

LUMBERJACK RC&D COUNCIL, INC.

GRANT INTAKE SHEET

2027-004

Use to determine if the project submission has met the initial requirements...

PROJECT NAME	Northwoods Lights Out Project
PROJECT NUMBER	2027-004
DATE RECEIVED	8/31/2026
PROJECT COUNTIES	Oneida/Vilas
PROJECT PARTNERS	Oneida Co L+W Conservation Dept, Oneida County L+R Association, Dark Sky WI, Vilas Co L+W Dept, NW Explorers of Space & Astronomy, Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau, NW Land Trust
AMOUNT REQUESTED	\$ 10,000.00
PRIOR FUNDING YEARS/AMOUNTS	Oneida & Vilas Counties partnered in 2012/13 for roadside surveys \$20K & Mgmt Plan \$10K/ in 2023 Water Clarity \$7,250. Oneida alone 2015 Conservation Projects \$9,477/2016 Pollinator Project. Vilas alone 2018 Decontamination Unit \$10K \$ 56,727.00

	YES/NO
Project was received by the deadline	Yes
Project fulfills Match Requirements (25% & minimum 10% of total asked must be in cash)	Yes
Project budget shows at least 10% of the amount asked for is in Cash	Yes
Project has been presented to county LCC	Yes 8/10/2026 Vilas 8/12/2026 Oneida
If funded in the past, project has met all post-funding requirements and presentations	Yes
Letter of Support from each match partner	Yes
Approved to move on to Council Meeting	Yes

NOTES:

LUMBERJACK RC&D COUNCIL, INC.

2027-004

GRANT RANKING GUIDELINE SHEET

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Use this sheet to help formulate questions & determine how the project aligns with the Lumberjack Mission.

NAME: Northwoods Lights Out Project

ASKING FOR...

COUNTY: Oneida & Vilas

\$10,000

PARTNERS: Oneida Co L+W Conservation Dept, Oneida County L+R Association, Dark Sky WI, Vilas Co L+W Dept, NW Explorers of Space & Astronomy, Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau, NW Land Trust

PRIOR FUNDING years/amounts:

\$ AMOUNT

Oneida & Vilas Counties partnered in 2012/13 for roadside surveys \$20K & Mgmt Plan \$10K/ in 2023 Water Clarity \$7,250. Oneida alone 2015 Conservation Projects \$9,477/2016 Pollinator Project. Vilas alone 2018 Decontamination Unit \$10K

\$56,727

Match Information (List Match Percentage)

157%

If funded in the past, project has met all post-funding requirements and presentations

Yes

MISSION Statement: Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc., a multi-county, nonprofit in Northeastern WI, strives to enhance area natural resources, promote a higher standard of living and improve the quality of life for area citizens by fostering partnerships between public and private sectors and strategically investing in area natural resources.

The following statements should be considered when determining if you feel the project aligns well enough with the Lumberjack Mission Statement. Project critiques should be based on their merits and mission alignment points, not on location, past funding or whether funds are available for all projects. Members should also consider the geographic reach and sustainability of the project.

Enhances Area Natural Resources. Does this project directly enhance natural resources? Consider the area and population covered. Consider how many Lumberjack counties are covered? Lumberjack serves nine counties. Consider the diversity of natural resources benefitting from the project. Is it one, two or a range?

Promotes a Higher Standard of Living & Improves Quality of Life. Does this project directly promote a higher standard of living and/or improve quality of life? Consider the economic impact and how the project affects disposable income, wages, job creation. Consider the health benefits. Does the project lead to better air or water quality, a cleaner environment? Does the project enhance accessibility to resources that lead to healthier living?

Fosters Partnerships Between Public & Private Sectors. Consider the number and diversity of the partnerships involved in this project. Do the partners represent a good cross section of public/private entities? Consider all partners, whether they are contributing monetarily or not. (Example: A school/classroom is involved in the project but they cannot commit with a Letter of Support. This would not qualify as cash match, but would qualify as fostering partnerships.)

Council Members: Use this space to jot down comments or specific questions you have after reading the project proposal. You'll have an opportunity to question the applicant at the October Council meeting.



Lumberjack Grant Application

PROJECT TITLE: Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project

Submitted by (name):	Michele Sadauskas
Organization:	Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department
Address:	P.O. Box 400, Rhinelander, WI 54501
Phone:	715-369-7835
Email:	msadauskas@oneidacountywi.gov
Counties:	Oneida, Vilas, with relevance to the entire Lumberjack Service Area

Mission Statement: Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc., a multi-county, nonprofit in Northeastern WI, strives to enhance area natural resources, promote a higher standard of living and improve the quality of life for area citizens by fostering partnerships between public and private sectors and strategically investing in area natural resources.

