

RRC 2013 Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony

May 19, 2013 Following the BioBlitz

4:30pm Korth Park, Elm Point Shelter

W8282 Elm Point Road off County Highway S, west of Lake Mills,
(west side of Rock Lake) Weather Location: Lake Mills Community Center

- 4:00 **Meet and Greet:** Tyranena Beer and Root Beer Available.
Stay after the Bioblitz and relax with scientists and participants.
- 4:45 **Annual Meeting and Election of Board Members**
If you are interested in being nominated for the Board of Directors, please contact President Patricia Cicero at patricia@rockrivercoalition.org. Board openings include one two-year term and one three-year term.
- 5:00 **Dinner** catered by Willie Street Co-op locally sourced food. Choice of Ham, Turkey or Veggie Wrap plus Granny's Potato Salad, Sumi Salad (an Asian Slaw) and cookies. We will also be serving Tyranena beer and root beer and Berres Brothers coffee. Total charge is \$16/person
- 5:45 **Introduction of 2013 RRC Officers**
- 6:00 **Awards Presentation of Protector and Friend Awards.** See page one for a complete listing of our award recipients and their accomplishments.

All RRC members are encouraged to attend, enjoy and meet with others involved in RRC activities and thank our award winners.

The public is also welcome to attend! The event is free; however, meals are the responsibility of the participant. Note all registrants must pay for their meal regardless of attendance. You are welcome to come at no charge if not ordering a meal.

Please RSVP to RoxAnne Witte by May 14 at info@rockrivercoalition.org or 920-342-0441. Please let her know if you need a vegetarian or gluten free selection. Hope to see you there!



Protector Awards are unique pieces of art. Come celebrate the 2013 winners at our Annual Meeting.



Rock River National Water Trail
Great news, the Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has designated the Rock River Water Trail into the National Water Trails System. Thanks to everyone who helped make this happen.

2014 RRC 20th Anniversary

Help wanted: For groups or individuals to plan our 20th anniversary celebrations.

What would you like to see: events, trips, educational activities?

Help us plan the best tribute ever to the Coalition and to the Rock Basin. Initial gathering to be held on Thursday June 13 starting at 4:00 supper will be provided. Contact Suzanne at suzanne@rockrivercoalition.org to be put on the contact list.

2013 Stream Monitoring Training Workshops

by Nancy Sheehan, RRC Stream Monitoring Coordinator

Today temperatures only reached 37°F. However, I saw American robins out my window so I know that spring has arrived! Thank you to all Level 1 volunteers who answered my survey regarding your equipment and chemical needs. If you have not done so already, please let me know if you need any refill chemicals.

If you're ready to learn how to monitor your stream, contact Nancy at nancy@rockrivercoalition.org or 608-233-7758 (o) or 608-515-9434 (c) and join us for one of our Spring training sessions:

- Saturday, 20 April (9:30 AM - 4:30 PM)-- Marsh Haven Nature Center, Waupun, WI. Teacher Training and Level 1 training with Kris Stepenuck, Water Action Volunteer Program Coordinator and Renee Wahlen Tillema of Marsh Haven Nature Center
- Saturday, 27 April (9:00 AM - 1:30 PM) -- Amundson Center, Cambridge, WI. Introduction for prospective volunteers with Patricia Cicero, RRC Board President and Jefferson Co. Water Resources Management Specialist.
- Saturday, 4 May (9:00 AM - 1:30 PM) -- Turtle Creek Parkway (a new park) in Clinton, WI. Level 1 training with Anne Miller, Rock Co. Land Conservation Dept
- Saturday, 11 May (9:00 AM - 1:30 PM) -- Salmo Pond in Cross Plains and Black Earth Creek. Level 1 training with Pete Jopke, Dane Co. Land and Water Resources (Perhaps Pete will share some of his fishing spots.)

Current RRC volunteers are welcome to join me during these trainings. It would be great to share your stories with prospective volunteers, even if you can't stay for the entire session. Contact the office or send me an email if you'd like to participate.

Find More Stream Monitoring Updates on page 2

Due to serious email issues Nancy Sheehan, RRC stream monitoring coordinator's email has been changed to nancy@rockrivercoalition.org. Please make this change in your address book.

Wetlands, Wildlife Habitat, and Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin Webinar Series

Monday June 17 3:00 - 4:30pm

Adaptive Management and the Rock River Basin TMDL – What is adaptive management - what are the opportunities for wetland restoration and what are the potential flood mitigation benefits. Confirmed Speakers: Michael Vollrath, DNR Southern District Rock River Basin TMDL Coordinator

Monday July 15 3:00 - 4:30pm

Different Routes to Wetland Restoration in the Rock River Basin – WRP/CREP, compensatory mitigation and FWS programs: What are the incentives, what are the results. Confirmed Speakers: Caroline Clarin, NRCS; Jeanne Scherer, RRC Wetland Monitoring Coordinator and Kurt Waterstradt, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

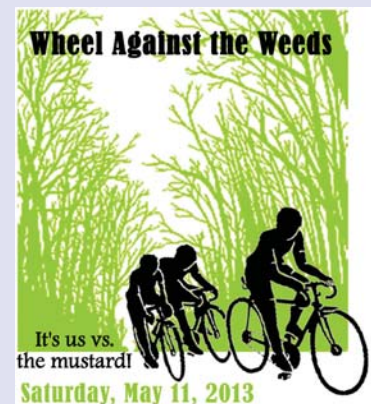
Monday August 19 3:00 - 4:30pm

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Buyouts – Making the most of the land once the structures are gone – case studies from Wisconsin communities. Confirmed Speakers, Roxanne Gray, DMA and Donna Haugom, Jefferson County Emergency Management Director

Monday September 16 3:00 - 4:30pm

Conservation in Urban Areas – Protecting wetlands and floodplains and providing flood mitigation and water quality benefits.

