

STATE OF WISCONSIN

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JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Howard Marklein
Representative Mark Born

Date: December 5, 2024

Re: DNR Reports to JFC

Attached are reports on land management contracts on department properties from the Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to s. 23.0912(2), Stats.

These reports are being provided for your information only. No action by the Committee is required. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Attachments

HM:MB:jm

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Land Management Contracting Report - FY 2023
November 15, 2024

Introduction

S. 23.0912(2), Wis. Stats., as created in the 2007-09 Biennial Budget (2007 Act 20) requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to submit a report to the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF) concerning land management contracts on department properties. This document is intended to satisfy that requirement.

Statutory requirement language

23.0912 Land management, maintenance, and improvement activities.

23.0912(1g) The department may contract with nonprofit conservation organizations and other 3rd parties to perform land management, maintenance, and improvement activities on department land.

23.0912(2) The department shall prepare, for the joint committee on finance, an annual report concerning any contracts into which the department enters under sub. (1g) during each fiscal year. For each contract entered, the report shall include information concerning the cost of the contract, the activities performed under the contract, and an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the contract. The department shall submit the report to the committee no later than November 15 for the preceding fiscal year, and shall submit the first report no later than November 15, 2008.

Definitions and scope of existing statutes

23.0955(1) In this section, "nonprofit conservation organization" means a nonprofit corporation, a charitable trust or other nonprofit association whose purposes include the acquisition of property for conservation purposes and that is described in section 501(c)(3) of the internal revenue code and is exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the internal revenue code.

23.0917(1)(c) "Department land" means an area of land that is owned by the state, that is under the jurisdiction of the department and that is used for one of the purposes specified in s. [23.09\(2\)\(d\)](#).

Land management: For purposes of this report this term means maintenance, repair or replacement of paving (regardless of material used), buildings, wild or cultivated plants, or the land itself for habitat or other recreational purposes. It includes structures associated with the specific purposes noted in s. [23.09\(2\)](#); it does not include maintenance associated with general office operations or other activities not clearly related to such purposes.

Examples of Items Included in Report

Fish hatchery facilities
 Habitat management
 Prescribed burning
 State park visitor centers and services
 Trail construction or maintenance
 (whether paved or unpaved)

Examples of Items Excluded from Report

Office buildings or facilities
 Law enforcement
 DNR staff training
 Equipment purchases/maintenance

Reasons for Contracting

Cost-effectiveness: The term is used here to indicate whether the product or service was purchased at a lower cost than if it had been provided by state employees.

Availability of DNR resources to perform work: Often the Department lacks available state employees with the necessary knowledge or time to perform the work. Also, the department may lack specialized equipment necessary to perform tasks.

Methodology of Report

In compiling the 2023 report, the Department identified multiple types of work that were contracted for rather than performed utilizing state employees. As in prior years, the analysis determined the work that was contracted for would have been outside of the Department's expertise, state personnel were unavailable to accomplish the work given the timeliness of the project, or contracting was the most efficient way to accomplish the necessary work. The following summaries describe the types of land management work that the Department contracted out.

Boat Access Site Land Maintenance: \$276,883

Boat access site maintenance encompasses several common activities requiring heavy materials transfer. Due to the remote location of many boat access sites that the Department administers, coupled with reduced staffing levels, it is frequently more cost effective to contract for work at these locations. In addition, much of the work is related to gravel parking lot maintenance, paving, pier installations, pier removal and snowplowing for which it is frequently cheaper to contract for rather than utilize existing staff time to accomplish.

Habitat Land Maintenance: \$1,703,515

One of the more common services the Department contracts for is earth-moving, whether in the form of soil or rock. This work requires access to quarries and rock-crushing facilities as well as the equipment needed to load, transport and install large, bulky and very heavy loads. Costs related to habitat land maintenance also involved moving soil and rock to excavate channels for culverts, place the culverts, and replace the soil and rock. Contractors also provided and installed broken and crushed rock erosion control material (riprap) along stream banks. Brush clearing and tree removal are also often contracted for. This work is typically contracted for due to unavailability of DNR personnel during periods of reduced LTE capacity coupled with the timeliness of the

projects. These costs are often cyclical, and reflect the need to perform additional, intensive work on specific areas.

