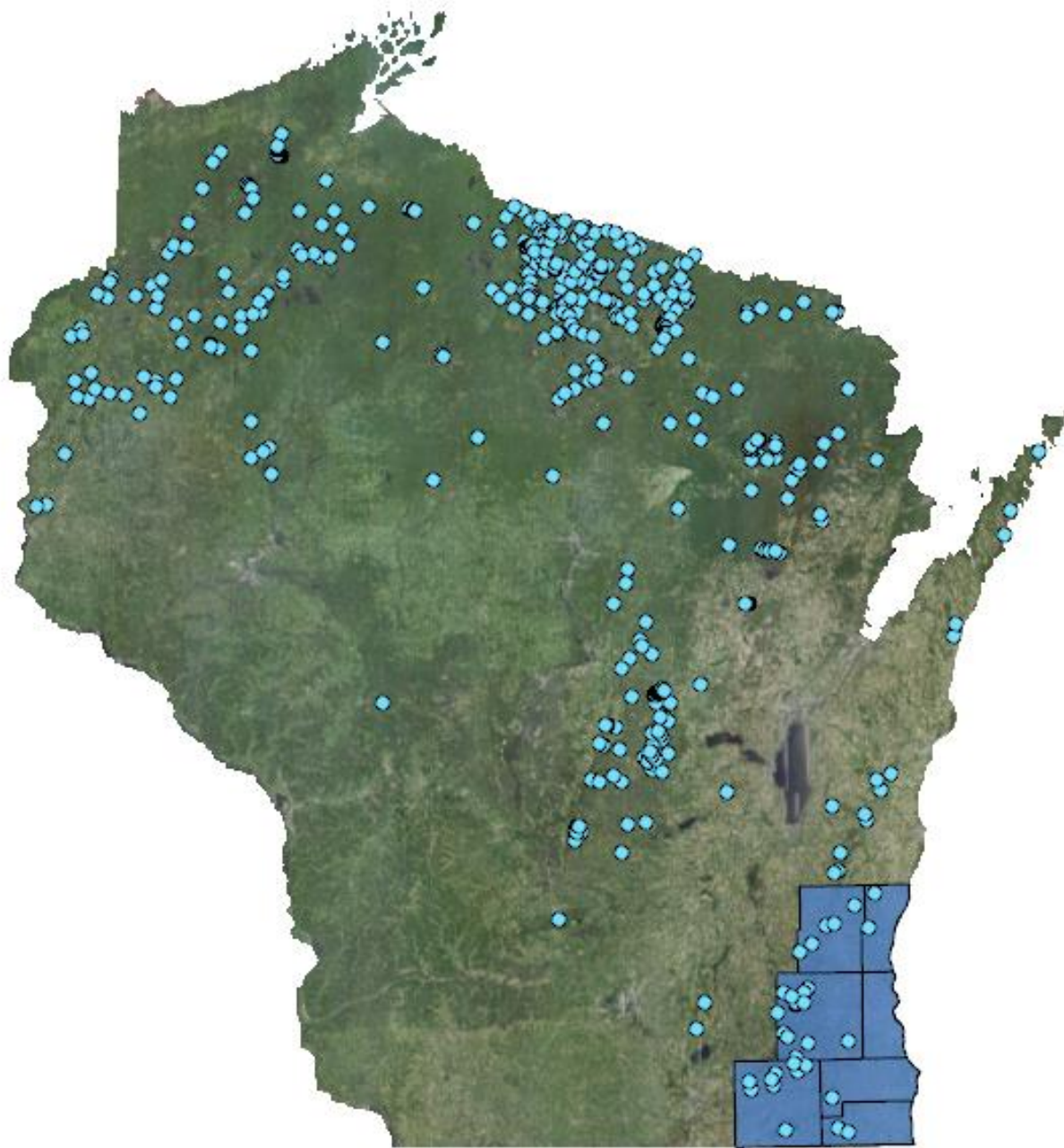


What is a “High Quality Water”?