For registration information contact Beth at beth.gehred@tacrcd.org



Don't miss early bird sign-up April 19. Go to register go to <http://www.tacrcd.com/wheel-against-the-weeds.html>

Celebrate The Sierra Club John Muir Chapter's 50th Anniversary

With Executive Director Michael Brune & Former State Representative Spencer Black

Saturday, April 20 2013

Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery

330 N. Orchard St, Madison, Wisconsin

4:00 – 7:00pm

For more information <http://sierrawi50.org/>

Clean Wisconsin Releases Guide to New Phosphorus Reduction Strategy

by Emily Jones, Clean Wisconsin

Phosphorus pollution is a major problem in Wisconsin, leading to excessive plant growth and noxious algae blooms in our waters every summer. In response to the problem of phosphorus pollution, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) adopted rules in 2010 that limit the amount of phosphorus that may be present in the state's waters without harming water quality.

These rules also provide different strategies that permitted phosphorus dischargers, such as wastewater treatment plants and factories, can take to meet the assigned limits on the amount of phosphorus they're allowed to discharge. One of these strategies is the adaptive management option (AMO), a framework for permitted phosphorus dischargers to work with stakeholders across their watershed to reduce phosphorus runoff and achieve water quality standards. The AMO has exciting potential for reducing phosphorus pollution, but since it's a new strategy unique to Wisconsin, there isn't a lot of direction for how to implement an AMO plan.

To provide guidance and recommendations for implementing the AMO, Clean Wisconsin, a statewide environmental advocacy organization, released a guidebook on the AMO earlier this year. Clean Wisconsin believes that the AMO is the best available strategy for addressing phosphorus pollution and is dedicated to making it work in Wisconsin. The guidebook is designed to build understanding of the AMO and to make the process of developing an AMO plan organized and accessible. In addition to Clean Wisconsin's recommendations, the guidebook also includes resources that can help in putting together an AMO plan.

Clean Wisconsin's guidebook is primarily written for operators at wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs), which are responsible for meeting phosphorus limits in the wastewater they discharge.

However, other readers may find it useful, including local government officials, nonprofit organizations and citizens interested in their watershed health. The AMO depends on community-wide collaboration to be successful, so many different individuals and groups will be involved in its implementation.

The guidebook is also meant to be a learning tool. As AMO projects across the state advance, Clean Wisconsin will update its guidebook with lessons learned from these projects to provide guidance for others considering the AMO. AMO projects are already underway northwest of Madison in the Yahara watershed, a subsection of the Rock River Basin, and has already shown some strategies that have worked and some that haven't. AMO implementations like the Yahara project can be useful case studies for the guidebook to help future watershed projects across Wisconsin and beyond.

The guidebook is available on Clean Wisconsin's website at www.cleanwisconsin.org/amoguide as both a PDF and a web version. Clean Wisconsin is excited about this innovative opportunity for long-term water quality improvement.

RRC Award Winners Continued from Page 1

Friends Awards

RRC Friends Awards are presented by the board to individuals, businesses, groups or organizations who have helped the RRC be an effective force within the Rock River Basin. This year's recipients are:

Lisa Conley, past president and board member has been instrumental in guiding the board's understanding of state policy and proposed regulations. Her leadership as president was invaluable in many of the RRC programs and projects. We also appreciate her artistic side, many of the photos from Send Your Legislator Down the River have been courtesy of Lisa.



Nic Tippery joined the UW-Whitewater staff in 2011. When asked if he'd be interested in helping survey the plants of Zeloski Marsh, he dove right in! During several visits to the marsh during the intense heat and humidity of 2012, Nic made extensive lists of plants that have successfully established themselves since the marsh was restored in 2006. He also put in many more hours creating a spreadsheet of the findings. He collected, pressed and labeled herbarium specimens of each species, which are now held at the university. His assistance as a professional volunteer has been invaluable in conducting our post-restoration surveys of Zeloski Marsh.

Brad Webb has taken up the very large wings of Nolan Kollath, assisting with monthly bird counts and leading walks at the marsh for Madison Audubon Society (MAS). He is an avid birder, a terrific teacher, and excellent bird photographer. Brad is a member of the notorious "Finch Gang" (Great Wisconsin Birdathon team) that focused on Zeloski Marsh during their birdathons in May 2012 and 2013. Brad also leads, along with others, monthly bird walks throughout Jefferson and Dodge counties on the third weekend of the month since 2008. We are grateful that throughout the Rock River Basin, Brad has shared his birding knowledge and skills.



Kris Stepenuck, DNR and UWEX Water Action Volunteer Coordinator. Whenever the RRC has needed guidance in the planning and execution of our citizen stream monitoring program, Kris has been there to help. She has assisted with our biennial Confluence and helped us acquire needed equipment.