SUMMARY: Review the Lumberjack Mission Statement above. How does your project align with Lumberjack's mission? Be specific. The more alignment points, the better your project is viewed. **Emphasis will be placed on projects that show sustainability.**

Answer:

This project reflects Lumberjack's mission in several concrete ways:

- **Sustainability** — this is not a one-year effort that ends when funding does. Northwoods Lights Out! is an established event already heading into its 5th anniversary in 2027, and dark-sky advocacy through County Land & Water Departments is structured to continue well beyond the grant period — turning a modest \$10,000 investment into a self-sustaining regional awareness effort. More details are in the Formulation & Evaluation section.
- **Enhance area natural resources** — dark skies are an under-recognized natural resource, on par with clean water or healthy forests. This project treats them as one worth actively protecting rather than taking for granted.
- **Promote a higher standard of living and quality of life** — protecting dark skies preserves the natural beauty and small-town character that draws residents and visitors to the Northwoods, and directly supports the region's tourism economy.
- **Foster public-private partnerships** — the project is built around a coalition of partners: the Greater Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau, Northwoods Explorers, Dark Sky Wisconsin, Northwoods Land Trust, Oneida County Lakes & Rivers Association, County Land & Water Departments, and local lake associations — each contributing input, advocacy, or in-kind support.
- **Regional reach** — although led by Oneida and Vilas County partners, the project is designed with relevance across all of Lumberjack's multi-county service area.

OBJECTIVES: What problems, concerns or opportunities will this project address? You will be asked to show how your objectives were met when you present your follow-up presentation to the Council.

Answer:

Light pollution is a growing, measurable concern: nationally, 80% of Americans can no longer see the Milky Way, and 35% of outdoor lighting is wasted -- costing U.S. communities an estimated \$3 billion annually. Fireflies, hummingbirds, monarch butterflies, and owls are among the wildlife most affected by artificial light at night. Too much light can disrupt migration patterns, mating rituals, and natural hunting patterns. Here in Northern Wisconsin, we are experiencing a gradual invasion of artificial light along our highways, shorelines, and in our night sky. Local awareness of light pollution is increasing, but our communities currently lack a coordinated effort to address the issue.

This project will protect and promote dark skies as a natural resource in Northern Wisconsin. Our three objectives are: develop and promote dark sky conservation strategies, guide and inspire homeowners, businesses, and communities to adopt dark sky friendly lighting, and build regional partnerships for long-term dark sky protection. Examples of activities will include, but are not limited to: develop a communication plan to establish media release schedules and clearly define responsibilities, expand Northwoods Lights Out!, investigate the feasibility of a future Dark Sky Preserve, and engage additional partners to expand the project's reach and sustainability.

FORMULATION & EVALUATION: Why is this project the best way to address the issues described above? How will the outcome be evaluated? Be specific – outcomes that can be measured are viewed more favorably. **Emphasis will be placed on projects that show sustainability.**

Answer:

Shifting public behavior through educational outreach and awareness is a positive and effective method to reduce light pollution. This approach also builds community and local capacity. Rather than a one-time regulatory fix, it creates a network of informed residents, engaged partners, and a replicable model that other counties can adopt.

Outcomes will be evaluated using measurable indicators: growth of Northwoods Lights Out! (attendance and number of events held); number and reach of educational materials distributed; launch of the Dark Sky Awareness webpage and associated web traffic; distribution of 3 key dark-sky conservation strategies to other County Land & Water Departments (LWCD); incorporation of dark-sky criteria into OCLRA's Lake Steward Program; documented feasibility findings for a future Dark Sky Preserve.

Sustainability was a central design consideration. A Lumberjack grant would enable us to expand the Northwoods Lights Out! event series. Dark Sky Preserve designation will continue past the grant period, with Oneida County LWCD maintaining a smaller, ongoing supporting role, while partners such as Greater Minocqua Visitors Bureau and Northwoods Explorers take a lead role. Lastly, this project builds a dark sky conservation strategy easily replicated by partners well beyond the one-year project period.

ASSISTANCE NEEDED: Why is assistance needed from Lumberjack? Who within your organization will run the project? Describe the assistance you are receiving from other partners. Include Letters of Support as outlined in Lumberjack's Granting Policy.

Answer:

Funding is needed to develop a communication plan, expand Northwoods Lights Out!, collaborate with OCLRA on their Lake Steward Program, develop a dark skies webpage, create and distribute outreach material, develop a dark sky conservation strategy for County Land & Water Departments, and help facilitate the feasibility of a Dark Sky Preserve. Although Oneida County L WCD has performed dark skies outreach throughout 2026 (5 presentations, a Star Party, and Northwoods Lights Out!), the proposed project activities go beyond our staff and budget capacity. The requested \$10,000 will fund coordinator time (500 hours) and provide outreach material. The project will be supervised by Michele Sadauskas, Oneida County Conservationist, with day-to-day activities completed by the Project Coordinator.

Partner participation is critical to this project's success and sustainability. Partners will contribute in-kind support with volunteer hours, educational materials, event support, promotional efforts, and participation in project collaboration.

PROJECT OUTLINE & TIMETABLE: List the project steps and expected completion dates. Could there be any possible roadblocks? If so, list them here.

Answer:

January-March: Hire Project Coordinator; create project logo/brand; begin Dark Sky Preserve feasibility discussions; begin updates to website; create communication plan; identify & build Northwoods Lights Out! events.

April: Develop and distribute outreach and educational materials; begin media outreach (newspapers, radio, TV).