- Background
 - Attention and funding often geared toward restoring impaired waters
 - Interest in identifying and protecting high-quality waters before they become degraded
- Objective
 - Identify the “healthiest” waterbodies in Wisconsin using the best known and available scientifically defensible datasets to enable water resource protection activities
- A “high-quality water” must meet two of the following attributes
 - Unique or rare resource
 - Attainment of state water quality standards
 - “Good” or “Excellent” biotic integrity

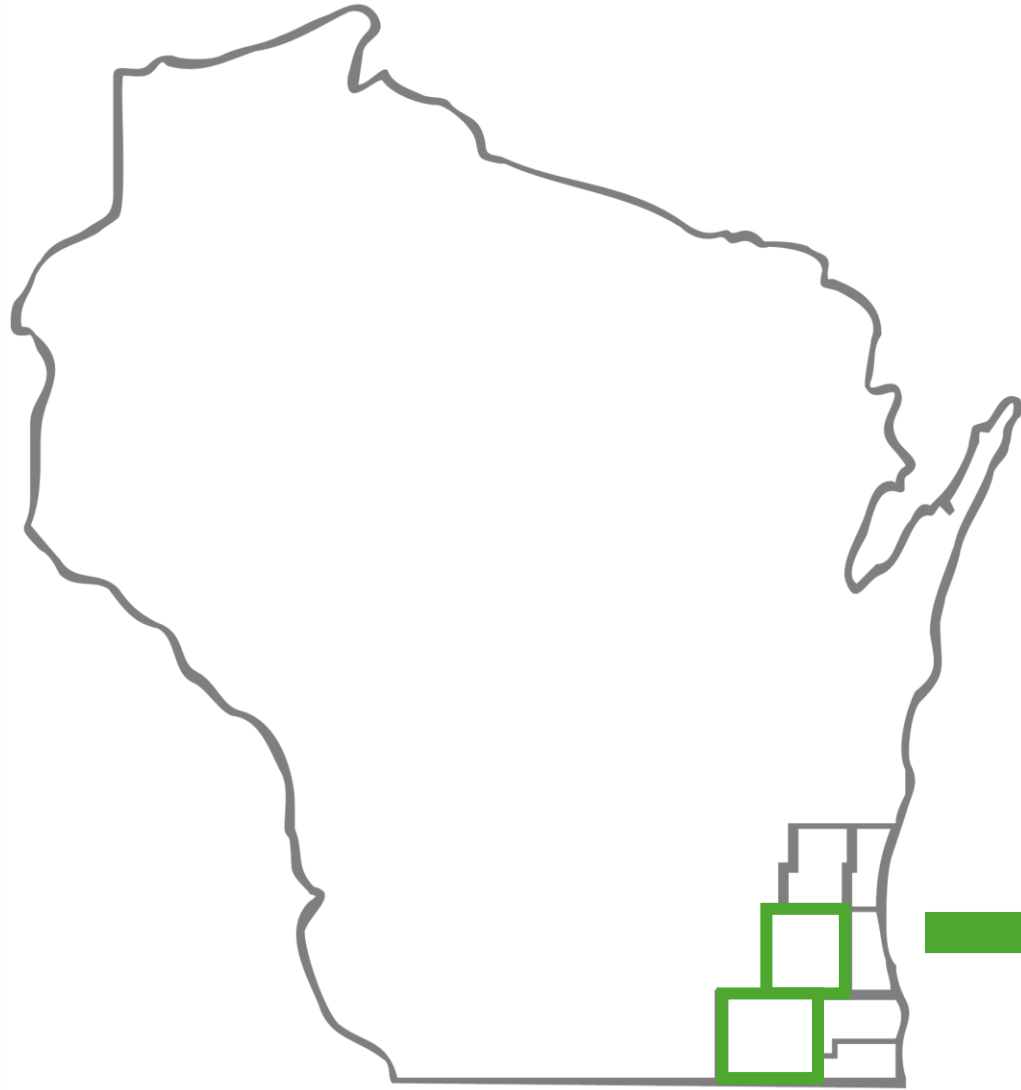


Location & Lakes

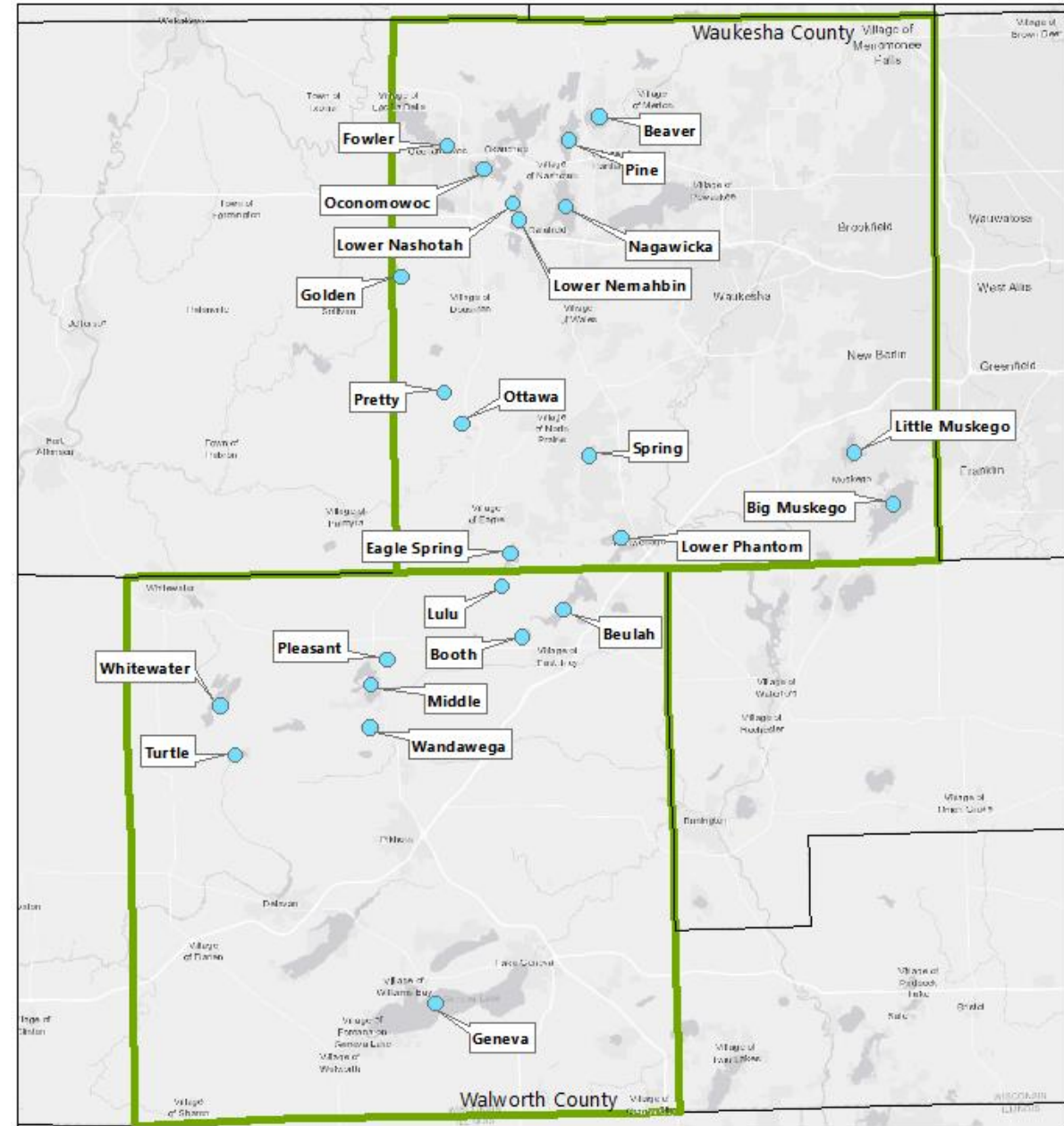


- 418 high quality lakes in Wisconsin
- 32 in the Commission's region
 - 7.65%

Location & Lakes



Lakes Designated as a High Quality Waters in Waukesha and Walworth Counties



Project Goals

- Collect information about WDNR-identified high-quality lakes in Walworth and Waukesha Counties and the active stakeholder organization affiliated with these lakes
- Educate stakeholders on how to collect information about lake conditions and management
- Facilitate learning and communication between stakeholder organizations through a practice-based workshop
- Publish a best management practice toolkit