Winners will receive their award at the Annual Meeting on May 19, 2013 or at Send Your Legislator Down the River later this summer.

Become a RRC Member

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

Name _____
 Title _____
 Affiliation _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____ Phone (____) _____
 E-mail _____
 I am a member of _____ Chapter.

Memberships Fees

Individual	\$ 25
Family	\$ 35
Student/Senior Citizen	\$ 15
Classroom	\$ 25
Affiliates*	\$ 50
Municipal**	\$125
Corporate	\$ 200

*Includes small businesses, organizations, lake districts, small municipalities and individual municipal departments
 **Covers entire municipality including all departments, administrative staff and elected officials

Any donation or membership of \$150 or more will be recognized and linked to your website from our website: www.rockrivercoalition.org

Donors of \$500 or greater will receive an ad in this newsletter. Check out our website for more information.

Tax deductible

Amount	Purpose
	General Support
	Citizen Monitoring
	Other:

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

Please mail this completed form with check to:

Rock River Coalition
 864 Collins Rd
 Jefferson, WI 53549

or register and pay online with PayPal at:

www.rockrivercoalition.org/membership.asp

My Healthy Wetlands: Helping Private Wetland Landowners Protect and Care for Wetlands

By Katie Beilfuss, Wisconsin Wetlands Association

Did you know that 75% of Wisconsin's remaining wetlands are in private ownership?

Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) has long recognized the importance of private landowners. Our award-winning Wetland Restoration Handbook for Wisconsin Landowners and companion workshop series brought critical information to landowners, federal, state, and tribal natural resource professionals, and others.

These resources have had good success in reaching the landowner who is ready to make the decision and commitment of time, energy, and financial resources to restore his or her wetlands.

In the past year, through extensive interviews with partners and landowners alike, WWA has confirmed that resources for other wetland landowners are few and far between, do not reflect current wetland restoration and management science and techniques, or were developed for other parts of the country.

Many landowners are actively seeking information about how to manage their natural land holdings and are eager for information about what to "do" with their wetlands but don't know where to turn. Other landowners don't even know their own wetlands.

WWA believes that, with the right information and tools, many landowners will not only develop a sense of pride in the importance of the resources for which they are stewards, but will also take active responsibility for managing and restoring their wetlands.

Among WWA's long term goals are reduced wetland destruction and improved wetland quantity and quality across the state. Increasing stewardship by private landowners who are inspired, motivated, and empowered by targeted messages and support is a critical strategy for achieving these goals.

Over the past year, WWA has had dozens of conversations with partners and landowners across the state about this issue, seeking their suggestions and recommendations for the best opportunities to reach private wetland landowners. Our work has identified many clear needs and exciting opportunities for reaching these landowners with information about wetlands and for partnering with

many existing networks for delivering this information.

We have created a clearinghouse of resources for private wetland landowners at <http://wisconsinwetlands.org/MyHealthyWetlands.htm> that will help these landowners to better know and understand the wetlands they own and to care for them using the best practices and approaches. This clearinghouse lists a variety of resources, including web pages, books, consultants, and training courses, to help private wetland landowners identify, protect, manage, restore, and enjoy wetlands as well as promote wetland wildlife habitat, understand wetland regulations and property tax assessments, and fund wetlands work.

While many of the resources listed in this clearinghouse are older or were developed for other parts of the country (and as such may not reflect the latest wetland restoration and management science and techniques or discuss approaches that may not be appropriate for Wisconsin), we do our best to highlight the strengths of each resource in the description. We also welcome your feedback and suggestions for this list, as we are sure there are resources out there that haven't yet come to our attention. This clearinghouse is a work in progress!

We are also pursuing projects to help develop new and better resources for Wisconsin's private wetlands landowners. Nearly all of the people with whom we have spoken in the past year articulated a strong desire for a basic publication for landowners that explains what wetlands are, why they matter, and how to care for them in a

simple, inspiring, and attractive way.

We also discovered a great model that is already creating positive change for woodlands and woodland landowners in Southwest Wisconsin: My Healthy Woods. This award-winning private landowner outreach publication was developed by the Aldo Leopold Foundation and American Forest Foundation to reach private family woodland landowners in Wisconsin's Driftless Area as part of the My Wisconsin Woods program.

Working with our partners in 2013-14, WWA plans to develop, produce, and market My Healthy Wetlands, a handbook for Wisconsin landowners.

We expect the first edition of this publication will be targeted for wetland landowners in Northeastern Wisconsin and will serve as a pilot for developing similar publications for wetland landowners in other parts of the state.

As we develop the My Healthy Wetlands handbook, we will continue to work with our partners to identify additional opportunities for expanding resources for private wetland landowners and to develop and implement these opportunities in the years to come. We will prioritize program opportunities based on projects that have a high probability of success; for which we have supportive, effective collaborating partners and funders; and that will have a tangible impact on the landscape.

The web clearinghouse and My Healthy Wetlands handbook are just the first steps in what we expect will be a long and fruitful private landowner outreach program.



Farmers can contact their County LWCD or NRCS office to learn about programs to restore shorelines and wetlands instead of allowing their farm practices to cause harm. Photo by Jim Kerler

Congratulations Watertown

Watertown is our newest Rock River Basin Wisconsin Water Star, receiving a Silver designation. Watertown joins cities of Middleton, Monona, Fitchburg, Whitewater, Beloit, Sun Prairie and Oconomowoc and villages of Johnson Creek and DeForest and the counties of Dane and Waukesha.