May-August: Promote Northwoods Lights Out! events; work with OCLRA on Lake Steward Program.

September-October: Identify, develop, and share 3 key conservation strategies for County Land & Water Departments, distribute regionally; continue work on website; continue Dark Sky Preserve conversations.

November-December: Compile outcomes and evaluation data; create sustainability plan; prepare follow-up presentation to the Lumberjack Council; continue Dark Sky Preserve conversations.

Possible roadblocks: none that we can anticipate.

BUDGET: Complete the attached Budget Form. Remember the 25% match requirement and the 10% cash requirement (see policy item #8). List each match donor in the 'Match' column and submit a corresponding Letter of Support with specific value of in-kind/services or cash for the project. Note: This form is available in excel online at: <https://lumberjackrcd.org/projects>

LUMBERJACK BUDGET FORM



Project Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project

Starting Project Date
1/1/____2027____(Year)

Ending Project Date **1**
12/31/____2027____(Year)

Income (SPECIFY)	Cash	Match (Cash & In-Kind) 2,3	Total
YOUR Request of Lumberjack RC&D	\$ 10,000.00		\$ 10,000.00
oneida county land & water dept. cash match		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
county conservationist match time (20 hrs.)		\$ 1,293.20	\$ 1,293.20
mileage match		\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
oclra match		\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
dark skies wi match		\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,800.00
vilas county land & water match		\$ 700.00	\$ 700.00
northwoods explorers match		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
greater minoqua area visitor's bureau match		\$ 7,000.00	\$ 7,000.00
northwoods land trust match		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
oneida county land & water dept. office space match		\$ 1,383.00	\$ 1,383.00
Total Income	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 15,676.20	\$ 25,676.20

Percent of Match=Match Total/Lumberjack Request **157%**



LJ Percent of Total = YOUR LJ Request/Total Expenses **39%**

Remember: If it appears here
you need a matching support letter

General Expenses (SPECIFY & include Match expenses)		
coordinator wages/benefits	\$	10,000.00
outreach material	\$	800.00
workshop	\$	200.00
mileage match	\$	200.00
office space & IT	\$	1,383.00
county conservationist's time	\$	1,293.20
partner match	\$	11,800.00

Total Expenses	\$	25,676.20	
NET 4	\$	-	

- 1 Lumberjack Project funds are available for one year from the date of the approval notice
- 2 Match Value must equal at least 25% of the Lumberjack Request and 10% of the request must be in cash
Volunteer Services=\$15/hour & Professional Services=current hourly wage
- 3 A Letter of Support is required for all match partners listed above & must include a description & match value
- 4 Explain a **NET** balance other than Zero (\$0.00) in the box below:

Karl Jennrich
Department Head

Stephanie Boismenue
AIS Coordinator &
Conservation Technician



Michele Sadauskas
County Conservationist

Jonna Stephens Jewell
Office Assistant

Oneida County Courthouse
P O Box 400
Rhineland, Wisconsin 54501
Phone (715) 369-7835
Fax (715) 369-6268
www.oclw.org

August 19, 2026

Tracy Beckman
Executive Director
Lumberjack RC&D Council, Inc.
315 S. Oneida Avenue, Suite 206
Rhineland, WI 54501

RE: Letter of Support for *Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project*

Light pollution is a growing, measurable concern: nationally, 80% of Americans can no longer see the Milky Way, and 35% of outdoor lighting is wasted — costing U.S. communities an estimated \$3 billion annually. Fireflies, hummingbirds, monarch butterflies, and owls are among the wildlife most affected by artificial light at night. Too much light can disrupt migration patterns, mating rituals, and natural hunting patterns. Here in Northern Wisconsin, we are experiencing a gradual invasion of artificial light along our highways, shorelines, and in our night sky.

To protect dark skies in Northern Wisconsin, the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department created a project that will expand awareness, develop and promote dark sky conservation strategies, guide and inspire homeowners, businesses, and communities to adopt dark sky friendly lighting, and build regional partnerships for long-term dark sky protection.

Through this letter, we acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of the Oneida County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) to fulfill this project. Upon funding of this project, LWCD would contribute staff time (\$1,293.20), office space (\$1,383), mileage (\$200), and cash (\$1000) as match toward the project.

We look forward to working with you to increase outreach, education, and build capacity for protecting dark skies of Northern Wisconsin!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MSadauskas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michele Sadauskas, Oneida County Conservationist
Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Dept.
P.O. Box 400
Rhineland, WI 54501



Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association

P O Box 451, Hazelhurst, WI 54531

www.oclra.org OCLRA100@gmail.com

President

Ted Rulseh

Vice President

Tom LaDue

Secretary

Beckie Gaskill

Treasurer

Tom LaDue

Directors

Bob Martini

Jeff Verdoorn

Richard Nelson

Jim Kavemeier

Tommy Burrell

Nancy Verkuilen

Gary Mastalish

Cheryl Schultz

Mary Jung

August 28, 2026

Tracy Beckman, Executive Director
Lumberjack RC&D Council, Inc.
315 S. Oneida Avenue, Suite 206
Rhineland, WI 54501

Re: Oneida County Dark Skies Grant Application

The Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association (OCLRA) wholeheartedly supports our county Land and Water Conservation Department's request for a grant for a Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies project. We have helped publicize the department's Lights Out! events in the past and are enthusiastic about this more comprehensive approach to promoting dark skies and discouraging light pollution.

