



Waukesha County Environmental Action League FINAL Report

The **Waukesha County Environmental Action League, Inc.**, (WEAL) was formed in 1978 by a group of citizens concerned about protecting Waukesha County's natural resources. For almost five decades, WEAL members and friends worked tirelessly to advocate, educate, engage and inspire Waukesha County residents and decision makers make good choices to reduce waste, prevent sprawl, conserve water, curb roadway expansion and protect County waterways, wetlands and open spaces. On March 15, 2026, the WEAL Board of Directors determined the organization could no longer continue without recruiting new leaders, supporters and followers. The dissolution of WEAL does not mean there is not a need for continued stewardship of the special places and a higher level of environmental protection in Waukesha County. This report highlights just some of the actions WEAL took over the years. The Board urges you, your neighbors and your friends to continue WEAL's advocacy and find ways to engage in activities and actions to protect Waukesha County's natural resources. The next generation is counting on you!



WEAL Takes Action to Advance the Following Objectives and Purposes

1

Develop and Support County-wide Grass-roots Environmental Networking.

2

Facilitate Environmental Education.

3

Support the Preservation of Water, Wetlands, Farmland, Open Space, Environmental Corridors and Natural Areas.

4

Support Regional Land Use and Transportation Plans When Done in an Environmentally Sensitive Manner.

5

Promote and Support Wisconsin Environmental Issues Beyond Waukesha County, as Approved by the Board.

6

Promote and Advance Zero Waste Actions and Policies as a Means to Reduce the Toxicity of Waste, by Promoting Responsible Production, Packaging, Reuse, and Recovery of Materials and Take Action to not Burn or Bury Waste.

7

Promote and Support Local and Global Actions to Reverse Climate Change.

WASTE ISSUES

WEAL promoted recycling long before it became fashionable and embraced by governmental agencies.

1981: **WEAL** sponsors a field trip to RECOM, a recycling plant

1986: **WEAL** members volunteer at the Waukesha County recycling center and hazardous waste collection sites.

1990: **WEAL** opposes a County-operated incinerator and advocates for recycling and composting.

1998: **WEAL** joins citizens opposes an expansion of the Emerald Park Landfill in Muskego by forcing a hearing contesting WDNR permit and plan completeness decision.

Multiple years: **WEAL** opposes pyrolysis and gasification plants proposed in multiple locations in Waukesha County. Promoters of this type of incineration were tagged by WEAL for making false and exaggerated claims to decision makers.

2012: **WEAL** advocates for a “Pay-as-you-Throw” policy for garbage collection and disposal.

2022: **WEAL** opposes the Orchard Ridge Landfill Eastern Expansion in Menomonee Falls. This expansion includes the escalation and exposure of 1.3 million cubic yards of contaminated waste that has been idle and contained for years.

2023: **WEAL Signs a petition to require incinerators operators report toxic releases.**

2023 – WEAL signs a letter asking for leadership from the federal government address the plastic crisis.

Citizen Action, Advocacy, and Education is Needed to Reduce Plastic Production and Waste, Expand Recycling and Composting and Prevent Landfill Expansions and Start-up of Gasification Facilities.





Zero Waste is the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials without burning them, and without discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.

Zero Waste is a goal that is ethical, economical, efficient and visionary, to guide people in changing their lifestyles and practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use.

Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them.



WEAL partnered with other Waukesha County conservation organizations to launch a County-wide **Zero Waste** Campaign.

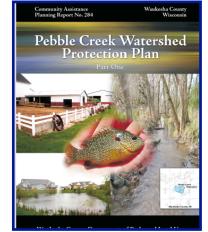
WEAL promoted **ZERO WASTE** at farmers markets and the Waukesha County Sustainability Fair.

WEAL held multiple public educational seminars on zero waste and plastic waste to foster a greater understanding of the need to reduce, recycle, reuse, and not use plastic products.

WEAL's "Skip the Straw" campaign successfully encouraged citizens and businesses to take a simple step to skip the use of plastics.

WEAL signed a Declaration Supporting the United Nations adopting an International Day of Zero Waste. This Day is observed annually on March 30.

WEAL Takes Action to Protect Wetlands and Waterways



Waukesha County has 80 Named Lakes. The County's scenic lakes provide valuable habitat for migratory birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and other water-loving plants and animals.

Wetlands perform important natural functions and provide ecological services which make them valuable resources adding to the overall health and diversity of Waukesha County's landscape. **Wetlands** are scattered throughout the County encompassing approximately 57,500 acres or about 15 percent of the County. No community in Waukesha County is without wetlands.

1982: **WEAL's** action prevails in preventing the encroachment of a large commercial building within the environmental corridor and close proximity to the Pewaukee River.

1990: **WEAL** brings together a diverse coalition of citizens to oppose a massive private pier in the Nagawicka Bog, a unique and sensitive shallow kettle on Nagawicka Lake. These citizens used their voices and their pens to oppose this pier and prevailed.

1991: **WEAL** members travel to Madison to testify in support of water quality standards and regulations to protect wetlands. WEAL launched a wetland watch-dog team to monitor WDNR and Federal permit applications impacting wetlands.

1993: **WEAL** forces a contested case hearing on the WDNR permit application to allow the city of Waukesha build a connected enlargement on the Fox River and place a sculpture in this public waterway.

1996: **WEAL** files affidavit supporting the city of Waukesha wetland zoning code and their right to protect the public interest of wetlands. This monumental case heard, by the WI Supreme Court is commonly known and referenced as *Zealy v. City of Waukesha*

1999. **WEAL's** action results in expanding a buffer zone between a proposed golf course and Brandybrook Creek, a cold-water waterway.

1995: WEAL opposes a road plan to extend Barker Road through wetlands and a Great Blue Heron rockery.

2003. **WEAL** supports the launching of the "Friends of Mukwonago River," cadre of citizens and professionals facilitating science, resources and actions to protect this unique river and its watershed.

2008: **WEAL** is represented on the Advisory Committee for the preparation of the Pebble Creek Watershed Protection Plan.

2008: **WEAL** members and residents form the Friends of Vernon Marsh, an organization to support actions and activities to protect this marsh and the Fox River.

2022. **WEAL** funds studies of the Mussel population in multiple Waukesha County waterways to have resource data available to advocate for mussel protection for proposed highway projects..

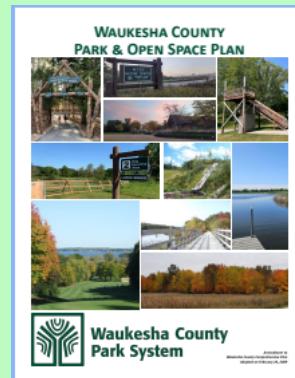
2023, **WEAL** joins a group of concerned residents to prevent the construction of transient pier in St. Johns Bay, a mapped and cataloged "area of special natural resource interest" within Nagawicka Lake.

Continued Action is Needed to Protect Waukesha County Wetlands and Waterways

The loosening of federal and state regulations and standards for land disturbing construction activities in waterways and wetlands will ultimately result in **the loss of small and isolated WETLANDS and low-flow tributaries in Waukesha County. WETLANDS WILL** continue to be lost, due to Court decisions, state and federal permit exemptions and general permit decisions. It is for this reason, citizens need to remain vigilant in protecting Waukesha County wetlands and waterways whatever their size or wherever their location.

Protecting Natural Areas and Special Places

1985: **WEAL** launches a fund raising drive for raise funds for a 40 acre expansion of Monches Park.



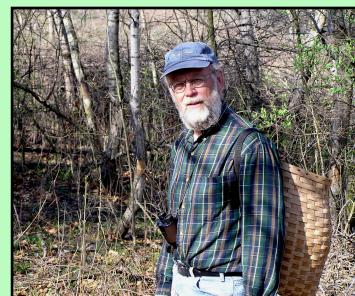
1991, 2023: **WEAL** testifies in support of the adoption the Waukesha County Park and Open Space Plan, to protect natural areas, foster environmental stewardship and provide recreational opportunities.

1991: **WEAL** testifies in support of the establishment of the Walter Tarmann Park Fund for a dedicated source of funds dedicated to park and open space acquisition

1992: **WEAL** supports the formation of a County-wide land trust. Three members of WEAL serve on the initial Board of Directors of the Waukesha County Land Conservancy.



1994: **WEAL** urges WisDOT to remove crown vetch and other aggressive invasive plant species along highway right-of-ways.



1995: **WEAL** promotes the use of Transfer-of-Development Rights to protect open spaces and prevent sprawl.

1997: **WEAL** supports Waukesha County's Greenway Plan.

2000-2025: WEAL members work tirelessly to improve native plant communities in public lands throughout Waukesha County by removing invasive species and replanting native plants.



WEAL COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT

2005-2010: **WEAL** launches a Water Conservation Campaign with multiple conservation partners to promote conservation as an alternative source of drinking water, rather than Lake Michigan.

2006 WEAL co-sponsors “Water Wise” conference at Carroll University.



2011: **WEAL** joins the Compact Implementation Coalition in the review of the City of Waukesha’s Great Lakes Water Diversion Project, to bring Lake Michigan water to the City’s faucets.

2023: **WEAL** signed-on to comments prepared by multiple organizations on the Draft Wisconsin Administrative Rules, regarding Great Lakes Diversions, Intra-basin transfers and Water Supply Service Areas.

WEAL OPPOSES MULTIPLE ROADWAY EXPANSIONS

1987: **WEAL** advocates for the avoidance of wetlands within the path of the proposed HWY 16 Oconomowoc Bypass.

1989: **WEAL** builds a coalition of residents and local elected officials to oppose the proposed West Waukesha Bypass.

1991: WEAL request an Environmental Impact Report for the proposed West Waukesha Bypass.

1991: WEAL formally opposes the HWY 16 Oconomowoc Bypass.

1992: WEAL and a coalition of residents and local elected officials travel to Madison to testify in opposition to the WisDOT funding of the West Waukesha Bypass. The funding was denied.

1996: WEAL opposed the construction of the proposed Mukwonago Bypass.

2005-2010: **WEAL** joins the Highway J Citizens group and files legal arguments against the WisDOT HWY J 4-lane expansion project.

2014-2017: WEAL forms the West Waukesha Bypass Coalition, a group of citizens committed to build public and legal opposition to the West Waukesha Bypass.

2023: **WEAL** prepares and submits comments to WisDOT and the US EPS on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed expansion of the I-94 corridor. WEAL continues to speak-out against highway expansion and supports the “fix-at-six” plan, rather than the expansion to 8 lanes through this I-94 corridor.