Waterloo Regional Trailhead Open House

Jefferson County is a primarily rural and agrarian area surrounded by expanding metropolitan communities. Jefferson County leaders decided to meet the challenge of stimulating economic development while preserving the county's rural character in part by creating the Glacial Heritage Area (GHA) Initiative. The GHA proposes to connect the county's natural areas by trails.

When the GHA is complete, people can bike or hike in a scenic and safe setting and rural communities will have an opportunity for economic growth. For example, someone in Oconomowoc could bike to Jefferson County, tour it, and finish in Madison or Janesville, spending the entire trip in nature. The Waterloo Regional Trailhead Facility is the first building designed specifically for the GHA. It will have a warming room and classroom, interpretive center for the GHA, covered picnic area, restrooms, and display technologies and techniques for sustainability, in a setting of trails, rain gardens and natural plantings. It will be built in Waterloo's Knowlton Park, across from Trek Inc. and adjacent to the Garman Nature Preserve. Funding was provided by a DNR Stewardship grant, donations from Trek Inc, the Junginger Foundation, the City of Waterloo, Jefferson County, private citizens and local businesses.

On April 25th there will be a ground breaking ceremony on location at 1 pm. An open house will be held from 4:30 to 7 pm., in the atrium of Trek HQ, in Waterloo, Wisconsin. The open house is a fundraiser for Phase 2, which includes furnishings and interpretive displays. Suggested donations \$35 per person, \$50 per couple. Please RSVP to Waterloo City Hall, 136 N. Monroe St. Waterloo WI 53594, cityhall@waterloowi.us, 920-478-3205.

The Zeloski Marsh BioBlitz Countdown is on!

by Jeanne Scherer, RRC Wetland Monitoring Coordinator

The Zeloski Marsh Bioblitz is less than two months away!

Thirty-five professionals and highly qualified citizen scientists have offered to survey life in the marsh from 4pm Saturday, May 18th to 4pm Sunday, May 19th. With 1500 acres to explore, more are sure to join in the excitement.

But you don't need to be an expert to participate! The Bioblitz is for anyone interested in a marsh's special plants, birds, animals, and insects. All you need is curiosity, regardless of your age.

Saturday, May 18th Zeloski Marsh Public Events:

- **4:00 pm Invasive Species Walk**
Chrystal Schreck of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will lead people into the marsh to learn about invasive plants. Some invasive plants are dangerous to people besides being a nuisance and pushing out native plants. Learning to recognize them is important for anyone who spends time outdoors.
- **7:15 pm Frog and Toad Calling** Learn how to recognize frog and toad calls with Andrew Badje (WDNR). After a brief presentation, you'll walk into the marsh as the sun sets. Listen as the birds become quiet while the frogs and toads begin their nightly calls for mates. Bring a flashlight.

Each walk will be 1.5 to 2 miles over flat trails and begin at the Glacial Drumlin State Trail parking area on Finch Brothers Road. A map is available on the Bioblitz webpage at www.rockrivercoalition.org.

Sunday May 19 Family Events

Noon to 4:00 Korth Park Elm Point Shelter

W8282 Elm Point Road off of County Highway S, on the west side of Lake Mills, (west side of Rock Lake)

Experts will be on hand to share what they know about bats, amphibians, water monitoring, dragonflies. Learn about local conservation groups and Jefferson County's parks and State Natural Areas. Enjoy fun family activities.

- **The Lady Bug Project** presented by Jennifer Mitchell (UW Arboretum). She'll have sweep nets and her laptop handy to show you how easy it is to participate.
- **1:00 Nature Photo Shoot** walk with professional Lake Mills photographer Eli Wedel starting at the Elm Point shelter.
- **2:30-4:00 Help celebrate the RRC's hard working 2012-2013 volunteers, meet the scientists and learn about their work.** We will celebrate the RRC's hard working 2012-2013 volunteers, immediately followed by presentations from the scientists and expert surveyors highlighting their findings in Zeloski Marsh.
- **Displays and Presentations**
Many of the displays and presentations will be focused on citizen science.
Professional scientists in government and higher education often call on people with a strong interest in natural science to help with research. Citizen scientists are trained to collect data by listening for frog calls, identifying dragonflies, collecting water samples, recording bird sightings, and more.

Today's citizen scientists include children, parents of all ages and active senior citizens. Once you get a peek at how interesting and fun citizen science is, you won't be able to resist getting involved.

Learn more about the Bioblitz and Zeloski Marsh and how you can become a citizen scientist at www.rockrivercoalition.org or by contacting Wetland Monitoring Coordinator Jeanne Scherer at wetlands@rockrivercoalition.org or 920-382-6123. See you there!

Be sure to thank our sponsors listed here:

Friends of
Glacial
Heritage
Area



Children who are free to explore grow into adults who explore!

Photos by Jeanne Scherer

Contribute Your Ideas for the 2013 Send Your Legislator Down the River Educational Event

One of the fun highlights of the year for the Rock River Coalition is the Send Your Legislator Down the River event. It is a time for us to gather together, meet with our legislators regarding issues important to the basin, and enjoy a paddle on one of the many special rivers in our area. In order to make this year's event successful, we would like your ideas and assistance!

