



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 17, 2007  
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### **Conference in La Crosse Will Highlight Wetlands of the Mississippi River in Celebration of World Wetlands Day**

Wetland experts and enthusiasts from around Wisconsin and the midwest will gather in La Crosse February 1 and 2, World Wetlands Day, for Wisconsin Wetlands Association's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Wetland Science Forum. This two-day conference, to be held at the Radisson Hotel La Crosse, focuses on the theme *Riverine Wetlands: Connections, Corridors & Catchments*.

#### **Conference Details**

- What:** *Riverine Wetlands: Connections, Corridors & Catchments*, Wisconsin Wetlands Association's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Wetland Science Forum
- Who:** More than 250 wetland researchers, wetland professionals, government agency staff, educators, landowners, hunters and anglers, conservationists and concerned citizens from Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, Indiana and Missouri.
- When:** Feb. 1 (9 AM – 9 PM) & Feb. 2 (8:30 AM – 4:30 PM), 2007
- Where:** Radisson Hotel La Crosse (200 Harborview Plaza, La Crosse)
- Keynote Speaker:** Dan McGuiness, Director of National Audubon's Upper Mississippi River Campaign: *A River That Works and a Working River*
- Banquet Speaker:** Kerry St. Pé, Director of Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program in coastal Louisiana: *Resurrection of the Bayou People: Wetlands, Hurricanes, and Restoration*
- Sponsors:** We Energies and Alliant Energy (*Lead Sponsors*)  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (*Banquet Program Sponsor*)
- Website:** [www.wiscwetlands.org](http://www.wiscwetlands.org) (detailed agenda posted)

"This year's conference program will cover wetlands associated with flowing waters of all sizes, from tiny headwaters to large rivers, and the program will give special emphasis to Mississippi River wetlands," said Laura England, Outreach Programs Director for Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA). WWA has invited keynote speaker, Dan McGuiness, to highlight the importance of wetlands of the Upper Mississippi River corridor and basin and the banquet speaker, Kerry St. Pé, to discuss the

status of wetlands at the far downstream end of the Mississippi River in coastal Louisiana. Three field trips will take conference participants to nearby riverine wetland sites on the mainstem of or tributaries to the Mississippi River including Goose Island, La Crosse River Marsh, and Upper Halfway Creek Marsh. The conference will also feature a special session, ***Wetlands of the Upper Mississippi River Corridor***, which will focus on the response of Mississippi River wetlands to large scale habitat restoration and water level management projects that have been conducted in the past decade. “We hope this conference will contribute to a growing collaboration for protecting and conserving riverine wetlands of the Upper Mississippi River corridor and other wetlands of the region,” said England.

WWA invites members of the interested public and conservation community in the Upper Mississippi River basin to join us for our conference banquet. Banquet speaker, Kerry St. Pé, is Director of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, a federal-state-local effort dedicated to preserving and restoring the 4.2 million-acre area between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers in Southeast Louisiana. Kerry will discuss the post-hurricanes status of Louisiana’s coastal wetlands and emerging plans for coastal wetland restoration efforts. This ticketed event is open both to conference participants (\$30) and the general public (\$35); purchase a banquet ticket by contacting Wisconsin Wetlands Association at 608-250-9971 or [admin@wiscwetlands.org](mailto:admin@wiscwetlands.org).

Riverine wetlands are wetland habitats found within river channels (e.g. islands), along the shorelines of rivers and streams, and in wide floodplains of rivers and streams. Wisconsin’s water-rich landscapes are drained by more than 32,000 miles of perennial streams and rivers. Hundreds of thousands of acres of diverse wetland habitats are associated with these treasured waterways, which range from tiny headwaters to large rivers like the wonderful Wisconsin and mighty Mississippi. “Wetlands provide critical water quality, water quantity and habitat functions that support the health of streams and rivers. In short, riverine wetlands are a big part of what gives a river life and character,” said England.

Despite the benefits provided by these and other wetland types, more than half of Wisconsin’s original 10 million wetlands acres have been lost due to human activities such as wetland draining and filling for agriculture and development. Wetland loss trends are comparable nationwide; more than half of the wetlands in the continental United States have been destroyed. “Wisconsin Wetlands Association is working to reverse this trend of wetland loss, and we invite water enthusiasts of the region to join our efforts by attending our conference and celebrating World Wetlands Day,” said England.

## **WORLD WETLANDS DAY**

February 2 is World Wetlands Day. It marks the date of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Each year, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. For more information on World Wetlands Day, visit: [www.ramsar.org/wwd/6/wwd2006\\_index.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/wwd/6/wwd2006_index.htm)

## **WISCONSIN WETLANDS ASSOCIATION**

*Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, restoration and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education and advocacy. Established in 1969, WWA is the only statewide organization focused exclusively on wetland protection. More than 1300 members include wetland scientists and educators, conservationists, hunters, concerned citizens, and local and regional organizations. Visit WWA online at [www.wiscwetlands.org](http://www.wiscwetlands.org).*

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