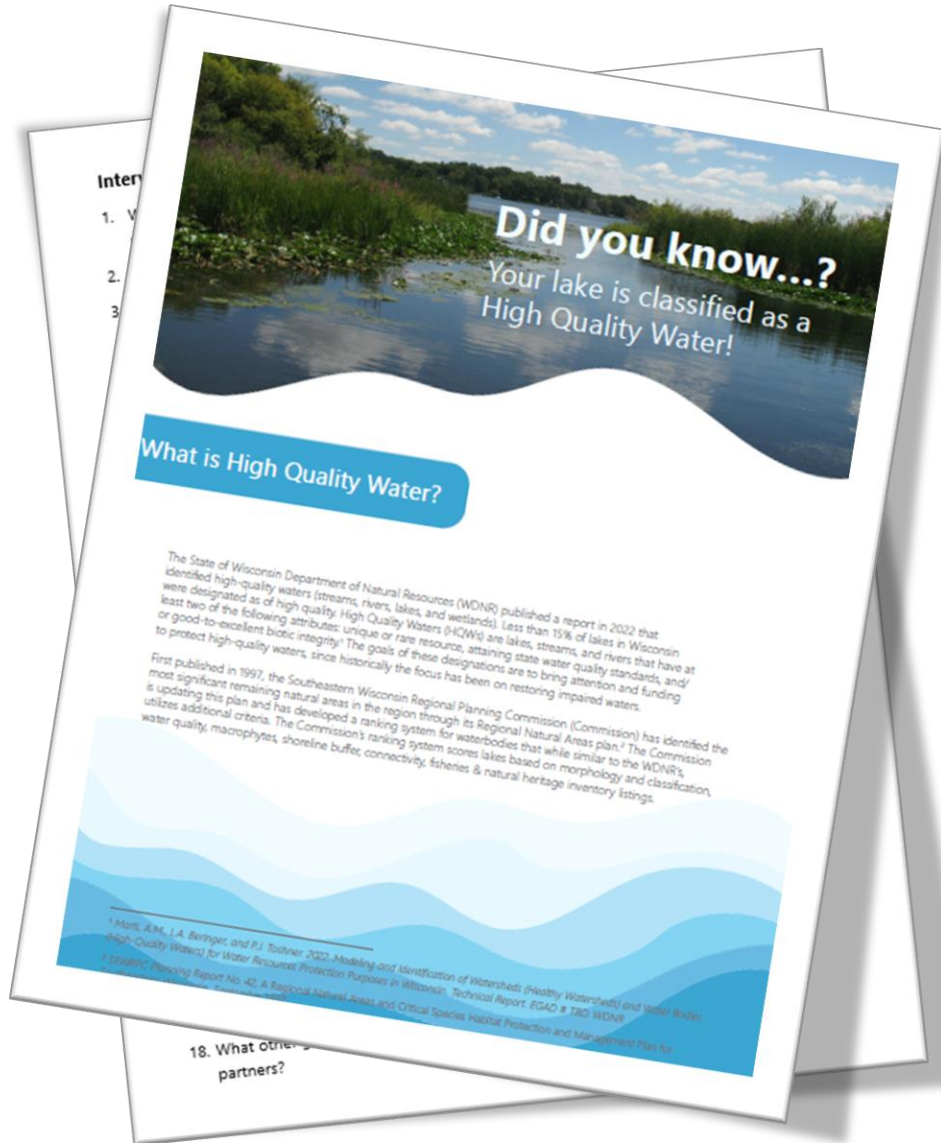
Project Timeline

- **2023** – Received confirmation of grant award for \$20,000
- **2024** – reached out to stakeholders on high-quality lakes to discuss lake conditions and current management practices and goals
- **May 3, 2025** – Day-long workshop hosted by the Commission and partners
- **Summer 2025** – publication of toolkit and resources