Please let us know if you have a favorite stretch of river where you would like us to hold the event. The paddle typically is 3-6 miles in length. Important amenities include either a shelter with restrooms at the put-in or take-out site, or a restaurant or meeting hall near the paddling site where we can hold the picnic and meeting with legislators.

Would your local river or conservation group like to help out with the event? If so, the event is an opportunity for you to share information about your organization with the participants!

Please contribute your ideas to the Rock River Coalition by contacting Patricia Cicero at 920-674-7121 or patricia@rockrivercoalition.org.

A planning session will be scheduled soon at Tyrannena Brewing Company, Lake Mills.

... and Forest Landscaping and Construction

Our Marsh - A Family Affair

by Scott Weberpal

On a crisp, still fall morning, dressed in camouflage from head to toe and cameras strapped on my shoulder, I wait patiently for the marsh to come to life, the silence only broken by the occasional distant hoot of a Great Horned Owl. As sunlight begins to pierce the horizon, hawks begin to take flight and like a chorus erupting, the songs of numerous birds begin to echo across the bottom land. Minutes later, the rattle of Sandhill Cranes fill the air as they take flight from behind the cattails. After most of the Sandhills have cleared the cattails on their way to the freshly harvested corn fields, two brilliant white cranes take flight and let out a bellowing 'ahhwoooooo' – the majestic Whooping Crane.

Less than a decade ago, this very same land was void of the diversity of wetland species found here today. It was drained and used to grow agricultural cash crops until my father

Andy, my grandfather Ralph and two of my uncles, Pat and Ron Weberpal envisioned a different future for this land. Circa 2005, with the help of the Wetlands Reserve Program, my dad, grandfather, and uncles began the long process of restoring the land to a functional wetland. The land, which is west of Janesville, sits almost entirely in the Bass Creek floodplain and is largely comprised of very poorly drained, mucky soils. Because the soils are very poorly drained, it was difficult to farm without extensive drainage which likely stressed the downstream waters of Bass Creek. Of roughly 1600 total acres, about 1150 are currently in the WRP, 350 acres remain tillable, and the remainder is mixed woodland and prairie. In October 2012, I became a Level 1 stream monitor with the RRC. My education from UW-Whitewater in Geography and Environmental Studies helped to spur an interest in

water quality issues, but my personal connection to the land and the creek running through it motivated me to become a stream monitor.

The restored wetlands and native grasslands provide habitat



for more than 100 species of birds and several species of mammals which rely on wetlands and grasslands for their survival. I have been fortunate to observe many prairie birds on the property including Bobolink, Dickcissel, Eastern Meadowlark, Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, and Ring-necked Pheasants. I have seen Bald Eagles occasionally perched over the usually open waters of Bass Creek during the winter waiting to swoop down for a meal.

The wetland has been a migration stopover for some rare or unusual species including Whooping Cranes, White-fronted Geese, Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese, and it's not unusual for the ponds to contain several thousand ducks during migration with virtually all species found in southern Wisconsin being represented. During mating season, I have frequently heard Sora and Virginia Rail, and who knows, perhaps one day I will hear the deep grunt of a King Rail. The diversity of species

alone make this restored wetland a true gem in the Rock River watershed.

I'm honored to be part of a family that understands the importance of wetlands and is willing to do something about it. I hope that if you're a landowner with eligible land, you will consider the Wetlands Reserve Program or another program available to assist in the transitioning and restoration of wetlands.

For more information regarding the Wetlands Reserve Program, please visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/wetlands/>

The stories on these pages are from our volunteers. Do you have a story to tell about your favorite spot in the Rock River Basin? Consider submitting it for use in our next Rock River Reflections. The summer issue will focus on monitoring and the fall on groundwater. Submission deadline is July 5, 2013 for the summer issue send your ideas to suzanne@rockrivercoalition.org.



Notes from the Wild:

Adventures in nature with family and friends

New RRC volunteer, Mary Ellen Gabriel, captures the essence of what we have all experienced as new volunteers.

Her blog post may inspire you to join our RRC stream monitoring team

<http://notesfromthewild.wordpress.com/about/>

Follow her monitoring journey, along with her other observations of actions in the wild.

Here's a selection from her first stream visit to monitor Murphy Creek.

Our lab is the damp stream bank, choked with buckthorn and the soft, blond cores of rotting logs. We snap twigs and mash limp jewelweed to create a tiny staging ground. ...It's our first day as citizen scientists on Murphy Creek, a spring-fed stream that feeds into Lake Waubesa, south of Madison, and we've got two hours to measure critical health factors like dissolved oxygen levels, invertebrate life, clarity, and flow. This is our training session. Next time, we'll be on our own.



Photo by Jeanne Scherer

Citizen Scientists Look for Answers

Volunteer citizen stream monitors regularly take to local rivers and streams to collect data and look for answers. While many of our local rivers and streams have fairly consistent water quality, volunteers have found a few that can change dramatically from month to month. Most often, this is seen in the clarity (turbidity) of the water—a measure of how clear or cloudy the water is.

One of the streams with clarity problems is Mason Creek—a stream that flows into North Lake in Waukesha County. Rebecca Mattano has been a level 2 monitor at Mason Creek for the last year and enjoys monitoring as a way to get outside and have fun in the water with her two young daughters.

