Lake Leaders to Install Natural Shoreline at Wisconsin’s Executive Residence

by Patricia Cicero, RRC President-elect and Wisconsin Lake Leader

In December of 2011, the State Capitol and Executive Residence Board voted unanimously to approve a shoreland restoration project at the Executive Residence, where Governors of Wisconsin have lived while in office since 1949.

A shoreland restoration at the Executive Residence not only will be a beautiful addition to the shores of Lake Mendota, but also is a tremendous opportunity to teach citizens of Wisconsin about the importance of protecting our waters.

Shoreland restorations use native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees to provide erosion control, water filtration, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty.

A group of citizens who participated in the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute led an effort to gain support and approval for this project.

The Lake Leaders Institute is sponsored by the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership which includes the Department of Natural Resources, UW-Extension Lakes Program, and the Wisconsin Lakes.

The restoration project will be implemented in close consultation with the Department of Administration, the State Capitol and Executive Residence Board, and the Executive Residence staff.

The plant design was prepared by Hope Oostdik of Dutch Designs; Lisa Reas of LJ Reas Environmental Consulting Corp.; Bradley Vowels, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison majoring in landscape architecture and water resources management; and Barb Gajewski a 2008 Lake Leader graduate and independent environmental consultant.

The planting will occur in September of 2012.

The shoreland restoration installation and long-term maintenance will be implemented under the leadership of the Lake Leaders and the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership. They are currently in the planning phase and are forming committees to work on the various aspects of the project including fundraising, publicity, and education.

Fundraising will be done in the next few months. In addition, volunteer participation will be sought and encouraged at every stage.

There are a number of ways to be a part of this exciting project. From serving on a committee to contributing materials and donations, there are opportunities for individuals and businesses to lend their support!

For more information, please contact Patricia Cicero at patricia@rockrivercoalition.org.
The Rock River Coalition enjoyed a boost when the family of board member, Jim Koepke, received the Sand County Foundation’s Leopold Conservation Award at the Wisconsin Farm Bureau annual meeting on Dec. 4. The Koepke family operates a dairy farm in the Town of Oconomowoc. They run 1,150 acres and distinguish themselves as early adopters of a no-till cropping system—a type of farming which minimizes soil disturbance and thereby reduces runoff, erosion and loss of nutrients to waterways. In addition to no-till cropping, the Koepkes employ grased waterways, contour strip cropping, crop rotation and barnyard runoff control to reduce nutrient runoff from their crop fields.

No-till cropping is an excellent practice from a water quality standpoint (although it comes with its own environmental impacts, like heavy reliance on herbicides). Its use among U.S. farmers started after World War II, partly in response to the dust bowl, and grew slowly until USDA program conservation requirements for farmers in 1985 and 1990 triggered faster adoption. The USDA estimates that one-quarter of US cropland currently has no-till operations.

Reducing tillage does more than protect our waterways—it helps our climate. By opening the soil, tillage hastens the decay of organic matter and, given the land area under cultivation in the United States, results in significant release of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, to the atmosphere. Rattan Lal, a leading soil scientist from Ohio State University, argued in testimony to the US Senate that soil conservation can play a major role in reducing atmospheric carbon. He cited a suite of familiar USDA programs—the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program and conservation compliance—that increase soil carbon at the expense of atmospheric carbon simply by halting tillage.

Shifting land use to improve water quality is a local undertaking. But we must consider the global ramifications of watershed land management. The stunning failure of nations to act swiftly to reduce greenhouse gases—a failure underlined at the recent United Nations summit in Durban, South Africa—increases the odds of climate change too fast and extreme for society to manage. It is not hyperbole to suggest that most, if not all, of the environmental progress in the Rock River Basin could be wiped out by climate change over the next 100 years. In fact, this could be a dramatic understatement.

As we approach a dangerous climate threshold without global leadership, we should work locally to maximize land management practices with potential for carbon sequestration, like no-till farming, pasture-based livestock production, production of biomass feedstocks on flood-prone cropland and active forest management. After all, due to their proven benefits for water quality, much has already been devoted to promoting these practices. We can’t go wrong by increasing their use in the basin.

Changing land management alone will not come even close to rescuing the climate—only alternative energy sources and conservation can do that—but it will help form a bridge to the day our leaders find it impossible to ignore climate change any longer. In the meantime, we should take leadership from local producers, like Jim Koepke and his family, who are already practicing solutions.

Sincerely,
Scott Taylor
President
Rock River Coalition, Inc.
Monona Year of Water

from The Natural Step Monona website: http://www.tnsmonona.org/water/

Last spring, a team of students in a Capstone Class from University of Wisconsin Nelson Institute and volunteers from The Natural Step Monona (TNS Monona) knocked on every door in the city of Monona to deliver a survey about citizens’ concerns of sustainability, the barriers to making change, and the methods they were adopting to become more sustainable. They learned that water was their most important concern.

This, along with water rates increasing by 32% in 2012 led the City of Monona and The Natural Step Monona to enter into a partnership to highlight water conservation. They learned that water is a precious resource and that people aren’t fortunate enough to live somewhere with access to fresh, clean water. These girls will also work to protect local water, or help keep it clean, all while helping to educate people about this essential resource.

Friends of the Senior Center Pledge: The Friends had lots of ideas, but no firm decision. They are interested in helping seniors conserve water in their homes.

MG21 (21st Century Charter School) