



# Rock River Reflections

A publication of the *Rock River COALITION* produced in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Extension Fall 2007 Volume 10, Number 4

## Local Group Explores Unique Partnership with the RRC

The Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed (FBCW) have been meeting since March 2007, developing a vision, purpose and action plan for their group.

Their purpose is: to educate themselves and others about the Badfish Creek Watershed and to work in partnership to improve riparian habitat and water quality, and to encourage land use policies that protect the Creek. They plan to do this by implementing the following:

1. Educational programs: Including holding monthly presentations and a fall watershed tour for their steering committee
2. Research studies: Such as a watershed inventory of springs, access points, riparian areas, non-point source areas of concerns, and doing water quality and sediment studies (for toxins)
3. Stream monitoring: They are participating in the RRC stream monitoring program
4. Habitat restoration: By assisting landowners in finding available resources and working in partnership on stream bank restorations
5. Environmentally friendly land use practices

A core group of dedicated individuals and many other interested folks have worked on this plan. As they explored going further, they decided

they wanted to put their energy into projects and education, rather than organizational logistics. Thus they are working with the Rock River Coalition Board to become an affiliate or committee and function under the auspices of the RRC Board.

As an active part of the Coalition they will function under our by-laws and policies. The RRC is just beginning to work out the details regarding funding, policies and other logistics. If the partnership works, it could be a viable process and opportunity for other small groups of dedicated individuals in the basin.



Caroline Werner, Chair of FBCW, enjoys a fall day monitoring the creek, along with Jeff Steven and staff from the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

photo by Jeff Steven

### Help support this newsletter and the Coalition's efforts in the Rock River Basin

*RRC membership is for the calendar year. Members will soon be receiving their membership letter.*

*If you are not currently a member, please consider becoming one. The Rock River Coalition does not receive any support from the DNR or other agencies for general operating expenses or for many of our programs. We depend on memberships and donations to keep the office open, projects such as citizen monitoring active and our member services functioning.*

*Since this is a joint newsletter with UW-Extension, the RRC is responsible for funding a significant portion of the printing and mailing costs. So if you are receiving it free and find it valuable, clip out the membership form on Page 7 and mail it in. It only costs \$25 a year for an individual to both be kept informed of activity in the basin and to help support the good work the RRC does in the basin.*

*Thank you, President Joe Dorava*

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# Language of Conservation: It's not just what you say ...but how you say it

By Bret Shaw, UW-Extension Environmental Communications Specialist

Most of us have heard the advice that "it's not just what you say, but how you say it." We intuitively know it's true that the words we choose make a huge difference in how our communication is received by others. However, when talking about environmental issues such as preserving the quality of the Rock River, it's easy to use specialized language that may not be the most understandable or appealing for the average citizen, particularly when talking about a topic we know a lot about.

A study conducted on behalf of the Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Land provides some valuable clues about how we might discuss conservation-related issues to increase the public's receptivity to our messages about improving the environmental, recreational and economic resources of the Rock River Basin. The findings are based on telephone interviews and focus groups conducted with 1,500 likely voters across the nation.

The purpose of this research was to provide insights about how to translate language about conservation issues into everyday vocabulary that resonates with the general public and provide a list of easy-to-follow, broad "rules" for communication. Select findings related to water quality issues and recommendations that are most relevant to the work of the Rock River Coalition are included below. It's important to note that these suggestions focus on communicating with citizens who are not particularly engaged in environmental issues rather than conservation groups who tend to be more aware of ecological topics.

The study indicated that people overwhelmingly viewed water quality as being a very important issue. When communicating about this issue with citizens, the authors stressed the need to talk about "preserving" water quality. Data indicated that voters do not view water quality as a problem now, but they do want to preserve the good water quality they perceive they already have and they recognize a need to invest in preserving the quality of their water.

The study also suggests that it is beneficial to use phrases that imply ownership and inclusion, such as "our" and "we." So, for issues pertaining to the Rock River Coalition, it is "OUR river" and "WE need to protect OUR river..." Pointing out that the Rock River is a resource that belongs to all of us and explicitly including others as part of the in-group that has a stake in the river increases the likelihood that people will care about your message.

The authors also encourage conservationists to evoke protecting wildlife as a way to encourage stewardship of natural resources - though the phrase "wildlife habitat" works better for people who are more active in environmental causes. Interestingly, the study revealed that people interpret "wildlife" to fit their locale. For example, urban residents view rabbits and birds on their lawns as "wildlife." The term "wildlife" also resonates because there is a strong sense that animals are voiceless and need someone to look out for their needs.

### **A powerful message from the Rock River Coalition:**

*"We need to protect the Rock River, natural areas and wildlife habitat for future generations. Unless we act to protect these areas now, many of our beautiful, natural areas will disappear before our children and grandchildren have a chance to enjoy them."*

Another recommendation of the report is to link conservation to "future generations." Evoking children and future generations consistently tests very well as a rationale for preservation of natural resources. For example, 64% of respondents rated providing "opportunities for kids to learn about the

environment" as a very important reason for their state or local community to protect land from development. Significantly, there does not tend to be a difference in the overall ratings between parents and non-parents in their reaction to messages which evoke children or future generations. An example of an argument that could be used in the Rock River Basin might be the following: "We need to protect the Rock River, natural areas and wildlife habitat for future generations. Unless we act to protect these areas now, many of our beautiful, natural areas will disappear before our children and grandchildren have a chance to enjoy them."

It is also worth considering labeling yourselves as "conservationists" rather than "environmentalists." Respondents in this study were more likely to view themselves as "conservationists" than environmentalists. Additionally, people were more likely to be skeptical about the agendas of "environmental groups" as compared to conservation groups.

One of the strongest recommendations to emerge from the study was to avoid ever using the phrase "conservation easement" when communicating with the general public.

The research demonstrated clearly and unequivocally that the language the environmental community has been using on this issue has hurt in positioning it with the public. Rather than using the term "conservation easement," the authors recommend saying "land preservation



## Mission

*"To educate and bring together people of diverse interests to protect and improve the economic, environmental, cultural, and recreational resources of the Rock River Basin in Wisconsin"*

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**Photos:** Stephen Derbyshire, Dennis Egge, Friends of Allen Creek Watershed, Jeff Steven, Jeff Strobel, Suzanne Wade

*RRC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, providing equal opportunity in employment & programming.*

*If you need special accommodation for programs please contact the RRC at least two weeks in advance.*



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## RRC GFLOW Project Update

On Dec. 14, progress on the GFLOW model will be presented by USGS staff at the UW-Extension Office, 864 Collins Road, Jefferson.

### Agenda

9:00 - 9:15 Registration

9:15 - 9:30 Update on model financial support and RRC Oversight: Joe Dorava, RRC President and GFLOW Coordinator

9:30 - 10:30 Model development update: Paul Juckem and Chuck Dunning, USGS

10:30 - 11:30 Discussion on the questions municipalities and others are anticipating using the model to address.

There has been considerable success in collecting funds to support the basin GFLOW model. We continue to promote the model and look for sponsors to help support coordination, administration, and future maintenance of the model.

We greatly appreciate model sponsorships and anticipate making continued contact with Towns, Villages, Cities, Counties, Lake Associations and Districts and other organizations in the basin to solicit participation and to help everyone better understand our GFLOW modeling effort.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting; feel free to contact me directly should you have a question about our GFLOW modeling effort: Joe Dorava 800-261-6468 or jdor@vierbicher.com.

### GFLOW Sponsors

#### COUNTIES

Dodge County  
Green Lake County  
Jefferson County  
Rock County

#### CITIES

City of Fitchburg  
City of Janesville  
City of Lake Mills  
City of Watertown  
City of Whitewater

#### VILLAGES

Village of Johnson Creek  
Village of Theresa  
Village of Hustisford

#### TOWNSHIPS

Town of Aztalan  
Town of Beaver Dam  
Town of Clyman  
Town of Concord  
Town of Emmet  
Town of Lake Mills  
Town of Portland  
Town of Shields  
Town of Sumner  
Town of Williamstown

#### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

US Fish & Wildlife Service  
US Geological Survey

#### CONSULTING FIRMS

Vierbicher Associates  
Kunkel Engineering

#### LAKES DISTRICTS/ASSOCIATIONS & NON-PROFITS

Fox Lake Inland Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District  
Friends of Horicon Marsh  
Lake Sinissippi Association  
Lake Sinissippi Improvement District  
Rock Lake Improvement Association Inc.  
Wisconsin Water Well Association  
plus several individuals and earlier municipal donations

### GFLOW Goal Achieved:

Current sponsorships, pledged or received:  
**\$95,125**

Next goal is to increase sponsorship by \$10,000 to cover model maintenance costs.

# 2008 Farmland Conservation Program Signup Ends Soon

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced that the signup for agricultural conservation practices will be from September 4 through November 16 for 2008 funding. Pat Leavenworth, State Conservationist for NRCS in Wisconsin, said there are a number of changes to the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) this year in addition to the earlier availability. EQIP is the primary program available to provide financial assistance for agricultural conservation practices.

"This year, a number of new conservation practices will be offered, including Waste Facility Cover, Mulching, Obstruction Removal, and Subsurface Drains, in addition to the more than 50 other practices that have been eligible in the past," said Leavenworth. "Also, to help streamline payments, EQIP no longer does "cost-sharing" – instead it offers flat-rate payments based on a schedule for each particular practice. Farmers will know up-front



No-till cropping, as shown here, is just one of the many practices available for farmers interested in improving their farm practices while protecting water quality.

what the payment will be, not a percentage of the costs as in the past."

All eligible applications received by the end of the ranking period on November 16, 2007 will be evaluated and ranked for 2008 funds. Signup is at the NRCS offices in USDA Service Centers statewide. NRCS anticipates \$17 million in funds for Wisconsin; however, that figure could change depending on Congressional action on the Farm Bill. Of the \$17 million, an estimated \$4 million will go toward animal waste concerns.

For more information, see [www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wi.nrcs.usda.gov) under Programs, or contact the NRCS office at the USDA Service Center serving your county.

### Contact USDA Service Centers:

Columbia - 608-742-5361

Dane - 608-224-3750

Dodge - 920-386-9999, ext 3

Fond du Lac - 920-923-3033, ext 3

Green Lake - 920-294-6140, ext 3

Jefferson - 920-674-2020, ext 3

Rock - 608-754-6617

Walworth - 262-723-3216

Washington - 262-335-4801

Waukesha - 262-547-3754, ext 3

### Continued from Page 2: Language of Conservation

agreements" or "land protection agreements." Easements were interpreted so negatively by people in the study because the term made them feel they were being forced into doing (or not doing) something with part of their land. The word "easements" made them think of restrictions on their property when they purchased a home or land. However, "conservation" tends to be a more positive term and pairing this with the word "agreements" or "partnerships" made the concept much more acceptable.

Obviously, there is no single best way

Never use  
"Conservation Easement" use  
"land preservation agreements"  
or "land protection  
agreements."

to communicate about how encouraging environmental stewardship will work for all audiences. However, the research described above reminds us that the words we use in promoting our cause can potentially make a big difference in how people respond to what we say to them about preserving and protecting the Rock River Basin.

## Unbelievable Results!

The Zeloski Muck Farm located just west of Lake Mills, experienced tremendous change in 2006. It underwent significant restoration replacing corn and bean fields with restored prairies, open water, and marsh land. Citizen monitors of the area under the direction of Wetland Monitoring Coordinator Jerry Matzelle and field team leader Nolan Kollath are amazed with the variety of species and the pure numbers of birds, which have utilized the area this 'the birth year' of the marsh. A total of 162 species have spent time in the marsh and prairies, choosing it as a stopping point along their long migration route or making it their nesting area. Of these 29 were shorebirds the targeted type of birds for the project.

### Species of Interest Utilizing the Zeloski Marsh during 2007

Whooping Crane	Hudsonian Godwit
Short-eared Owl	White-fronted Goose
Ruddy Turnstone	Peregrine Falcon
American Bittern	Wilson's Phalarope
Common Moorhen	Red-necked Phalarope
Western Meadowlark	Bald Eagle
Black Tern	Brewers Blackbird
American Golden Plover	Forester's Tern
Semi-palmated Plover	Yellow-headed Blackbird
Baird's Sandpiper	Black Bellied Plover
Vesper Sparrow	White-rumped Sandpiper
American Pipit	Dickcissel
Orchard Oriole	Sedge Wren
Short & Long billed Dowitcher	
Black-crowned Night Heron	

Come enjoy a fall day of Wisconsin bird watching at the Lake Mills/Zeloski Marsh Wildlife area. Please contact Jerry Matzelle at 920-648-3380 if interested in becoming a member of the volunteer wetland citizen monitoring team.



© Night Heron photo by Jeff Strobel

A continuously updated list of species can be found at:

<http://ebird.org/content/wi>  
 -click on "View and Explore Data"  
 -click on "All Birds at a Location"  
 -click on "Hot Spots in Wisconsin" then "Continue"  
 -check the "Lake Mills WA-Zeloski Marsh Unit" box  
 -click on "Continue"

## How Much is that Shoreline Worth?

from work done by Bob Korth, UWEX Lake Specialist, & Douglas Miskowiak, UWEX Land Use Specialist

For some time there has been an interest in finding ways to show that clean, healthy lakes are important to our nation's economy. Some states such as Minnesota, New Hampshire, Maine and Wisconsin have had some economic studies, models and other work exploring how waterfront property values change when things such as water clarity or removal of shoreland vegetation change.

Actual economic value has been determined. This study by UW-Extension used a simple premise: if we could discover the length of the frontage around lakes and we had some idea of the going price of a front foot in a given county, we should be able to get a rough idea of the value of bare lakeshore frontage (without buildings or improvements) in a given county.

The approximate length around WI lakes, ponds, flowages, reservoirs (including the Great Lakes, but not including rivers or streams) is:

29,305 miles or 154.7 million feet of frontage – greater than the circumference of the earth around the equator.

If the average land value is \$1,000, then for each front foot of shoreline, that would equate to a total value for the frontage of all the lakes in Wisconsin of: **\$154.7 billion dollars.**

### How does this compare with agriculture and forestry land?

According to USDA Economic Research Services, total farmland in WI in 2002 was estimated at 15.7 million acres. Using a value of \$3,000/acre, this would equate to approximately \$46 billion dollars. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/StateFacts/WI.HTM> <http://cdp.wisc.edu/pdf/Wiscconsin%20Agricultural%20Land%20Prices1.pdf>

According to the US Forest Service, total forestland in WI in 2006 was estimated at 15.9 million acres. Using a value of \$3000/acre, this would equate to approximately \$48 billion dollars.



A fall view of Whitewater Lake - lakes are valuable assets to the basin, and worth efforts to control sediment and phosphorus to protect their water quality. -photo by Suzanne Wade

### How much is lake frontage worth in the Rock River Basin?

Nine billion dollars for just the land, not counting the buildings, roads and other improvements.

This was determined by totaling the values for all the counties in the basin. Except for Green and Green Lake counties, which weren't included as they have little acreage and no lakes in the basin.

Next a rough estimate of the number and size of lakes was made for the basin portion of each county that has land in more than one basin. (Columbia, Fond du Lac, Dane, Rock, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha). This total was multiplied by \$1,000/foot and rounded to the nearest billion. Which resulted in a total value of lakefront land in the Basin of **9 Billion Dollars.**

### How about rivers in the basin?

They have great value as well. We have about 3,900 river miles or 7,800 miles of river front property. This equals 41,184,000 feet of frontage. Using an average value of \$100/foot, the value of our river frontage would calculate out at \$4,118,400,000 or \$4 billion dollars.

This estimate for the Rock River Basin was a 'quick and dirty' estimate, we hope to explore actual values in the future.

### Length of Shoreline for Lakes, Ponds, Flowages and Reservoirs by County in the Rock River Basin

Conducted by Douglas Miskowiak 5/23/07  
 Data from WIDNR Hydro IV database based on 1:24,000 sources.  
 Statistics DO NOT include shorelines of rivers or streams.  
 Statistics DO include shorelines of islands.

County	# of FEET	# of MILES
Columbia	933,398.07	366.19
Dane	1,617,219.08	306.29
Dodge	2,383,454.83	451.42
Fond du Lac	1,404,492.29	265.99
Jefferson	1,044,933.65	197.91
Rock	512,034.69	96.98
Walworth	1,612,471.37	305.37
Washington	1,160,003.94	219.70
Waukesha	2,291,471.95	434.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,959,479.87</b>	<b>2,643.84</b>

Green and Green Lake counties are not included due to the small amount of land area in the Rock River Basin.

Estimated Value of Lake Frontage for the Rock River Basin - not including buildings and improvements

**\$9 Billion Dollars**

**Controlling Phosphorus results in Clearer Water and even Higher Values**

# Friends of Allen Creek Watershed

By Kim Karow, FACW

The Friends of Allen Creek Watershed (FACW) have been working on producing a baseline study that will help drive sound decision-making. Data gathered will help guide best management practices for landowners in the watershed, possible restoration activities and conservation priorities in and along the creek. The study will conclude in early summer 08 and include information on water quality, water chemistry, physical attributes of the creek (geomorphology), inventories of instream species such as macro-invertebrates, fish and mussels, terrestrial studies inventories of plants, dragonflies, butterflies and other insects, soils and land use among others.