Throughout 2012 Rebecca noticed some fluctuations in the clarity of Mason Creek. Mattano says, "I enjoy collecting the stream data, but it will be really meaningful if the data can be used to help improve the quality of the water in Mason Creek."

A movement is currently under way to generate a watershed plan for Mason Creek where the data should be put to good use by concerned citizen groups as well as agencies such as Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

Suzanne's Own Rules for Low Impact Lawn Care

by Suzanne Wade, RRC Board Member and retired UWEX Natural Resources Educator

People often ask me how I manage my own yard. After all, I have been giving talks on low impact yard care for more than 20 years. I have to admit that at times I don't follow all the rules, but I do try. So here are my personal rules for how I manage my own lawn and gardens and why.

#1 Accept Diversity

Early grass seed mixes included clover to fix nitrogen and violets and other pretty things. It was only when chemical companies wanted us to use herbicides that their marketing campaigns convinced the world every broad leaf plant in lawns was bad.

My husband and I accept diversity in our lawns as a given, that's not to say we don't work to have a grass dominated lawn, we do. But I'm not going to go through a regiment of spraying poison on my yard to achieve that. Here are some of the things we do.

Generally we do not put toxic chemicals on the grass in the backyard or other areas where our dogs spend time. If need be we fence off those areas before spot spraying. On our vegetables, trees and shrubs, if we have insect problems, we first try the pick and crush or pick and drop into soapy water methods. We also use yellow sticky traps. We have selectively sprayed Japanese beetles when their numbers became overwhelming. We do use a systemic on our roses, because without they would be dead. Our guideline, we only use a toxic poison if not using it would mean the death of our plant.

We've cut down trees rather than continuously spraying them. Soon our roses will be pulled in favor of something that is pretty, but doesn't need an annual spraying regimen.

We use dormant oil on our fruit trees to help with mites and fungus diseases and bt products on our cabbage family plants.

Some weeds are hard to control even with a herbicide; our approach is:

VIOLETS: Their waxy coating makes them very resistant to chemicals – so accept them or eat them; all viola's including Johnny jump-ups are edible and beautiful in salads or candied. If you really want to control them you have to dig them up and that's more work than we're willing to do.

CREEPING CHARLIE: We pull and pull in our garden and flower beds and occasionally treat with a broad leaf pesticide in the fall hoping that a hard winter will knock them back. We don't ever expect we'll have a creeping

charlie free yard. Therefore, I've tried to change my attitude about them, trying to think of them as a dwarf variety of Ajuga. (People pay good money for Ajuga!)

DANDELIONS: Here's where my husband and I disagree, I'm fine with physically hand-popping as many dandelions as I can and leaving the rest. After the main bloom in the spring, you really can't see them in the yard. He doesn't like them, so he individually sprays each offensive plant with a broad-leaf killer. A strong thick turf is one of your best protections against dandelions and many other weeds. Here's one case where you can eat your invasives.



Taking a soil test is easy - get directions at your local Extension office

#2 Fertilize as Needed

No more, No less! Your grass uses nitrogen and most people need to fertilize with nitrogen at least once a year. A healthy thick lawn is the best water quality practice around, as long as unnecessary chemicals aren't used.

Almost no lawn in the Rock Basin or most of Wisconsin needs phosphorus fertilizer – EVER. Our home soil test showed we have enough phosphorus in our soils to last more than 50 years! Plus it's now illegal to use most phosphorus fertilizers on lawns without a soil test in Wisconsin.

There's no restrictions on gardens, flowers, trees, farm fields or even new turf, just established lawns.

We test our soils about every three years and fertilize accordingly. Your UW-Extension office has bags and instructions. You can also go online at the UW Soils Lab site and get instructions. Generally we find we need to apply nitrogen fertilizer twice a year. We fertilize right around Halloween and Memorial Day. We mulch our clippings, so that is all we need.

#3 Mow High - Let it Lie

Tall thick grass shades and cools the soil as well as fostering deeper roots while shading out weeds.

Mow High: Your mower should be set at the highest setting possible, at least 2.5 inches, 3 or more is better.

Ours is set at 3 inches. Mow until late October or early November. For the last cutting we lower the blade to one inch to prevent snow mold or other winter diseases.

Let it Lie: Mulching your grass and leaves is a great way to get a free fertilization.

One misconception is that mulching will result in thatch. Thatch is a layer of living and dead organic matter that is caused by excessive fertilization and over watering.

NEVER MOW INTO THE STREET:

All those good nutrients wash down the street to the stormdrain and right to the lake! Results in algae and weed growth – yuck.

Sharpen those blades: Sharp mower blades prevent tearing of grass blades. A torn grass leaf can lose a lot of water and turn brown. We sharpen ours every year.

Mow Often: Never cut more than 1/3 of the grass blade at a time, it stresses the plant.

#4 Water Wisely

Your lawn is composed of cool weather grasses, they grow the best in the spring and fall and go dormant in the hot, dry summers. Honor that and let them go dormant during July and August. Your lawn will green up again when it gets cool in the late summer

or early fall. Last year we watered our lawn just once during the drought. We're not sure it needed even that, but we'll find out as it greens up. So far what we can see is looking good. Our neighbors watered weekly and ended up with a \$700 water bill as a result. Yoicks.

