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New Study Estimates Wisconsin Wetlands Contribute Billions in Economic Benefits Annually

February 9, Madison WI. A new study found that Wisconsin's wetlands are worth between \$3.2 billion to \$152 billion in benefits every year. The study, a *Rapid Assessment of the Economic Value of Wisconsin's Wetlands*, is the first ever broad valuation of ecosystem services provided by Wisconsin's wetlands, and one of only a few on this scale in the U.S. It was completed by [Earth Economics](#) as part of a new partnership with the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA).

The study identified 22 ecosystem services provided by wetlands and assigned values to 10 of them based on values reported in academically peer-reviewed literature. The 10 wetland services valued included waste treatment, water regulation (including flood control), water supply, disturbance prevention, gas and climate regulation, aesthetic and recreation, and habitat and nursery values.

Another key finding from the study is that if wetlands were treated as economic assets providing a stream of benefits over the course of 100 years, the present value of Wisconsin's 5.3 million acres of wetlands would be between \$81 billion and \$3.7 trillion (using a 4% discount rate).

"These figures are actually very conservative because we don't have comparable values to plug in for 12 of the 22 services Wisconsin's wetlands provide," said Earth Economics Chief Economist and Executive Director, David Batker. "Even so, it's clear that Wisconsin's wetlands have an enormous economic value." Batker also notes that while natural systems appreciate over time, the infrastructure we build to replace wetlands depreciates and falls apart over time.

Batker was recently in Wisconsin to deliver a Plenary Address on the economic value of wetlands at Wisconsin Wetlands Association's (WWA) 17th Annual Wetland Conference. His talk, *The Economic Value of Urban Wetlands: Revealing our Best Investments* kicked off the two-day event focused on Urban Wetlands.

"Earth Economics is adding important new information to the public debate on wetland issues in Wisconsin and across the nation," says WWA's Executive Director, Tracy Hames. "This study is the

first in a series of projects we plan to launch with Earth Economics to ensure that the economic value of Wisconsin's wetlands are considered during policy debates and land use decision making."

Input from wetland professionals, land use planners, and watershed advocates will be critical in this work.

To view a copy of Earth Economics' *Rapid Assessment of the Economic Value of Wisconsin's Wetlands* visit: <http://www.wisconsinwetlands.org/WIWetlandsRapidAssessment.pdf>

Questions about WWA's new wetland valuation initiative should be directed to WWA's Policy Director, Erin O'Brien at erin.obrien@wisconsinwetlands.org/608-250-9971.

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About Wisconsin Wetlands Association

WWA is dedicated to the protection, restoration and enjoyment of wetlands and associated ecosystems through science-based programs, education and advocacy. WWA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. www.wisconsinwetlands.org.

About David Batker and Earth Economics

Chief Economist and Executive Director of Earth Economics David Batker has completed over a dozen path breaking ecological economics studies. Working with clients and partners as diverse as the World Bank, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, state legislatures, and others, Batker's ecological economics studies have helped change policies at the international, national, and local levels. His new book, [*What's the Economy For, Anyway?*](#), was named Best Business Book for Fall 2011 by Publishers Weekly and will be available for purchase at the conference.