This proposed project is consistent with our mission to advocate, educate and collaborate on behalf of the waters of Oneida County. Dark skies are fundamental to the scenic beauty and mystique of the Northwoods, important to the area's quality of life, and part of a sustainable approach to protect our water resources and natural habitats.

OCLRA by board action has committed to a minimum of 10 hours of support (estimated at \$300) for the Dark Skies initiative. This will most likely include promotion of the various events to local news media and through our own channels, which include a website, social media presence, and an extensive list of advocates for quality waters, natural lakeshores, and sustainable habitat.

The Oneida County Land and Water Conservation Department has a track record of undertaking high-value programs that get results. We are confident that the Dark Skies project will be no exception, and we encourage the Lumberjack RC&D Council to look kindly upon this grant application.

Respectfully,

Ted J. Rulseh
President
On behalf of OCLRA Board of Directors

Our Mission: *To protect Oneida County waters and habitats through:*

** Education * Collaboration * Advocacy*

August 18, 2026

Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc
315 S. Oneida Avenue
Suite 206
Rhineland, WI 54501

Re: Letter of Support for the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project

Dear Lumberjack RC&D Grant Review Committee:

On behalf of DarkSky Wisconsin, I am pleased to express our strong support for the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department's application for the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project.

This one-year project represents an important opportunity to increase awareness of dark skies as a valuable natural resource in Northern Wisconsin. Through outreach and education, the project will help homeowners, businesses, municipalities, and communities better understand the impacts of light pollution and learn how simple, responsible lighting choices can protect the night sky while supporting wildlife, community well-being, and the region's natural beauty.

DarkSky Wisconsin is particularly supportive of the project's emphasis on education and regional collaboration. Planned activities, including the expansion of Northwoods Lights Out! events, development of educational materials on better outdoor lighting practices, expansion of the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department's website to include Dark Sky Awareness, and exploration of a future Dark Sky Preserve in Western Oneida County, will provide meaningful opportunities to engage residents and visitors throughout the region.

We also appreciate the project's focus on building partnerships among organizations and communities across Northern Wisconsin. The opportunity to collaborate with the Minocqua Visitors Bureau, Northwoods Explorers, Northwoods Land Trust, lake associations, county Land & Water Conservation Departments, and other regional partners will help extend the project's impact beyond Oneida County. Because Lumberjack RC&D serves 10 northern counties, the resources and approaches developed through this project have the potential to benefit communities throughout the region.

DarkSky Wisconsin is committed to supporting this effort through our knowledge, expertise, and participation in outreach and educational activities related to responsible outdoor lighting and dark-sky conservation. Our involvement will help provide communities with practical information about lighting that delivers the right amount of light, in the right place, at the right time, while reducing unnecessary light pollution.

DarkSky Wisconsin will provide an in-kind match of up to 50 volunteer hours, with an estimated value of \$1,800. These contributions may include event support, educational materials and outreach, promotional efforts, and participation in project collaboration. The value of these contributions will be documented in accordance with the grant program's requirements.

We believe this project will establish a strong foundation for continued dark-sky awareness and advocacy in Northern Wisconsin beyond the grant period. By increasing public understanding, strengthening regional partnerships, and providing communities with practical tools and information, the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project can help build long-term support for protecting the region's night skies.

For these reasons, DarkSky Wisconsin strongly supports this application and is pleased to partner with the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha Saeger". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Samantha Saeger
President
DarkSky Wisconsin



Vilas County Land & Water Conservation

330 Court Street • Eagle River, WI 54521

715-479-3747 • Fax: 715-479-3627 • [http:// www.vilasconservation.com](http://www.vilasconservation.com)

August 24, 2026

Dear Lumberjack Grant Reviewers,

Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department enthusiastically supports the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project proposed by Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department. We support this project through this Letter of Support for a Lumberjack RC&D grant, and as a partner in the development of the Northwoods Lights Out! project since 2023. The Lights Out! project is a great idea borrowed from a Lake Association in Vilas County and expanded by Vilas and Oneida Co L&WCDs to share across our landscapes. The Northwoods still has many areas of little light pollution because of our protected public lands. Unfortunately, current rates of immigration and development threaten that resource in our small communities and around our lake shorelines as more people bring their urban and suburban habits of over-lighting their landscapes with them.

Natural dark skies are an important survival resource for many native wildlife species (insects, birds, mammals, and some plants). Light pollution can have consequential negative effects on feeding, mating, and survival of a number of wildlife species. Dark skies are also popular with humans as both a tourist attraction (introducing natural dark skies to visitors who live in areas of heavy light pollution), and a valuable and increasingly rare resource to Northwoods residents (see all the social media posts and artwork created over the last few years of spectacular northern light shows). Protecting this resource makes both ecological sense and economic sense.

Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department strongly supports the growth of this program through the hiring of a program coordinator who will expand Lights Out! outreach to increase the number of home and business owners who modify their lighting choices to lessen light pollution in the northwoods; will expand Dark Skies activities to increase human enjoyment of these resources, and will provide educational and legislative resources to communities who want to protect Dark Skies. These activities support several Goals in our Vilas County Land & Water Resource Management Plan 2025-2034 - including Goal 1: Increase conservation knowledge, skills, and stewardship activities; and Goal 5 Protect the Counties Resource's with Planned Strategies. Over the past years we have committed at least 16 – 20 hours per year to Lights Out! planning activities that support these Goals, at a cost of \$35/hour, and are committed to continuing that support in 2027. 20 hours X \$35/hour = \$700 as stated on budget form. TJB

A dedicated Lights Out! coordinator will guide the development of a communications plan, a website, and outreach to new partners locally and across the northern part of the state.

This would be a timely expansion of outreach at this time of increased development and immigration to northern Wisconsin that are spreading light pollution to further corners of the state.

Thank you for past Lumberjack RC&D funding of great projects that benefit our local communities, and for your serious consideration of this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Quita Sheehan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Quita" being more prominent and the last name "Sheehan" following in a similar style.

Quita Sheehan,
Conservation Specialist
Vilas County Land & Water Conservation

Dear Grant Review Committee,

I am writing in support of this proposal to expand public education on responsible lighting practices throughout our region. Artificial light at night continues to affect nocturnal wildlife, human sleep patterns, and the visibility of the natural night sky. Community-focused education is an essential step toward addressing these impacts.

The proposed program's emphasis on practical lighting guidance—such as using fully shielded fixtures, selecting warmer color temperatures, and reducing unnecessary overnight lighting—will help residents, businesses, and private groups make informed choices that benefit both the environment and human well-being. These practices support healthier circadian rhythms, reduce ecological disruption for nocturnal species, and improve opportunities for experiencing the stars, planets, and deep-sky objects above us.

The Northwoods Explorers will continue their long-standing role in sharing lighting information with the public and with private groups during outreach events, presentations, and stargazing activities. In addition, the Explorers are actively identifying potential dark-sky locations within Oneida County that could support future Dark Sky Park development, including the possibility of a natural-area campground. We plan to support Oneida County's Light's Out goals of the proposal by encouraging community engagement with naturally dark environments and highlighting the value of preserving them.

Learning more about our universe provides a powerful perspective on the rarity and fragility of Earth. When people see the night sky clearly — the Milky Way arching overhead, planets shining steadily, and the faint glow of distant galaxies — they gain a deeper appreciation for how special our planet is. That sense of perspective strengthens public support for conservation and responsible stewardship. Residents and visitors alike come to the Northwoods and Oneida County for its natural beauty, and protecting dark skies is part of protecting the character of this region.

Support Commitment:

The Northwoods Explorers will support the Oneida County Lights Out programs and public Star Parties by contributing at least 20 hours of outreach and educational service, valued at \$50 per hour (a total of \$1,000). This commitment includes assisting with public education on responsible lighting practices, participating in outreach events, and helping community members understand how thoughtful lighting choices benefit wildlife, human health, and the night sky.

This initiative will strengthen environmental stewardship, support healthier nighttime environments for people and wildlife, and enhance public access to the night sky. I encourage approval of this grant and look forward to the positive impact it will bring to our region.

Sincerely,

James Head

President

The Northwoods Explorers of Space and Astronomy

www.TheNorthwoodsExplorers.org



MINOCQUA.

GREATER MINOCQUA AREA VISITORS BUREAU, INC.

1 (800) 44-NORTH • 1 (715) 356-5266 • 8216 HWY 51 SOUTH, MINOCQUA, WI 54548

   [MINOCQUA.ORG](https://www.minocqua.org)

8/24/2026

Re: Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project

To the Lumberjack Resource Conservation & Development Council:

On behalf of the Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau, I am pleased to offer our strong support for the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project led by the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department. We believe protecting and promoting dark skies as a natural resource is an important investment in the environmental health, rural character, visitor experience, and long-term quality of life of northern Wisconsin.

Our region's natural resources are the foundation of the Northwoods experience and an essential part of our tourism economy. Visitors come here for our lakes, forests, trails, wildlife, and opportunities to experience nature in ways that are increasingly difficult to find elsewhere. That experience does not end when the sun goes down. A truly dark night sky - where visitors can see the Milky Way, watch a meteor shower, photograph the stars, or simply sit beside a lake beneath an unobstructed sky - is itself a natural resource worth protecting.

We especially support this project's approach of creating change through education, awareness, collaboration, and better lighting choices rather than relying solely on regulation. Helping homeowners, businesses, municipalities, and visitors understand practical solutions such as shielded fixtures, warmer color temperatures, timers, and motion sensors can reduce unnecessary light pollution while maintaining the lighting necessary for safety and everyday life. This approach builds community knowledge and creates practices that can continue well beyond the term of a single grant.

The Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau also sees a direct connection between dark sky conservation and the preservation of the Northwoods' rural and small-town character. Excessive artificial lighting can gradually change the experience of a place, even when individual changes seem insignificant. Protecting darkness allows our communities to grow thoughtfully while maintaining one of the qualities that makes northern Wisconsin distinctive.

We are particularly excited to serve as a core project partner and to work alongside Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department and Northwoods Explorers in investigating the feasibility of a future Dark Sky Preserve in western Oneida County. This effort could create an important conservation and educational asset while also introducing new opportunities for nature-based and astronomy tourism. Stargazing, astrophotography, astronomy programming, nighttime wildlife experiences, and related activities have the potential to complement our existing outdoor recreation offerings and provide meaningful experiences throughout the year.

The regional nature of this project is equally important. Light pollution does not stop at municipal or county boundaries. By bringing together organizations including Dark Sky Wisconsin, Northwoods Land Trust, Oneida County Lakes & Rivers Association, Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association, county Land & Water Departments, lake associations, tourism organizations, and other community partners, this project can establish a coordinated approach to dark sky conservation across northern Wisconsin. The development of strategies that can be shared and replicated by other counties makes this investment even more valuable.

We also strongly support the expansion of the existing Northwoods Lights Out! event series and the project's focus on creating consistent educational resources and regional messaging. Building upon an established program rather than creating a one-time campaign gives this effort a much greater opportunity for long-term impact and sustainability.

From a destination-development perspective, dark skies represent something increasingly valuable: an authentic natural experience that does not need to be constructed. It simply needs to be protected. As destinations across the country invest in creating new attractions, northern Wisconsin already possesses an extraordinary one above us every night. Thoughtfully protecting that resource can enhance outdoor recreation, environmental education, wildlife conservation, community character, and our visitor economy simultaneously.

As part of our commitment to the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project, the Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau will provide \$7,000 in in-kind sponsorship, professional services, and promotional support to the initiative. This contribution will include access to our on-staff professional designer for development of the project logo and visual identity, along with graphic design time for educational, promotional, and event materials. The Visitors Bureau will

also provide staff time for event support, project planning, participation, and ongoing collaboration with project partners.

As part of this commitment, the Visitors Bureau will provide a \$1,500 in-kind advertising investment that includes a banner advertisement on Minocqua.org, which receives more than 500,000 individual visits annually, as well as promotion of project events and initiatives through our social media channels. These established tourism marketing platforms will provide the project with significant additional exposure to visitors, residents, businesses, and other audiences throughout the region.

Collectively, our \$7,000 in-kind commitment will provide the project with professional creative services, established marketing channels, event and staff support, and ongoing project collaboration. We are pleased to contribute these resources to help create a recognizable identity for the initiative, broaden the reach of its educational messaging and events, and build long-term awareness and support for protecting northern Wisconsin's dark skies.

The Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau is proud to support the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project and looks forward to contributing as a regional partner through outreach, promotional efforts, project collaboration, and participation in the exploration of a future Dark Sky Preserve.

Protecting the Northwoods means looking beyond the landscapes we see during the day. It also means ensuring future generations can look up on a clear northern Wisconsin night and experience the same extraordinary sky that has defined this place for generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krystal Westfahl" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Krystal Westfahl

President & CEO

Minocqua Area Visitors Bureau



NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

BOARD

Bob Martini
President

Bill Dickens
Vice-President

Mary Schwaiger
Treasurer

Pete Davison
Secretary

John Bates
Don Behm
Ron Eckstein
Terry Hatch
Colleen Matula
Peter McKeever
Ben Meyer
Mitch Olson
Paul Stearns
Cathy Techtmann
Beth Tornes

STAFF

Ted Anchor
Executive
Director

John Heusinkveld
Conservation
Outreach Specialist

Kari Kirschbaum
Land Protection
Director

Carrie Rasmussen
Philanthropy
Director

Frank Schroyer
Land Conservation
Associate

Troy Walters
Easement
Stewardship Coord.



August 27, 2026

Michele Sadauskus
Oneida Cty. Land And Water Conservation Dept.
P.O Box 400
Rhinelander, WI. 54501

Dear Michele,

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT) is writing to express its support for the Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Department (OCLWCD)'s grant proposal – "Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Sky Project".

NWLT and OCLWCD currently have mutually beneficial and coordinated programs to protect water quality of surface waters, natural shorelines, as well as forested parcels of ecological value. Night sky "conservation" would fit under a similar vein.

We believe that OCLWCD's project will be another good way to partner to advance the protection of natural resources in Oneida County, in this case, the dark skies, which safeguards the natural life cycles of many animal species and protects a crucial Northwoods aesthetic.

NWLT will participate in OCLWCD's grant proposal activities, mainly staff time associated with the outreach and education involved in their initiative. Some ways NWLT will offer support includes:

- Attend meetings to discuss project development and implementation.
- Contribute staff resources towards distribution of educational outreach material.
- Co-lead a landowner workshop and/or event.
- Commit a minimum of 20 hours (valued at \$50/hr. for a total of \$1,000) to accomplish the above tasks.