Fish Hatchery Land/Facility Maintenance: \$255,517

These costs are often related to hatcheries maintenance and repairs which the DNR may not have staff trained to perform or it is more cost efficient to contract for this work.

Invasive Species Control: \$908,953

Invasive species control is very seasonal. Due to the timing of LTE hires, reassigning existing permanent employees to accomplish these projects would require setting aside other high-priority work.

Land Maintenance: \$7,252,501

There are a variety of costs in this category associated with work that the Department may not have the capacity to perform due to vacancies or a compressed time period in which to perform work and it is frequently cheaper to contract for rather than utilize existing staff time to accomplish. Costs related to repairs and maintenance of the Department lands are included in this category such as dredging projects, grading and gravel work, mulching work, repairs and improvements to roads and parking lots, construction and reconstruction projects, and counseling and analysis services. In addition, contracts for work related to herbicide spraying to prepare land for restoration are included here.

Many of the costs identified in the other categories are present here if there was not enough detail to place them in a more detailed category.

Tree Planting: \$197,145

Tree planting is a necessary part of land management, and it is done during the spring in order to maximize the chance of survival. This is also the time when Department staff are getting buildings and other operations up and running. The primary reason these projects are contracted for is a lack of available staff time to accomplish the work. Given the short time frame and range of other critical work, it is often not possible for existing staff to accomplish the projects.

Facilities Maintenance: \$4,102,905

Contracts related to facilities maintenance are in response to a variety of needs; however, most of the contracts are related to capital development projects, specifically facility repair and maintenance. Facilities maintained in this category span the full range of facilities owned and maintained by the department including: marinas, shooting ranges, public entrance and visitor stations, campgrounds, well drilling and well abandonment. Utilizing contractors for these types of expenses is both cost effective and necessary as the Department typically does not have trained personnel available to perform these types of work. The Department contracts for technical work,

including asbestos removal and multiple construction-related services for which the Department lacks the capacity or technical skills to perform.

Trail Maintenance: \$888,201

The Department contracts for snowmobile grooming services with local snowmobile clubs utilizing statutorily authorized, dedicated funds for this purpose. In addition, the costs to mow, remove brush, perform minor tread repair and facility maintenance along trails are included here. A majority of the contracts are related to capital development projects specifically major trail repair, trail building and maintenance. Utilizing contractors for these types of expenses is both cost effective and necessary as the Department typically does not have trained personnel available to perform these types of work.

Dike/Dam Land Maintenance: \$31,780

A majority of these contracts are related to capital development projects specifically dike and dam upgrades and maintenance as well as facility repair and maintenance. Utilizing contractors for these types of expenses is both cost effective and necessary as the Department typically does not have trained personnel available to perform these types of work.

Summary

The Department of Natural Resources contracts with private companies and non-profit conservation organizations to implement high-priority land management projects for which state employees and/or equipment are not available. In most cases the Department does not have the necessary equipment, training or capacity to do the work.

Category Summary

Boat Access Site Maintenance	\$ 276,883
Habitat Land Maintenance	\$ 1,703,515
Hatcheries	\$ 255,517
Invasive Species Control	\$ 908,953
Land Maintenance	\$ 7,252,501
Tree Planting	\$ 197,145
Facilities Maintenance	\$ 4,102,905
Trails Maintenance	\$ 888,201
Dike/Dam Maintenance	\$ 31,780
Total:	\$ 15,617,401

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Boat Access Site Land Maintenance: \$317,470

Boat access site maintenance encompasses several common activities requiring heavy materials transfer. Due to the remote location of many boat access sites that the Department administers, coupled with reduced staffing levels, it is frequently more cost effective to contract for work at these locations. In addition, much of the work is related to gravel parking lot maintenance, paving, pier installations, pier removal and snowplowing for which it is frequently cheaper to contract for rather than utilize existing staff time to accomplish.