OK – I can't convince you to let your yard go brown, you insist on a three season green lawn. Try this:

Water with rain water: Why put water that has been pulled from deep underground, transported with energy and pumped through the city, treated with chlorine and fluoride to make it safe for humans to drink - on your lawn?

So instead take the water that nature has freely moved to your yard, store it and use it. You'll probably need a 250 gallon system for lawn watering.

Don't let it run-off!



If you're using city water, you're paying for it, so make sure it isn't rushing to the stormdrain and out to the lake or river!



Benefits of using rain water

Added Benefit 1. Your plants, especially flowers hate the hard alkaline well water, they love slightly acid rain water.

Added Benefit 2. You'll help our lakes out too, as all that excess water isn't washing downstream.

Added Benefit 3. Save taxpayer money - moving water around is the single biggest energy expense for most cities.

Rock River Stormwater Group

The RRSRG announces that MSA Professional Services of Madison will be their new stormwater education coordinator. The RRSRG would like to thank Biodiversity Project especially Rebecca Dill and Meg Kelly for their previous service.

Watch for new stormwater articles from the group in upcoming newsletters. The RRSRG is a collaboration of municipalities with stormwater permits in the central region of the basin from Beaver Dam down to Beloit. Other communities involved include Watertown, Jefferson, Fort Atkinson, Whitewater, Milton, Janesville and the Town of Beloit.

RRSG president is Jeff Woods of Fort Atkinson who can be contacted at: jwoods@fortatkinsonwi.net. The contact at MSA is Jason Valerius who can be reached at jvalerius@msa-ps.com.

Rock River Coalition President's Message

The Rock River Coalition is a supporter of the Rock River Trail Initiative because its mission goes hand-in-hand with our mission. The mission of the Rock River Trail Initiative is to establish and interpret a Rock River water trail along the 300 mile river course from the headwaters in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois; and a separate Rock River Scenic and Historic Route on roads within the river corridor to provide access for all to the natural resources, recreational opportunities, scenic

beauty and historic and cultural assets of the Rock River Basin. Certainly the first steps toward improving the resources of the Rock River Basin are to ensure that people can get to those resources and are aware that they live, work, and play within the basin.

In order to establish a Rock River Scenic and Historic Route on the roads next to the river, legislation is required to be passed in both Wisconsin and Illinois. This process is now underway and the Rock River Coalition recently submitted a letter of support for the proposed legislation in Wisconsin. Parallel legislation is currently underway in the Illinois General Assembly to designate the Illinois portion of the road route from the state line to the Mississippi River at the Quad Cities.

Senator Tim Cullen of Janesville is the lead sponsor of Senate Bill 41 and Representative John Jagler of Watertown is the lead sponsor for Assembly Bill 55. The bills establish the scenic

and historic route along the Rock River in Wisconsin from trailheads in Waupun and Theresa to the state line in Beloit. Joining Senator Cullen as co-sponsors of the Senate bill are Senators Kedzie, Fitzgerald, Olsen, Miller, Schultz, Risser, Carpenter, Lehman, Jauch, and Gudex. Co-sponsors of the Assembly bill in addition to Rep. Jagler are Reps. Kleefisch, Schraa, Ripp, Nass, Jorgensen, Ringhand, Kolste, Loudenbeck, Born, Spiros, Berceau, Mason, Ohnstad, Kahl, Bies, Ballweg, Bernier, Thiesfeldt, and Milroy. It is certainly nice to see such broad, bi-partisan support of this proposed legislation!

You too can support these bills by contacting your legislators. Find out who represents you at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/Pages/waml.aspx>. To learn more about the Rock River Trail Initiative, please visit <http://www.rockrivertrail.com/>.

You can also check out a video about the RRT on Youtube

Patricia Cicero,
RRC President



Greg Farnham, and Dave Schreiber after providing testimony at the public hearing along with State Representative Debra Kolste of Janesville, a member of the Transportation Committee.

RRC Spearheads Proposal for Expanded Monitoring in the Yahara River Watershed

by Nancy Sheehan, RRC Stream Monitoring Coordinator

I used the wintery months of January and February to support the RRC stream monitoring program with grant writing. RRC has joined with the Water Action Volunteer Program, Dane County Land and Water Resources and Office of Lakes and Watersheds, the River Alliance of Wisconsin and Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District to submit a grant to expand the citizen stream monitoring program in the Yahara River Watershed – including total phosphorus monitoring. This effort is part of the new adaptive management program.

In another proposal, RRC and Friends of Pheasant Branch jointly submitted proposals to support middle and high school stream monitoring educational programs in Dane County. Cross your fingers in the hopes that these grants are funded. If you are interested in learning more about these proposals or helping with grant writing to support the monitoring program, please let me know. I would welcome your assistance.

Story Map

Check out the revised RRC Demo Story Map which provides information on sites that need to be "adopted" by volunteers. Go to this link http://studentgis.uww.edu/fall2012/RRC/index_demo.html

Is There a Citizen Scientist in You?

We want you to tap your inner scientist! Volunteers are needed to gather valuable data about our local rivers and streams.

Once a month, April through November, volunteers visit a site and test water for various qualities such as temperature, flow and the presence of oxygen. Volunteers also collect critters to determine a biotic index and once a year do a habitat analysis.

Interested in learning more, see page 8 or contact Nancy at nancy@rockrivercoalition.org.