Sincerely,

Ted Anchor
Executive Director

Aug. 10 - 2024

Oneida County, describing his efforts as comparable to a full-time job. She thanked the Committee for recognizing his contributions and expressed her support for its continued work.

6. Lumberjack Grant Submission:

Sadauskas informed the Committee that Lumberjack RC&D is accepting grant applications, with a submission deadline of September 1. As part of the application process, applicants seeking funding for projects within Oneida County are required to present their proposed projects to the Committee. The purpose of the presentation is to make the Committee aware of the project and to document the presentation in the meeting minutes. Committee approval of the project is not required as part of this process.

a. ILIDS Presentation – CJ Kraft

CJ Kraft, representing the Lake Julia Association and serving as a member of its Board, presented information regarding a proposed grant application to Lumberjack RC&D for the installation of an Internet Landing Installed Device Sensor (ILIDS) system at the Lake Julia boat landing. Lake Julia, identified by the Wisconsin DNR as Julia Lake, is a 400-acre lake located east of Three Lakes and spanning both Oneida and Forest Counties.

Kraft explained that the ILIDS system is designed to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). The solar-powered system is installed at a boat landing and is activated when a trailer enters the area, providing an audible reminder for boaters to remove debris and drain water from boats and trailers before launching. The system also informs users that activity is being monitored, helping to encourage compliance with AIS prevention measures.

The Association is pursuing the project due to increasing concerns about the spread of aquatic invasive species and the challenges of maintaining adequate staffing through the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program. The ILIDS system would provide a consistent monitoring presence for approximately 16 hours per day throughout the boating season, from April through October.

Kraft stated that the total cost to purchase, install, and operate the system for its first year is estimated at just under \$20,000. The Lake Julia Association is applying for a \$10,000 Lumberjack RC&D grant and, if awarded, has sufficient funds budgeted for 2027 to cover the remaining project costs. The Lumberjack RC&D grant awards are expected to be considered in late October, and, if approved, installation of the ILIDS system is planned for April of the following year. The presentation was provided to inform the Committee of the proposed project as part of the grant application process.

Sorgel asked whether the Lake Julia Association would be able to proceed with the project if it received less than the full \$10,000 grant amount, noting that many applicants may be asked to accept reduced funding due to limited grant funds available. Kraft responded that the Association's current budget is based on receiving the full \$10,000 grant award. He stated that receipt of the full amount would allow the project to move forward as planned. If a smaller award were received, the Association would likely need to seek additional financial contributions from lake residents through a special assessment or donation effort, the outcome of which would be uncertain.

Mott advised that if the proposed ILIDS system includes a raised concrete base or other fixed structure, it should be clearly marked and made highly visible to help prevent accidents and improve public safety.

b. Town of Schoepke Shoreline Project – *Bob Mott*

Bob Mott, Chair of the Town of Schoepke, and Mary Schmitzer, Land Use Committee Chair for the Pelican Lake Association, presented information regarding a proposed shoreline restoration project on Pelican Lake that will be submitted for consideration under the Lumberjack RC&D grant program.

Mott reported that the Pelican Lake Association represents approximately 400 members and a 3,500-acre lake. The proposed project would restore and stabilize approximately 150 feet of shoreline located north of the Schoepke Town Hall in Pelican Lake. The area was originally developed as a shoreline buffer demonstration project in 2014-2015 with funding from a Lumberjack RC&D grant. The Town donated the shoreline area to the Association to demonstrate how native vegetation and shoreline buffers can improve water quality by filtering runoff and reducing erosion. Located along Highway 45, the site has served as a visible example for riparian property owners and visitors interested in shoreline conservation practices. The proposed restoration would include the installation of riprap and soil stabilization measures to preserve the shoreline both adjacent to and south of the existing demonstration buffer. The project area would extend from a grass-covered shoreline section near the buffer to a nearby culvert along Highway 45. In addition to addressing shoreline erosion, the project would continue to serve as a demonstration site showcasing shoreline protection and native planting techniques for waterfront property owners. Four cost estimates had been obtained for the project, ranging from approximately \$11,700 to \$17,000. The Association believes the bids reflect comparable scopes of work. The project is expected to be submitted as a 2027 grant application to Lumberjack RC&D.

Schmitzer provided additional details regarding the proposed Pelican Lake shoreline restoration project. She described the shoreline area north of the public dock and noted that the site shows significant erosion and deteriorating shoreline conditions. The shoreline has not been substantially restored or maintained for many years and contains remnants of older shoreline protection materials, including rocks located both below and slightly above the waterline.

Schmitzer explained that the goal of the project is to restore and stabilize approximately 150 feet of shoreline through the installation of riprap and shoreline protection measures extending above the ordinary high-water mark, along with the establishment of a restored buffer zone. She noted that the original buffer area experienced substantial erosion and is in need of repair. Native plantings would be incorporated into the restoration to improve shoreline stability, reduce runoff, and enhance wildlife habitat. Currently, the area contains primarily weeds.

The project proposal includes contributions from the Pelican Lake Association, the Town of Schoepke, and volunteers who would assist through cash and in-kind support. The proposed work, as outlined by the project contractor, would include installation of rock and soil stabilization materials as well as native vegetation intended to benefit pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.