Interviews

- Reached out to nearly 50 organizations
- Wide variety of types
 - Districts, Associations, Conservancies, Governments, etc
- 18 questions asked
- Interviews took place primarily Spring 2024
- Virtual, in-person, or filled out questionnaire



Interviews



Interview Overview



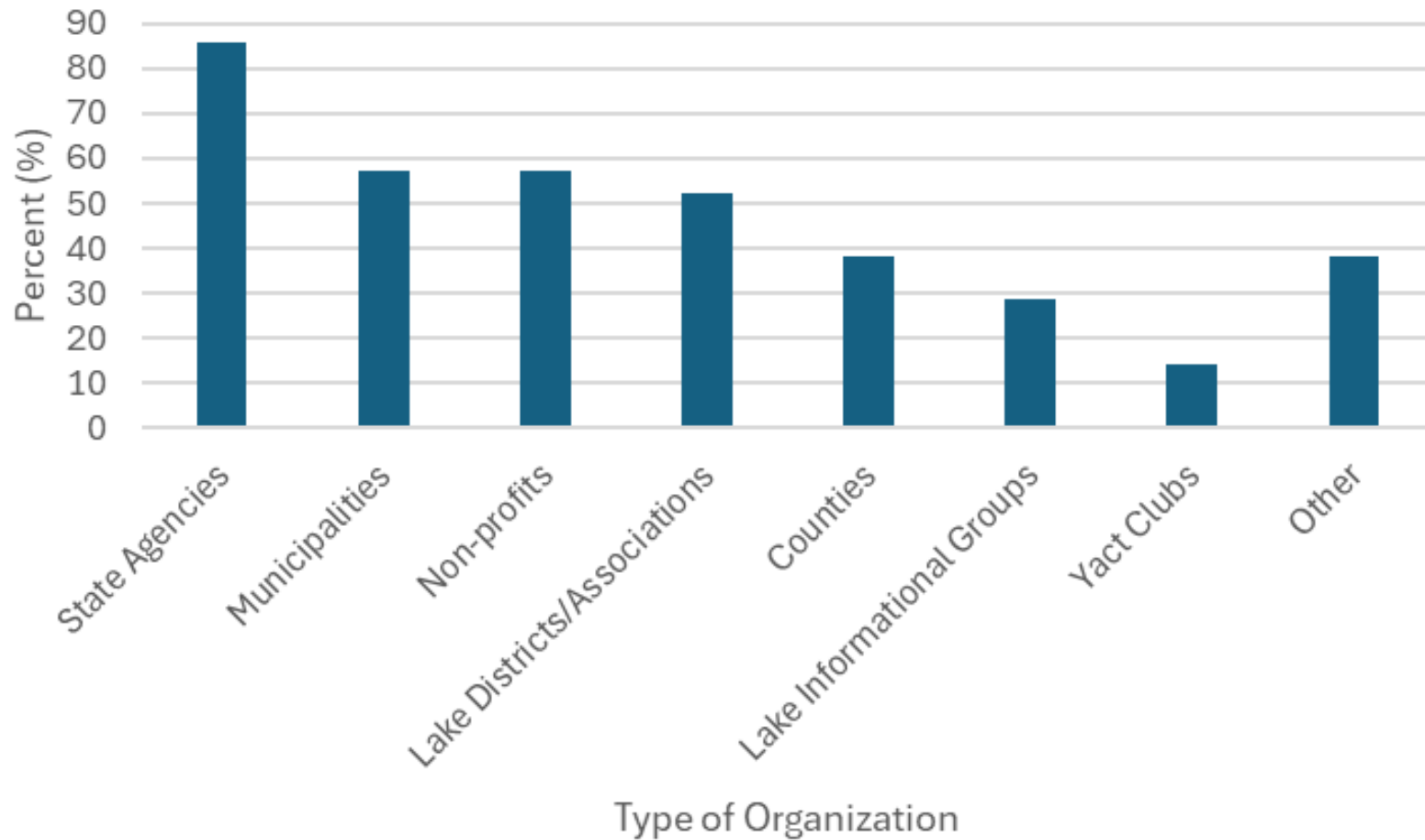
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- 23 organizations interviewed
- 19 lakes represented
- Several organizations manage multiple lakes
 - Ex: Counties, municipalities, WDNR