This large robber fly was collected in the watershed (*Promachus vertebratus*). It is known to prey on dragonflies and bumblebees.



Starting in early spring members began collecting information on plant species and plant communities located in the watershed. The group focused on high quality areas. Among many interesting finds were large, intact tracts of high quality sedge meadow, low prairie, and calcareous fens. Above is thin-scaled cotton grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Spring Cress (*Cardamine bulbosa*).



This mating pair of double-striped bluet damselflies were found during the Friends of Allen Creek Bug Blitz. This species was unknown in Jefferson County prior to the group's studies. The double-striped bluet is a species of special concern in the state.



Lisie Kitchell leads a small group collecting and identifying freshwater mussels in the creek. The group will continue to survey during future outings. Care is taken to photograph and return live mussels to the creek, either imbedding them as they were found in the creek substrate or laying them on their side. Left to Right: Lisie Kitchell and Mark Anderson.



The group hosted an insect collection or "Bug Blitz" on July 14, 07 and collected insects using sweep nets and aspirators in several plant communities. Above, Peter Jacobs and Kerry Katovich look over some of the smallest insects collected in their aspirators. Aquatic insects were collected using kick sampling with D nets. Drs. Kerry and Nadine Katovich, UW-Whitewater, led the insect collecting and will be interpreting the data from the survey. To the right, Matt Loup and Nadine Katovich collect on the Allen Creek stream bank.



Throughout the year, FACW members have collected water quality data monthly using the DNR Tier II protocols. Left to right: Peter Jacobs, Elizabeth Chetney, Mark Anderson, Andy Selle

## Learning Can Be Fun

by Ed Grunden, RRC Monitoring Director

The date was October 12, 2007, the place was the Janesville Waste Water and Water Treatment Facility along the banks of the Rock River, and the students were from Janesville Parker High School. Mentors from the General Motors Plant, staff from the Rock River Coalition, Rock County Land Conservation Dept, and Janesville Waste Water facility combined to conduct a day of exploratory hands on learning for the student's from Mr. Bob Eicher's Advanced Placement Biology classes. Nearly fifty students enjoyed a field lab day along



the banks of the Rock River testing the water quality of the river. Chemical, Biotic Index, Habitat Assessment, and Physical Conditions such as flow and area were explored in this student-driven day of field lab testing. While enjoying being outside (warmer weather would have improved the event) and having fun, students were able to make their own determination of the water quality of the Rock. Thirty five percent of the students expressed finding the conditions not as bad as they predicted



photos by Dennis Egge

before beginning the lab testing. AP Biology students from Mr. Charles Kealy classes, Janesville Craig, also experienced a day of field testing on Friday October 19<sup>th</sup>.

Everyone involved expressed a very large thank you to the staff of the Janesville Waste Water facility for hosting the event.

## Update on bill to ban unnecessary use of phosphorus on lawns

The Senate Committee on Natural Resources heard testimony Aug. 28 on the proposed statewide ban on phosphorus in lawn fertilizer (SB 197).

The committee heard from over 20 citizens and organizations about how phosphorus is impacting lakes and rivers and the people who enjoy them, and about the efforts many communities are making to reduce phosphorus from entering their local waters. Banning the sale and application of unnecessary phosphorus in lawn fertilizer is one easy step to take as we continue to work towards reducing phosphorus and the algae blooms that result from the over fertilization of our lakes and streams. The Rock River Coalition was one of the groups who testified about this important matter.

Excess phosphorus is the number one reason for nuisance plant and algae growth in the basin. When the state budget is finally resolved, we hope this important bill will pass and be signed into law.

Add your voice to the legislative process - please thank the committee members for holding a hearing on this important issue and let them know you look forward to seeing this bill move forward:

Senator Mark Miller Sen.Miller@legis.wisconsin.gov  
Senator Robert Jauch Sen.Jauch@legis.wisconsin.gov  
Senator Neal Kedzie Sen.Kedzie@legis.wisconsin.gov  
Senator Dale Schultz Sen.Schultz@legis.wisconsin.gov  
Senator Robert Wirsch Sen.Wirsch@legis.wisconsin.gov

## RRC/UWEX nondiscrimination policy

Periodically, UW-Extension and the Coalition take steps to assure that our partners know and understand our policy of nondiscrimination. Neither the RRC nor the University of Wisconsin-Extension discriminate in the treatment of individuals, in the admission or access to its programs and activities, or in employment.

