

Greetings!

Welcome to the third edition of **The Northern Connection**, quarterly e-news from the Northern Region Office, Wisconsin Department of Administration. The format is short bits of information, with links to details for those who want to learn more. After August 1st, you will receive a short email survey asking for feedback & suggestions to make the fourth edition (slated for mid-October) better. Please feel free to share specific information, or this entire e-news, with your colleagues & those you serve.

The Northern Connection

Volume 1, #3

July, 2014

News You Can Use from the DNR

At the bottom of the WI DNR website, you can find the envelop symbol and get transported to a new world of updates available on a variety of subjects. E-newsletter updates keep the public informed on subjects they care about. Examples include the DNR Weekly News, the latest information on Wisconsin's Walleye Initiative, air quality, forestry, invasive species and hunting topics. There's something for everyone, and you manage the service simply through the use of your email address. Check it out at www.dnr.wi.gov

Be In-the-Know! E-Newsletters Available from Many Other State Agencies

Use the links below to check out sample publications & get on the list.

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) – WEDC's newsletters provides the latest information on resources that will help your business, community and clients grow, startup or expand/relocate in Wisconsin.

Subscribe at: <http://inwisconsin.com/subscribe/>

Department of Workforce Development (DWD) – "Workforce Watch" focuses on activities to attract & retain companies, and to facilitate sustainable employment for Wisconsin workers.

See past issues at: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/workforcewatch/archives.htm>

Subscribe at: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/workforcewatch/subscribe.htm>

Department of Transportation (DOT) – "The Connector" targets community stakeholders with information on transportation safety, department initiatives and links to resources.

To subscribe send an email to dotexecofficeofpublicaffairs@dot.wi.gov

Attention County, Town, Village and City Leaders!

Here's a variety of news for you.

Funds for planting trees

If your city, village, town, county or tribe is looking for tree planting funds, American Transmission Company's (ATC) *Grow Smart Tree Planting Program* may be just what you're looking for! Awards range from \$100 to \$5,000. Applications will be accepted through September 30, 2014. Go to <http://www.atcllc.com/learning-center/trees-and-vegetation/grow-smart/> and read the details under the heading "Community planting program."

Broadband News & Resources

The UWEX [Broadband & E-Commerce Education Center](#) has published a new **collection of broadband laws and policies** which can be helpful to communities wanting to make more informed decisions regarding their own policies, agreements, ordinances, and plans. These samples assist with understanding the issues that have been considered by others, and can be used as a starting point for local discussions. You can find the online and downloadable PDF version here: [Collected Broadband Regulations](#)

Communities less than 1500 – This one's for you!

Small Town Downtown Forums will be held in Grantsburg and Mellen in September. Small towns have unique issues and needs that are often very different from those of larger communities. Here's an opportunity to learn from each other and development experts. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is partnering with the Wisconsin Downtown Action Council and others on the forums. Learn more at http://events.inwisconsin.com/EventDirectorySearch/community_development

Many northern Wisconsin areas do not have an appointed humane officer, but it's in your best interest to consider appointing one The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection will offer its annual humane officer training course September 22-26, 2014 in Madison. This 40-hour course teaches a special set of skills and a body of law that applies only to animal cases. The training makes the job of investigating these cases easier to handle and leads to a more enforceable case against the offender. The curriculum covers a wide range of topics, and is conducted by veterinarians, attorneys and law enforcement officers with years of experience in investigating animal cases. Hands-on training at the University of Wisconsin-Madison barns is another highly rated feature of the class. You can also get the details and download a registration form on the DATCP website: <http://datcp.wisconsin.gov>, under the "Animals" pull-down menu.

Chambers of Commerce & Economic Development Corporations – Help Spread the Word!

Please consider sharing the following three items with your members.

State Veterans Employment Grants Now Available!

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) are proud to offer the Veteran Employment Grant Program to encourage Wisconsin employers to hire eligible veterans. **Employers can receive a state grant of up to \$10,000 over four years when they hire a veteran who is eligible to participate.** More details about the program and other hiring incentives for businesses in the area are available [online](#) or by contacting your closest [Local Veterans' Employment Representative \(LVER\)](#).

Does your business have adequate broadband speed?

State broadband planners are finding that numerous rural businesses/business parks do not have access to the bandwidth to successfully compete in today's economy. Please help with an effort to collect data as a first step in meeting this critical need! The Public Service Commission (PSC) recently announced the launch of the LinkWISCONSIN **Bandwidth Assessment Tool (BAT)**. By completing a simple assessment, the BAT provides residents and businesses with a report estimating how much bandwidth is required for doing the daily necessities they want or need to do online. This data is aggregated by the PSC and will be used to identify needs and find solutions. Learn more by watching a two minute video at: <http://www.linkwisconsin.org/lwi/bat.htm>

WHEDA awarded \$50M in New Market Tax Credits

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) is the recipient of \$50 million in New Markets Tax Credits (NMTCs) by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The tax credits are a **resource to help fuel job creation and economic development** efforts by promoting equity investment in low-income rural and urban communities. To be eligible, businesses must be located in census tracts that qualify due to economic distress. Past credit recipients have included manufacturers, food processors, renewable energy facilities, cheese plants, small technology firms, commercial real estate developments, retail stores, hotels, and health care facilities. Check it out at: <http://www.wheda.com/root/WhedaProducts/NewMarketsTaxCredits/Dynamic.aspx?id=813>

Department of Transportation MAPSS Performance Improvement Program Tracks Results

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's **MAPSS** Performance Improvement Program focuses on five core goal areas—Mobility, Accountability, Preservation, Safety, and Service—that serve as the strategic compass for the agency. Performance measures provide a valuable tool to keep Wisconsin residents and businesses informed about the state of the transportation network, while providing ongoing accountability and transparency through regular reporting of results.