Current Collaboration



- Vast majority of the interviewed management organizations work with other organizations
 - Some lakes have multiple organizations dedicated to the lake
 - Ex: Geneva Lake – GLC, GLA, GLEA



Mission Statements and Goals



Goal Topics

Water Quality

Maintenance of Native Biota

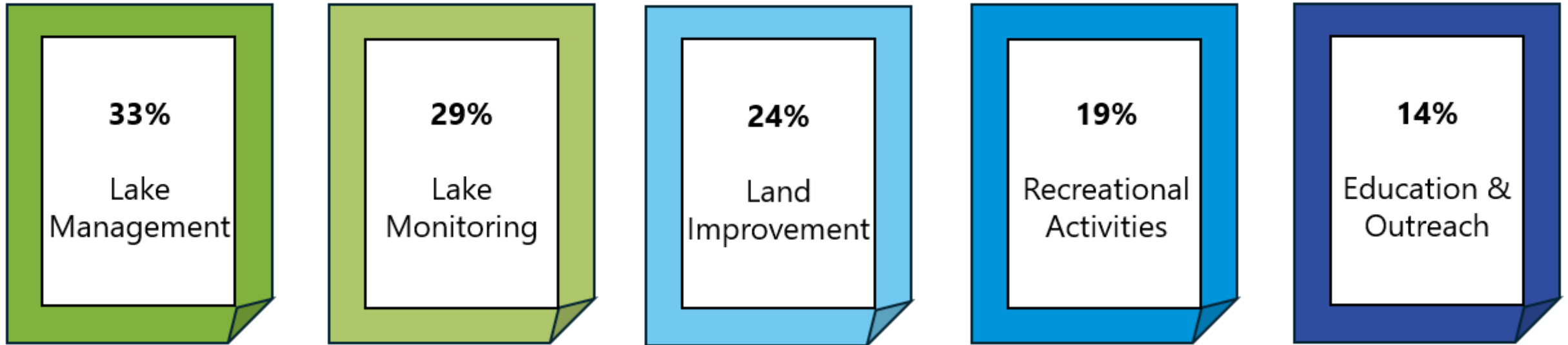
Invasive Species Control

Land Issues

Safe Recreational usage



Sponsored Activities



Lake Monitoring

- Citizen Lake Monitoring Network = **62%**
- Clean Boats, Clean Waters = **52%**
- Self-directed monitoring = **48%**
- Wave Action Volunteers = **10%**