Further, UW-Extension and RRC will not participate with organizations or in activities which discriminate on the basis of any of the legally prohibited categories of discrimination. Categories of prohibited discrimination include race, color, gender/sex, creed, disability, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status, arrest or conviction record, or membership in the national guard, state defense force or any other reserve component of the military service.

Consistent with the Americans With Disabilities Act, persons who need materials in alternative format or other accommodations must write or call the UW-Extension contact person for the specific program or call the main telephone number of the Jefferson County Extension Office, 920-674-7295 at least ten (10) working days prior to the event.

If you need TTY access use 711 for Relay.

On behalf of Jefferson County Extension, the Rock River Coalition and the University of Wisconsin-Extension, I want to thank you for collaborating with our faculty and staff in their many educational endeavors and activities. We appreciate your support and working relationships as we provide programs designed to empower the diverse citizens of the Rock River Basin.

Suzanne Wade, UWEX & Joe Dorava, RRC President

## Many Rock County Residents in the Rock River Basin have Nitrate Concerns with Their Drinking Water

This past summer, residents in the Towns of LaPrairie (Rock River Basin) and Magnolia (Sugar River Basin) had the opportunity to test their water from their private drinking water wells and attend an educational meeting. The intent of the program was to provide a convenient well testing opportunity and at the same time help these communities better understand their community groundwater resources. Between the two towns, 65 households participated. Many people who had water tested were relieved to learn that their water was safe. Others were surprised to learn they had a variety of water quality problems.

The health-related problem most frequently found was nitrate-nitrogen, a common contaminant throughout much of Wisconsin. Fifty-nine percent of the water tests exceeded the drinking water limit of 10 milligrams per liter for nitrate-nitrogen. In the Rock River Basin portion - all samples had some nitrate-nitrogen contamination and 91% were over the enforcement limit of 10mg/l! Statewide roughly 10% of private wells exceed the drinking water standard for nitrate.

Such water is unsafe for pregnant women and infants to drink. This water interferes with the oxygen-carrying ability of the baby's blood. Nitrate may cause birth defects in the unborn, or miscarriages. In addition, elevated levels of nitrate are an indication that water is being influenced by human activity and may indicate that the well is susceptible to other potential contaminants.

The most common source of nitrate in groundwater is from agricultural fertilizers and animal waste, especially in areas such as Rock County where agriculture is widespread and is such an important part of the local economy. Other sources of nitrate include lawn fertilizer, septic systems, and other decomposing materials.

Nearly 40% of the samples showed the presence of coliform bacteria (46% in the Rock Basin). Coliform bacteria are living microorganisms found in soils and in human and animal wastes. They can enter wells through loose well caps, other well defects, or through cracks in the underground rocks. Coliform bacteria do not usually cause disease themselves, but may indicate a pathway for other disease-causing bacteria to enter the well. If disease-causing bacteria are present, a variety of flu-like illnesses and even hepatitis may result from drinking the water. Usually the source of the problem is quite local since bacteria do not normally travel long distances in groundwater. People should suspect bacteria problems if their water suddenly changes color or becomes cloudy, especially during spring snowmelt or after heavy rains. However, sometimes there are no symptoms.

Other important tests that some participants chose to have done included triazine, copper and lead. While no sample contained an unsafe triazine level, 73% contained a measurable amount of triazine type pesticides. In addition, 5% had an unsafe lead level and 5% were unsafe

because of high levels of copper. The source of lead and copper is usually household plumbing or new brass fixtures. Water that sits in the pipes can sometimes interact with plumbing, as a result, metals such as copper and lead sometimes end up in the water. People whose test results detect unsafe copper and lead levels should consider treating their water or simply avoid drinking water that has been sitting in the pipes for extended periods of time by running the water faucet for a few minutes before consuming.

In addition to learning about their individual test results, participants also had an opportunity to learn more about the groundwater resources in Rock County. Some of the areas of Rock County appear to be more susceptible to groundwater pollution because of differences in geology and soils within the county. However, what we do on the land-surface ultimately determines whether or not groundwater becomes polluted. The more a community knows about where their drinking water comes from, the easier it is to understand why it might be contaminated and what steps can be taken to ensure that the water you are drinking is safe.

