

April 28, 2016

## Message from WisDOT Secretary Mark Gottlieb

Earth Day was April 22, but the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) does its part to "be green" year-round. Just as we strive to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, we also work diligently to be good stewards of natural resources. Whether this involves recycling pavements or incorporating waste materials into pavement mixes, the goal is to identify alternatives that save money and natural resources without compromising the quality of the end product. We very much appreciate the ongoing cooperation we receive from our many private sector contractors who also understand that recycling and re-use is fiscally wise and socially responsible.

This edition of the WisDOT Connector looks at some of the environmental initiatives WisDOT oversees in conjunction with our stakeholders.

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## Recycling pavements

Each year, WisDOT incorporates over 1.5 million tons of recycled materials into highway and bridge improvement projects. Along with conserving natural resources, preserving landfill space and cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions, these recycling efforts reduce the need for virgin materials and saved an estimated \$14.3 million over the last state fiscal year.



Virtually all old pavements are recycled in some way. Concrete is crushed and re-used as highway shoulder material or as base course under a roadway. Asphalt pavements can be reheated and re-used as part of new pavement. Steel from bridge and pavement demolition is recycled. In addition, WisDOT specifications allow for certain waste materials to be used in pavement mixes including foundry sand and asphaltic shingles (a typical house shingle is about 25 percent asphalt). Also, fly

ash, a by-product of coal-fired power plants, can be used to replace a certain amount of cement in making concrete.

WisDOT's MAPSS performance improvement program tracks progress on established goals in the areas of Mobility, Accountability, Preservation, Safety and Service including a [specific measure](#) on the amount of recycled materials used in transportation projects. The MAPSS' goal calls for at least 10 percent of virgin materials for bridge and highway projects to be replaced with recycled materials. In 2015, the percent of recycled materials was nearly 15 percent.

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## Adopt-a-Highway

Each year, Wisconsin's 2,900 Adopt-a-Highway groups collect some 210 tons of trash and recyclables along state roadways. By helping keep roadsides looking clean and green, these community volunteers save taxpayers' money and boost the tourism industry.



Of the 11,800 miles of state highway in Wisconsin, about 8,600 miles or about 72 percent are adopted, meaning there's still plenty of room for more volunteers. Workers are asked to clean-up their assigned two-mile state highway segment at least three times per year. WisDOT furnishes safety vests, temporary highway worker signs, a safety training video, trash bags, and two permanent signs identifying the group. Collected trash and recyclables are placed along roadways and picked up by county highway workers.

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## Mitigating wetland and wildlife impacts

Transportation improvement projects in Wisconsin undergo careful environmental evaluation including efforts to avoid impacts on wetlands, wildlife and other natural resources. When impacts to a wetland are unavoidable, WisDOT works cooperatively with other federal and state agencies to offset any losses. A wetland mitigation bank has been established to track these efforts. Over the last 23 years (since 1993), for every acre of wetland lost to a WisDOT project, about 1.4 acres (over 5,400 acres) have been created.

Sometimes, an environmental review indicates possible impacts to a protected wildlife species. One animal found in Wisconsin and recently added to the federal threatened species list is the northern long-eared bat. If such a species is found on or near a transportation project, options would include re-scheduling construction work to a time of year when the animal is not present, providing alternate habitat adjacent to a project, or in some cases-using exclusion techniques like netting to keep protected species away from an improvement project.

In some cases, wildlife decide to make their home on construction equipment. Last summer, WisDOT learned a pair of osprey were building a nest atop a construction crane being used as part of a maintenance project on WIS 29 in Marathon County.

To provide a more suitable nesting location, a cooperative effort got underway involving the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, WisDOT, the construction contractor, local paper company and utility firm, along with the village of Rothschild. An artificial nesting platform was erected along the Wisconsin River and osprey have recently been seen using it.



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## Who's who at WisDOT

Alyssa Barrette, WisDOT Bureau of Technical Services

As WisDOT's Ecologist and Wetlands Biologist, Alyssa Barrette's job involves preserving natural resources and protecting wildlife in accordance with state and federal rules-and at the same time-enhancing public safety and quality of life.

A northeast Wisconsin native and graduate of De Pere West High School, Barrette holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Science from UW Green Bay. During her junior year in college, an internship at WisDOT's NE Region office in



Green Bay led to her current position working out of WisDOT's Central Office in Madison. Barrette works closely with environmental coordinators in WisDOT's regional offices to ensure transportation projects conform to applicable state and federal laws. The National Environmental Policy Act requires careful analysis of transportation projects including potential impacts to wetlands and endangered species. This is where Barrette's expertise comes into play. Some current initiatives include:

- Developing a management strategy to plant native species in highway right-of-way along portions of the I-39/90 corridor between Madison and Illinois-efforts that will support endangered "pollinators" such as honey bees and monarch butterflies. The goal is a management plan and Interstate corridor that is aesthetically-pleasing, wildlife-friendly, and low maintenance.
- In cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, work will be completed this year to construct a culvert-like "turtle tunnel" along WIS 66 near Stevens Point. The DNR identified the area as home to the threatened wood turtle and a "high mortality" turtle crossing. Fencing on both sides of the highway will guide turtles to their safe passage under the road. But Barrette says it's not just about protecting turtles. "Well-intentioned motorists will often stop along the highway to lend a helping hand, but that puts their lives in danger. So really, it's as much about protecting people as it is wildlife."

Barrette says her appreciation for the outdoors stems from watching her brothers' activities in Boy Scouts along with family camping trips in northern Wisconsin. Today, Barrette continues to enjoy hiking, kayaking and camping-activities where she can keep a watchful eye on Wisconsin's wildlife and natural resources.



The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's MAPSS Performance Improvement Program reviews performance measures for five key goal areas that guide us in achieving our mission - mobility, accountability, preservation, safety and service. To check out the latest online reports, simply click on the MAPSS logo.

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