Habitat Land Maintenance: \$4,252,436

One of the more common services the Department contracts for is earth-moving, whether in the form of soil or rock. This work requires access to quarries and rock-crushing facilities as well as the equipment needed to load, transport and install large, bulky and very heavy loads. Costs related to habitat land maintenance also involved moving soil and rock to excavate channels for culverts, place the culverts, and replace the soil and rock. Contractors also provided and installed broken and crushed rock erosion control material (riprap) along stream banks. Brush clearing and tree removal are also often contracted for. This work is typically contracted for due to unavailability of DNR personnel during periods of reduced LTE capacity coupled with the timeliness of the

projects. These costs are often cyclical, and reflect the need to perform additional, intensive work on specific areas.

Fish Hatchery Land/Facility Maintenance: \$622,158

These costs are often related to hatcheries maintenance and repairs which the DNR may not have staff trained to perform or it is more cost efficient to contract for this work.

Invasive Species Control: \$796,673

Invasive species control is very seasonal. Due to the timing of LTE hires, reassigning existing permanent employees to accomplish these projects would require setting aside other high-priority work.

Land Maintenance: \$5,588,516

There are a variety of costs in this category associated with work that the Department may not have the capacity to perform due to vacancies or a compressed time period in which to perform work and it is frequently cheaper to contract for rather than utilize existing staff time to accomplish. Costs related to repairs and maintenance of the Department lands are included in this category such as dredging projects, grading and gravel work, mulching work, repairs and improvements to roads and parking lots, construction and reconstruction projects, and counseling and analysis services. In addition, contracts for work related to herbicide spraying to prepare land for restoration are included here.

Many of the costs identified in the other categories are present here if there was not enough detail to place them in a more detailed category.

Tree Planting: \$194,937

Tree planting is a necessary part of land management, and it is done during the spring in order to maximize the chance of survival. This is also the time when Department staff are getting buildings and other operations up and running. The primary reason these projects are contracted for is a lack of available staff time to accomplish the work. Given the short time frame and range of other critical work, it is often not possible for existing staff to accomplish the projects.

Facilities Maintenance: \$3,578,993

Contracts related to facilities maintenance are in response to a variety of needs; however, most of the contracts are related to capital development projects, specifically facility repair and maintenance. Facilities maintained in this category span the full range of facilities owned and maintained by the department including: marinas, shooting ranges, public entrance and visitor stations, campgrounds, well drilling and well abandonment. Utilizing contractors for these types of expenses is both cost effective and necessary as the Department typically does not have trained personnel available to perform these types of work. The Department contracts for technical work,

including asbestos removal and multiple construction-related services for which the Department lacks the capacity or technical skills to perform.

Trail Maintenance: \$729,609

The Department contracts for snowmobile grooming services with local snowmobile clubs utilizing statutorily authorized, dedicated funds for this purpose. In addition, the costs to mow, remove brush, perform minor tread repair and facility maintenance along trails are included here. A majority of the contracts are related to capital development projects specifically major trail repair, trail building and maintenance. Utilizing contractors for these types of expenses is both cost effective and necessary as the Department typically does not have trained personnel available to perform these types of work.

Dike/Dam Land Maintenance: \$187,800

A majority of these contracts are related to capital development projects specifically dike and dam upgrades and maintenance as well as facility repair and maintenance. Utilizing contractors for these types of expenses is both cost effective and necessary as the Department typically does not have trained personnel available to perform these types of work.

Summary

The Department of Natural Resources contracts with private companies and non-profit conservation organizations to implement high-priority land management projects for which state employees and/or equipment are not available. In most cases the Department does not have the necessary equipment, training or capacity to do the work.

Category Summary

Boat Access Site Maintenance	\$ 317,470
Habitat Land Maintenance	\$ 4,252,436
Hatcheries	\$ 622,158
Invasive Species Control	\$ 796,673
Land Maintenance	\$ 5,588,516
Tree Planting	\$ 194,937
Facilities Maintenance	\$ 3,578,993
Trails Maintenance	\$ 729,609
Dike/Dam Maintenance	\$ 187,800
Total:	\$ 16,268,593