Water quality can change over time. Because many contaminants can't be tasted or smelled, private well owners are encouraged to test their water for bacteria and nitrate once a year. Plans are being developed for further testing opportunities for other towns in Rock County.

The testing program was sponsored by the Towns of LaPrairie and Magnolia, UW-Extension and the Rock County Health Department. Water testing was performed at the Water and Environmental Analysis Lab at UW-Stevens Point.

For more information about drinking water safety or water testing opportunities contact the Rock County Health Department at 608-757-5441.

### Water Quality Tests for Home Drinking Water

The UWSP/UWEX Water and Environmental Analysis Lab, as well as many other private labs can test your drinking water quality.

Call toll free 877-383-9378, to receive more information from the UWSP lab. Below are some of their offerings.

Homeowners Package (\$40): Total Coliform Bacteria, Nitrate plus Nitrite-Nitrogen, pH, Alkalinity, Hardness, Chloride, Conductivity, Corrosivity Index.

Metal Package (\$38): Arsenic, Calcium, Copper, Iron, Lead, Magnesium, Manganese, Potassium, Sodium, Sulfate and Zinc.

Pesticide Triazine Screen (\$22)

For more information on these and other tests:

[www.uwsp.edu/cnr/etf](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/etf)

## Jefferson County Farmland Conservation Easement Program

(abbreviated from Jefferson County Fact Sheet)

Jefferson County can now accept donated land protection agreements. The county is also working toward a voluntary purchase of development rights program for agricultural land. To learn more go to <http://www.co.jefferson.wi.us/Farm/index.htm>

The land protection agreements, also known as conservation easements, are voluntary and permanent legal agreements that restrict the way land can be used. They do so by separating some of the rights of landownership—the rights to develop, subdivide or mine, for instance—from the rest of the rights of ownership. Those separated rights are transferred to a conservation committed public agency, nonprofit land trust, or both.

Thanks to a law passed in August 2006, landowners who donate conservation easements to government bodies or land trusts are able to deduct fair market value of their donation up to 50% of their gross income and can carry forward

deductions in future years.

Farmers, those who receive more than 50% of their income from farming, may deduct the fair market value of their donation up to 100% of their adjusted gross income and can carry forward this deduction as well. Eligible conservation easements must allow that the land remain "available for agriculture".

*Since tax laws change frequently, specific requirements and benefits should be checked with an attorney or tax planner!*

### These tax benefits are currently available only in 2006 and 2007.

Land preservation agreements such as these can help protect the Rock River Basin's agricultural and natural resource base. By entering into such an agreement farmers can keep their land in production and may be able to provide estate tax relief for their heirs.

see also [www.gatheringwaters.org](http://www.gatheringwaters.org)

## Black Swallow Wort Update

In the last newsletter we had a short article regarding an invasive vine in the basin. This was followed up with a press release and a segment on NBC 15 News out of Madison. As a result, a number of locations of the black swallow wort vine were found in Fort Atkinson and Whitewater.

The DNR funded the identification and eradication of the vine through September by Cindy Wagner of Local Landkeepers, LLC. Unfortunately the grant funding is over and this vine takes several years of work and chemical spraying to keep it under control. If you think you have the vine, and want to confirm the identification, either cut a long piece including several leaves and a pod or two, put it in a sealed plastic bag and drop it off at the UWEX Jefferson County Office or mail it to Suzanne Wade, UWEX Jefferson County, 864 Collins Rd, Jefferson WI 53549-1976. Please include your name, phone or email and a description of where the plant was found.

You can also contact Local Landkeepers at [landkprs@charter.net](mailto:landkprs@charter.net) or 920-563-8552 as Cindy is keeping track of locations and can provide information on control.

As a reminder here is some of the natural history and reasons we are concerned about the Black Swallow Wort Vine.

**Black swallow-wort**, a twining vine with dark purple star-shaped flowers is in the milkweed family. It can form extensive patches that crowd out native vegetation. Old field habitats of goldenrod and grasses can be replaced almost exclusively by swallow-wort, completely changing their physical structure and most likely results in a decline in grassland bird presence. Investigations into impacts on the monarch butterfly, show that the butterfly will lay eggs on swallow-wort, but the larvae do not survive.