The latest [MAPSS Performance Improvement Report](#) and interactive web visualizations demonstrate favorable trends in the areas of Safety and Service. For example:

- [Traffic fatalities](#) –The state has experienced a dramatic reduction in traffic fatalities on its roads in recent years, but each fatality is a tragic loss of life. In 2013, there were 528 traffic fatalities in Wisconsin, which is the lowest annual fatality total since 1944. This measure tracks fatalities by county.
- [DMV driver license road test scheduling](#) – Customers scheduling a first-time driver skills test expect to find adequate appointment slots available at their preferred location. This measure ensures there are adequate tests to meet 90 percent of the estimated demand, and tracks performance by region.

For more information, please visit the [MAPSS internet page](#)

Wisconsin Fast Forward Addresses Need for Skilled Workers

The Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) program created worker training grants and other investments to prepare workers for jobs available today and in the years to come. The **worker training grants** deliver flexible, demand-driven training to companies that identify a specific workforce need. Companies can partner with other firms as well as workforce development boards, economic development organizations, technical colleges, and others. Recent grant recipients in Northern Wisconsin include:

- College of Menominee Nation (Health Care), \$208,750 and (Construction), \$29,917
- Veriha Trucking, Inc., \$227,473
- North Central Workforce Development Board, \$191,935
- Pro Products, Inc., \$21,987
- Superior Council of the Arts, \$15,400

For more information, see <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/wff/default.htm>

Recent WFF Blueprint for Prosperity grants are supporting **dual-enrollment opportunities for high school seniors**. Grant recipients in northern Wisconsin included Northcentral Technical College (\$149,641) and Oneida County Economic Development Corporation (\$132,385). Check out more at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/wff/prosperity/>

Guest Column

DNR Update on Proposed Northern Wisconsin Mining Project

By John Gozdziński, Secretary's Director for Northern Wisconsin

Staff from the Department of Natural Resources Water, AWaRe (Air, Waste, Remediation and Redevelopment), Forestry and Land divisions, as well as the Enforcement and Science bureaus, are taking a collaborative approach to managing the broad scope of environmental regulations relating to the potential mining project involving Gogebic Taconite (GTac), LLC, in northern Wisconsin.

Exploratory drilling, bulk sampling, and baseline environmental data collection activities began in 2013, and continued into 2014 with assistance from the hard winter. Consistent temperatures below freezing at the site, which straddles Iron and Ashland counties, facilitated ice road construction on existing roadways. The ice roads allowed rock coring and drilling rigs good access on the steep grades. This resulted in completion of 14 bedrock core holes and five deep holes that will be equipped as groundwater monitoring wells.

The ice roads also expedited bulk sampling activities at three locations. The bulk sampling sites, comprising less than 1 acre of total disturbance, have successfully undergone reclamation activities, including re-grading, stabilization of slopes and completion of native plant seeding.

Comprehensive baseline data collection, including information on surface water, groundwater, wetlands, wildlife and air quality is currently underway on the proposed mine site and surrounding area, and is projected to continue for some time. Department water and mining staff are also working in the area, assessing stream delineations and navigability determinations, with wetland assessments to follow. GTac officials have indicated that additional exploration drilling will be conducted and may commence in 2014 depending on site conditions.

Frequent inspections of the site are being conducted by DNR staff to ensure environmental compliance. Additionally, the department is performing independent baseline monitoring regimes, examining jurisdictional determinations and verifying sampling data produced by GTac and their consultants. The department is also in communication with federal government and tribal agencies, including the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), the Bad River Tribal Natural Resources Department, U.S. EPA, Army Corps of Engineers, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey and the US Geological Survey.

The department will continue to engage in outreach activities with local governments, community groups and schools geared at providing opportunities for discussion and education on the agency's role and activities in the process as applications for permits related to the proposed mine are received.

For more information, contact Larry Lynch at 608-267-7553.



A bulk sampling site during excavation and after reclamation (Photos: Zoe McManama, DNR)

Northern Region Office 101

The role of the Office is to be a connection point between communities in Northern Wisconsin and the resources of state government. If you are looking for information, have a suggestion or need assistance with problem resolution with a state agency, please contact me at MaryAnnT.Lippert@wisconsin.gov. I travel throughout the 40 county region north of U.S. Highway 10 and can be available, with 3 to 4 weeks notice, to attend your meetings and events. Keep in touch!