**62% of groups do multiple
forms of monitoring!**

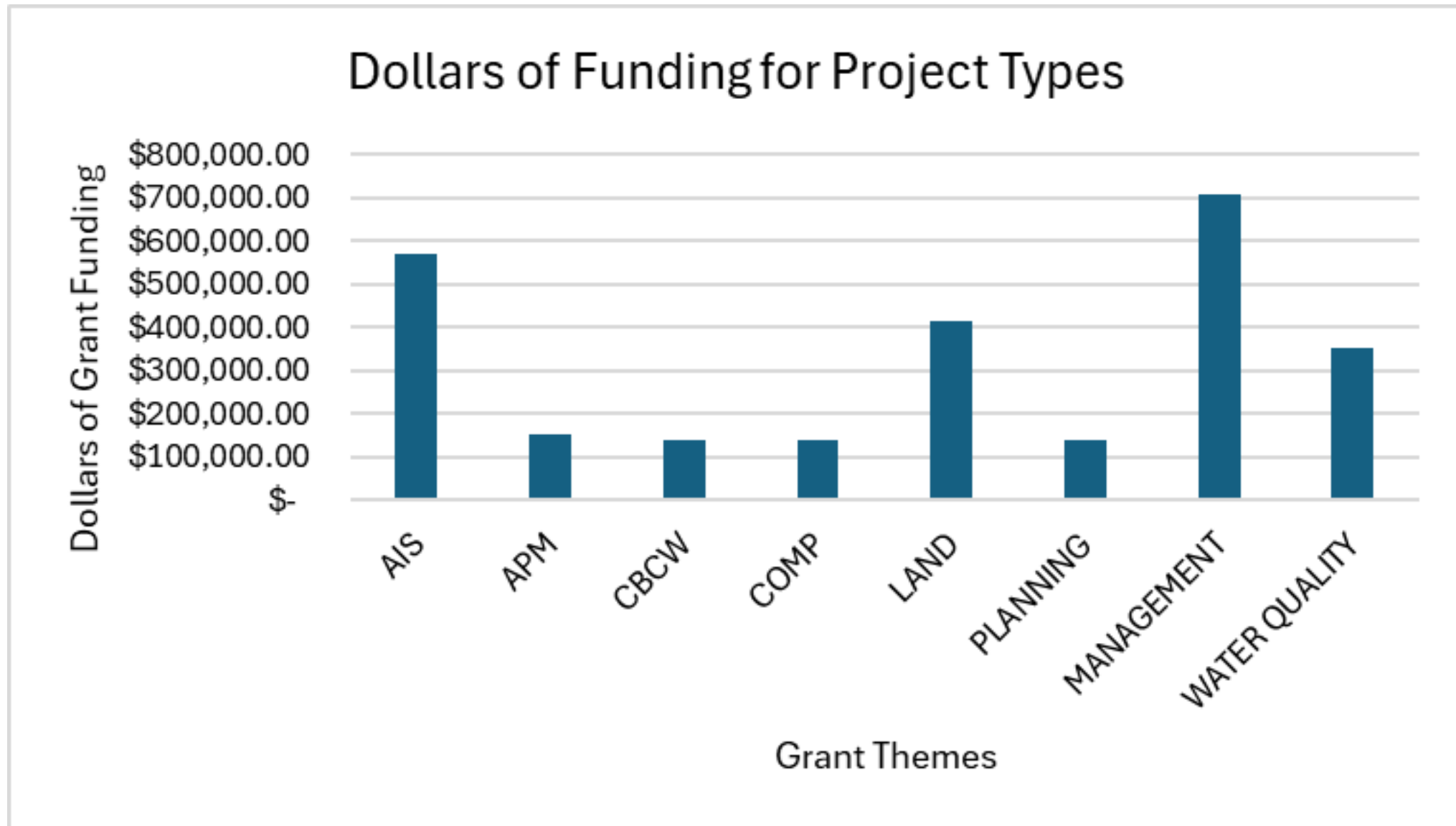


Lake Management Plans

- Age of Plans
 - Plans 0-5 years old: 26%
 - Plans 6-10 years old: 16%
 - Plans 11-15 years old: 16%
 - Plans >16 years old: 21%
- No management plan: 21%
- Purpose of plans:
 - provide summary/inventory of lake data and characteristics
 - Provide recommendations for science-based lake management



WDNR Surface Water Grants



WDNR Surface Water Grants

80% of interviewed
groups have receive
some kind of grant from
the WDNR Surface Water
Grant program



Equates to over \$2.6
million over the last 33
years



Barriers to Management

- Limited funds
- Agreement/Coordination
- Ordinance Enforcement
- Education and Outreach
- Technical Expertise available





Threats to High Quality Waters

- Increased developments, thus increased lake usage
- Invasive species
- Pollution
- Watershed management (or lack thereof)
- Climate change



In the face of threats... How are they doing it?

- Coordination and communication
- Helpful people
- Ordinances and regulations
- Erosion control practices
- Being a part of larger lake groups





Workshop

- May 3rd, 2025
- RSVP form sent out in early February
- Guest presenters
- Built-in networking time
- Interview results will guide topics



Toolkit

- Sections dedicated to lake types
- Addresses “threats” to high-quality waters
- Addresses barriers to adequately managing lakes
- “Phonebook” of lake group contacts
- Will be publicly available on Commission website
- Will be shared with lake groups, not just high-quality waters

Thank you! Any questions?

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