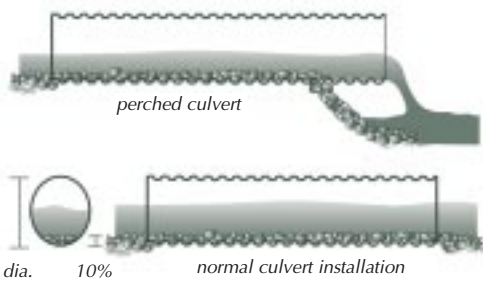# Funding offered for fish friendly culverts

Fishing is important to the quality of life and the economy of Wisconsin, but many fish populations have declined. One reason is culverts, crossings and dams that fragment habitat and prevent movement. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has funds available through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program for replacing old culverts with new, fish friendly ones.

Some common problems for fish can also indicate culvert deterioration, installation problems, and potential road base damage. Perched culverts where one or both ends are above the stream bottom are an example. Not only do they totally prevent fish passage, but water action against the ends can undermine the culvert and saturate the road base.

perched culvert

dia.   10%   *normal culvert installation*

from Fish Friendly Culverts

"Sometimes the solution is burying the culvert deeper," says Bill Peterson of the USFWS at Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. "Bottomless culverts also work very well when they have good support on the sides and ends." USFWS funded projects in the Great Lakes region have aided brook trout, sturgeon and paddlefish. Walleye, muskie, and endangered or threatened species like mussels would also be considered, he says.

For small projects—a few thousand dollars—funding is often easily available. Larger projects involve a grant application process. Funding is usually about 50% of the project cost. The first point of contact is your county's UW Extension Natural Resources agent.

"A lot of information can be provided to local officials on what it takes to improve or restore fish passage," says Peterson. "We also like to work with partners like Trout Unlimited and local angling groups. And the projects can be done on public and private lands."

Spring is a good time for reviewing your roadway drainage systems. Snowmelt flooding often reveals culverts that are too small or failing. It's also the season for repairs and reconstruction projects. If you have culverts that need improvement, consider asking for help.

Sizing and placing culverts correctly can be complicated. It is important to consider local stream history, watershed conditions, storm intensity and frequency, and the life cycle requirements of fish along with backwater elevations, maximum velocities, and road over-

topping frequency. Culverts on navigable streams require permits from DNR or other agency.

Hiring a professional engineer to coordinate the design may be money well spent. There are also many local sources of assistance including your County Land and Water Conservation Department, District Natural Resources Transportation Liaison, and County UW Extension Natural Resources agents. They can advise on Fish Friendly Culverts, and help put you on the road to financial assistance for your project.

Contact the T.I.C. for a copy of the pamphlet Fish Friendly Culverts, or view it on-line at: **http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/culverts/ fishfriendlyculverts.pdf.** *The T.I.C. also offers copies of the* **Drainage Manual** *for help with evaluating roadway drainage, and the T.I.C. bulletin* **Culverts—Proper Use and Installation,** *No. 15. For more information on USFWS fish passage assistance, visit the Wisconsin Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program website at* **http://midwest.fws.gov/ WisconsinPartners** *and the USFWS Fish Passage website at* **http://midwest.fws.gov/ Fisheries/topic-fishpass.htm.**

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