

Celebrating Our Streams in the Yahara River Watershed
Stream Restoration Panel: Food for Thought

1. Stream restoration – overview

What are realistic goals that groups and volunteers could advocate for that would “fit” the particular ecological contexts, regulatory requirements and water quality standards in watersheds like the Yahara River watershed? I think we are most familiar with the goal of meeting state “designated use” for trout fisheries on cold water streams “impaired” for suspended sediments. We are less familiar with what is possible for restoring warm water streams that have been re-channelized and separated from their associated wetlands and floodplains in agricultural areas. We also hear less about what is possible for urban streams that have become little more than stormwater drainage ditches.

2. “Thinking Outside the Channel”

The absence of trout streams in the Yahara River watershed, specifically, and Rock River Basin, generally, do pose constraints – from funding to building coalitions of diverse stakeholders. For me the key question is -- *Do stream restoration projects always need to be tied to the specific goal of improved fish (in many cases, trout) habitat?* It seems to me that if we have broader goals like restoring navigability, connecting streams to wetlands and floodplains, reducing runoff (and thus phosphorus loading), improving riparian and aquatic habitat for herps and macro-invertebrates as well as fish habitat (to say nothing of birds) then we can enhance the overall ecological functions streams provide within a watershed.

3. Stream restoration – Local groups spearheading stream restoration projects –

What is the value of local participation? How has local participation benefited your organization and your organizations ability to complete projects from invasive species removal and creating canoe trails to advocating for land purchases and cattle fences? What are some of the challenges? What barriers were faced in accomplishing broad based citizen involvement?

4. Stream restoration –Building Partnerships

How can partnerships be formed among disparate groups such as local watershed groups, farmers and municipalities? How to translate large scale projects to the local level?