Eradication is difficult once a colony is established because plants form a dense, knobby mass of underground roots. Initial control efforts should concentrate on plants in sunny areas since they produce the most seeds. All pods should be removed before they open, and then burned or landfilled to prevent seed release. Triclopyr or glyphosate with a surfactant can be applied to foliage during the growing season. Cut-stem treatment with glyphosate is also effective but labor intensive. Monitor for populations in late summer when plants turn golden yellow and pods become prominent.



-photo by Stephen Derbyshire, Canada

## Become a RRC Member

In addition to supporting RRC work, members receive newsletters, notices of forums, conferences, and special events. To become a member, complete the following:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Individual	\$ 25	_____
Family	\$ 35	_____
Student/Senior Citizen	\$ 15	_____
Classroom	\$ 25	_____
Affiliates*	\$ 50	_____
Corporate	\$ 200	_____

\*Includes small businesses, organizations, lake districts, and municipal departments

Any donation of \$100 or more will be recognized and linked to your website from our website:

[www.rockrivercoalition.org](http://www.rockrivercoalition.org)

Tax deductible donation	
Amount	Purpose
	General Support
	Citizen Monitoring
	Rain Gardens
	Other:

Donations are greatly appreciated and can be targeted towards specific projects.

Please mail this completed form with check to:

Rock River Coalition

823 Lucas Lane

Jefferson, WI 53549 -1182

or register and pay online with PayPal at:

[www.rockrivercoalition.org/membership.asp](http://www.rockrivercoalition.org/membership.asp)

## President's Message

During the past quarter the RRC has begun work on our two new DNR River Planning grants, one to develop a plan for using citizens to monitor phosphorus in targeted regions of the watershed and the other to promote the Water Star Community program. We're currently hiring the coordinator for the Water Star Community program and have had our first meeting with DNR TMDL staff to discuss the best process for selecting sites. We'll be meeting soon to begin the discussion on protocols.

Ed, our Monitoring Director, recently completed our fall high school stream monitoring training program in conjunction with the General Motors Corp in Janesville. (See page 4)

However, our work with basin-wide citizen stream and wetland monitoring has been slow because we are extremely short of funds to support this work. As a result the RRC will be increasing our fundraising efforts and have begun to examine ways to enhance our operational budget.

Our goals and vision remains committed to improving and protecting our shared resources and includes developing a watershed education center, developing a water conservation program for the watershed, developing water related recreational and educational opportunities in the watershed and developing innovative ways to meet our goals as an organization. Increased funding for operations or to support an executive director would help the RRC.

The focus we are taking as RRC directors for the future will be to enhance our funding through increased memberships, increased corporate and municipal sponsorships, and increased government and private grants. Any ideas you have to help this objective are welcome.

Your President,  
Joe Dorava,  
jdor@vierbicher.com



*Greater Yellowlegs, one of more than 50 shorebirds that are now using the Zeloski Marsh just one year after restoration. See page 4 for a list of some of the species of interest that have been observed.*

© photo by Jeff Strobel

### Nominate a stream for Send Your Legislator Down The River '08

If you have a favorite stretch of river in the Rock Basin that you think would be great for our annual canoe outing, please send your suggestion to Ken Wiesner at [wiesnerk@msn.com](mailto:wiesnerk@msn.com). We typically paddle between 3 and 6 miles for the event, and prefer to have boat landings at both ends. A shelter building with restrooms available is desirable for the meeting and picnic. If you would like to help with the event, please let us know at the same email address. Thanks!

### Janesville High School students study Rock River water quality

More than a hundred students from Janesville High Schools recently participated in their fall trip to the Rock River to learn about water quality. See page 5 for more pictures and information on this exciting program.



-photo by Dennis Egge

## Calendar of Events

### RRC Board Meeting:

November 12, 4:30-7:30 pm, UWEX Jefferson County  
December 17, 4:30 - 7:30pm, UWEX Jefferson County

### GFLOW update meeting with USGS:

December 14, 9:00 - 11:30 UWEX Jefferson County,  
864 Collins Road, RSVP if attending, 920-674-7297

### Groundwater Teachers Workshop:

January 15, UWEX Jefferson County  
Application deadline November 1. Call 920-674-8972

### Newsletter Deadline:

Deadline for the winter newsletter is January 9, 2008

*A letter-sized, full color version of this newsletter is available at [www.rockrivercoalition.org](http://www.rockrivercoalition.org).*

**For more information about these and other area events, meetings, workshops, or conferences go to <http://www.rockrivercoalition.org/events/calendar.asp>**

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