Friends of Lake Wingra and the RRC

The Rock River Coalition Board is happy to announce a new partnership with the Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW). Nancy Sheehan, our Stream Monitoring Coordinator, will be working with FOLW to further their mission of creating a healthy Lake Wingra.

She will be recruiting and working with volunteers on maintaining the Odana rain garden and Vilas Park Lagoon plantings and participating in the annual Lake Wingra spring cleanup. In addition, she will be assisting with special events to highlight the work of FOLW.

This partnership is a great example of how the RRC has helped foster the growth of local resource organizations in the Rock River Basin.

Another opportunity is to become a chapter of the Rock River Coalition.

Chapters of the RRC are non-incorporated groups who want to concentrate on projects to benefit the resource while relying on the RRC to serve as the non-profit fiscal manager.

A benefit for both the RRC and the chapters is sharing membership income. If a RRC member is also a Chapter member, then 25% of any RRC membership dues will be set aside for the chapter's use. Funds raised through targeted efforts of the chapter are held in an account for their use, and only a nominal fee is charged for administration of the funds.

To inquire about how your resource organization can partner with the Rock River Coalition, please contact the RRC President, Patricia Cicero at 920-674-7121 or patricia@rockrivercoalition.org.



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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Next deadline is July 5, 2013.

A letter-sized color version of this newsletter is available at www.rockrivercoalition.org.

Sign up for a monthly email update at <https://lists.uwex.edu/mailman/listinfo/rock-river-basin-update>.

Contact Marie Rubietta at marier@jeffersoncountywi.gov if you'd prefer a pdf of the newsletter emailed to you.

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

TTY: 711 for Wisconsin Relay

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



Rock River Reflections

A publication of the Rock River Coalition in cooperation with the Rock River Stormwater Group and the University of Wisconsin-Extension

Spring 2013 Volume 16, Number 2

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These Winners Really Rock!

Protector Awards

Every two years the Rock River Coalition honors those who have contributed to the protection of our Rock River through actions that truly are exemplary. The following will be honored for their accomplishments by the RRC this year.

Individual Effort

Greg Farnham, Rock River Trails and Lake Sinissippi Improvement District.

Greg has worked tirelessly as the Wisconsin chair for the

Rock River Trail effort. From a good idea just a couple of years ago, the Rock River Trail has now been designated as a National Water Trail, thanks to Greg's work in partnership with Frank Shier, Rockford, Illinois. (See President's message page 2).

Greg has been leader in the innovative work done by Lake Sinissippi Improvement District to implement a lake restoration plan, and advocating for controlling phosphorus and sediment in the entire watershed.



Greg Farnham, posting a Rock River Trail sign in Rock County. Photo courtesy of the Janesville Gazette

Business: Berres Brothers Coffee Roasters.

Berres Brothers is both a Green Tier and a Travel Green business.

They were featured in our winter 2013 Rock River Reflections.

Berres Brothers Coffee Roasters is the number one local coffee roaster for retail sales in Wisconsin. In addition to roasting over a million pounds of coffee each year, Berres also operates a café and retail shop at their roasting facility in Watertown.

Berres strives to be a sustainability leader in both the coffee industry and the Watertown area. Environmental accomplishments at the Berres facility are numerous, but most importantly for the Rock, they have installed rain gardens preventing 98 percent of total suspended solids from leaving the site.



Winners of the Rock River Basin Protector Awards receive a hand-painted turkey feather by artist Marsha Vomastic on a brass plate. Winners of the Rock River Coalition Friends Awards receive a framed photo taken at the Horicon Marsh by Jeffrey Strobel such as the egret photo pictured here.

Elected Official:

Bob Miller Mayor, City of Monona. In 2012 Mayor Miller declared the Year of Water for the City of Monona.

This lead to a number of successful actions done in partnership with local groups and businesses including the Monona Water Conservation Challenge and the Lake Monona Water Walk. Other successes include the designation of Monona as a Bronze Wisconsin Water Star and as a Green Tier Legacy Community. Under his leadership, the Sustainability Committee has gone from an ad hoc committee to a standing committee. The Sustainability Committee has produced Green Tours and a Green Monona Map. Prior to becoming mayor, Mr. Miller was president of The Natural Step Monona. In order to reach as many Monona citizens as he can, Mayor Miller holds weekly office hours at the Sunday Monona Farmers Market.

Educator:

Joseph Hardgrove, University Lake 5th Grade Teacher. Joe has taught his students the importance of watersheds and our water by having them monitor the

Oconomowoc River and by doing annual stream clean-ups. He's been the lead teacher for the past two years on this project. The focus of their river restoration trip is to make the Oconomowoc River a healthier waterway. The kids spend half their day on the river building wing dams, protecting banks, and clearing debris in an attempt to make the water narrower-deeper-faster-colder= Healthier.



Jim Lorman, Edgewood College Professor. Jim is involved in numerous Edgewood College projects including: Sustainability Leadership graduate certificate program, The Wingra Watershed Project, The Watershed Education Connection and the Rain Garden Project. Jim is also involved in his community being a founding member of the Friends of Lake Wingra, a member of the Dane County Lakes & Watershed Commission, the Yahara Lakes Legacy Partnership, and the City of Madison's Building a Green Capitol City: Subcommittee of Sustainable Design and Energy Committee. He's also been involved in bringing Bioneers to Madison.

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