Schmitzer emphasized that the project would not only address shoreline erosion and runoff concerns but would also serve as a public demonstration site for shoreline restoration practices. The location is publicly accessible and includes a parking area, shoreline garden, and viewing area established through a previous conservation grant. The restored site would provide educational opportunities for residents, visitors, and shoreline property owners interested in learning about effective erosion control techniques, native plantings, and shoreline protection methods. She noted that interpretive signage is planned to explain the project and promote conservation practices.

c. **LWCD Presentation — M. Sadauskas**

Sadauskas presented a proposed Lumberjack RC&D grant application focused on protecting and promoting dark skies as a natural resource in northern Wisconsin. The project would build upon ongoing educational efforts, including the Northwoods Lights Out events held annually in June and August, which raises awareness about light pollution and the benefits of preserving natural darkness.

The proposed one-year project would seek \$10,000 in grant funding, with the majority of the funding designated for a coordinator position to lead outreach and education efforts. The project's focus would be on helping homeowners, businesses, lake associations, and communities understand the importance of dark skies and encouraging voluntary adoption of responsible lighting practices.

Emphasis would be placed on education and awareness rather than regulation or infrastructure improvements.

Planned activities include expanding public presentations, developing educational and outreach materials, strengthening partnerships, and increasing community engagement. The Department is beginning to collaborate with the newly formed organization DarkSky Wisconsin and is working with partners including the Northwoods Land Trust, Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association, Northwoods Explorers, and Vilas County. Additional outreach opportunities are being explored, including public awareness campaigns and collaboration with lake associations interested in promoting dark-sky-friendly practices.

Sadauskas noted that the project would primarily involve staff and LTE coordinator time dedicated to outreach and public engagement. The proposed grant application is expected to be presented to Lumberjack RC&D for consideration at its October meeting. No Committee action was requested, and the presentation was provided to inform the Committee of the proposed project.

7. Kathan Lake District Public Hearing Update:

The Committee received an update on the recent Kathan Lake District public hearing, which was attended by three Committee members in person and one member virtually. No action items resulted from the hearing, and the agenda item was included primarily to provide an opportunity for discussion and follow-up. Committee members were reminded that written comments and materials submitted during the public hearing had been distributed electronically via email.

Chair Jensen noted that the hearing was well attended, with approximately 30 individuals present, and commented that the event was well organized. Appreciation was expressed to Land and Water Conservation Department staff and others involved in planning and facilitating the hearing.

Newman acknowledged comments submitted by the Town of Sugar Camp concerning representation on the proposed Lake District Board. It was clarified that state statute requires appointment of a town representative to a lake district, but the representative is not required to be a member of the town board. Chair Jensen noted that there had been some misunderstanding regarding this requirement and that the Town of Sugar Camp had since received clarification.

Additional discussion focused on local government concerns about the creation of a new taxing authority through a lake district. Chair Jensen noted that existing lake districts in the area have remained focused on their intended purposes, particularly aquatic invasive species management. The Kathan Lake District proposal was described as

Aug. 12 - 2026

Land & Water Conservation Committee

~~July 8, 2026~~

VCL&WCD Staff: Staff shared highlights from their monthly reports (on file). Wirt was working on the budget and paying bills. Sheehan shared another **Lumberjack Grant Proposal** that arrived too late for an agenda amendment, and was only found at the last minute it needed to be presented to the Vilas LCC in addition to the Oneida LCC. This is for the Northwoods Lights Out! Dark Skies Project which will create a 1 year program to focus on protecting dark skies as a Natural Resource in Northern Wisconsin. Sheehan presented the program would educate about better lighting choices for homes and businesses; grow Northwoods Lights Out! events; investigate the development of future Dark Skies preserve and bring in additional partners. The long-term goal would be to expand the program to the 10 northern counties served by Lumberjack. Higley gave an online webinar about Shorelines 101, organized the Vilas County Volunteer Thank You party (which was well attended and appreciated). She has been doing AIS and aquatic plant surveys as well.

Lake Organization Reports:

-Tomlanovich reported that Long Lake had created an open letter to the Town of Phelps on their position on Wake boats and Float planes on their lakes (on file).

-Carolyn Ritter sent in the Little St. Germain report. They completed chemical treatment for EWM and there will be a follow up assessment in fall to determine success. They have funds to repair the boat landing and will wait for the DNR upgrade in 2028. The Annual meeting will be Sept 6th.

-The Manitowish Chain sent in their latest newsletter (on file).

Lumberjack RC&D: Mary George, Vilas at-large representative, gave a run down of the funding changes that Lumberjack is experiencing and planning for 2027. Next meeting is Oct 28th at Trees for tomorrow, Eagle River. **NRCS:** No report received. **NC Land + Water:** Area Tour is Sept 10 in Athens WI. **WI Land + Water:** No report received. **WHIP:** hired new WHIP executive director, Janelle Lekies, and she has been invited to attend a future LCC meeting to meet the committee. **APHIS:** No report received. **North Central Regional Planning:** No report received.

Out of County Travel: None planned.