

Supporting wetland protection across the nation

While at Wisconsin Wetlands Association work for the wetlands of Wisconsin, wetlands all across the country need protection and care. That's why we love supporting people who are starting wetland protection organizations in their states. Here are two of those stories:

Two weeks later, Savage met with WWA's Policy Programs Director Erin O'Brien at a national conference, where they talked for several hours.

"Erin suggested we take whatever inspiration and ideas we needed from WWA and turn it into our own to get a jump start," Savage said. "And that was exactly what we did. WWA's mission statement and principles helped us organize our thinking."

By June of 2015, Savage and a group of fellow committed wetland supporters had registered the Carolina Wetlands Association as an official nonprofit.

One of the founding volunteer board members is Laura England, who was Outreach Programs Director with WWA from 2004-2008. England's work for the Carolina Wetlands Association includes co-

ordinating a Wetland Treasures program modeled after WWA's Wetland Gems® program, which she was instrumental in developing when she worked for WWA.

The Carolina Wetlands Association is also pursuing programs for landowners, local governments, and state-level decision-makers.

"We have a lot of work to do in terms of convincing decision makers that wetland protection and restoration should be made a priority," England said.

You can learn more about the Carolina Wetlands Association on their website: www.carolinawetlands.org.



The Carolina Wetlands Association leads an educational field trip to a forested wetland in South Carolina.

CAROLINA WETLANDS ASSOCIATION

Carolina Wetlands Association

In 2014, the North Carolina state legislature cut support for their wetland monitoring programs. Rick Savage, who had spent years monitoring wetlands for the state, knew he had to step up to make sure someone was still watching out for wetlands. Savage was looking for wetland organizations he could learn from when he came across Wisconsin Wetlands Association.

"In March of 2015, I got an email from a close friend with a link to WWA's website," Savage said. "I spent about two minutes looking at your website and I said 'I have got to do this for the Carolinas.' There was no doubt about it in my mind."



A group exploring a vernal pool at a workshop hosted by the Ohio Wetlands Association.

RAY STEWART

Ohio Wetlands Association

When Ray Stewart, a retired science teacher, became the leader of a wetlands advocacy group in Ohio, he knew he had an opportunity to grow the locally-based volunteer group into a statewide wetlands non-profit. Now, six years after he took the helm, the Ohio Wetlands Association is a registered non-profit with more than 1,000 members.

Stewart isn't stopping there. He has looked at WWA as a model for how the Ohio Wetlands Association can continue to expand and protect wetlands.

"We often look to the history of WWA to see how they went from being a small volunteer organization to a staffed organization," Stewart said. "We hope to model that."

The Ohio Wetlands Association plans to supplement their expert board with paid staff and project managers over time.

Even as a volunteer group, the Ohio Wetlands Association has created strong programming, in-

cluding starting an annual wetland science conference, which is now in its fifth year, with last year's conference attendance reaching building capacity. This Ohio conference was modeled after WWA's annual Wetland Science Conference.

The Ohio Wetlands Association has also recently raised awareness of and support for wetlands during a development dispute, helping educate residents about their local wetlands and supporting grassroots advocacy efforts. The Association's efforts helped stop the development, though recently legal battles over the property have again emerged.

"We're really proud we helped determine the destiny of this property people are enjoying," Stewart said.

The Ohio Wetlands Association also runs an educational vernal pool program and hopes to expand its citizen science component.

You can learn more about the Ohio Wetlands Association on their website: www.ohwetlands.org.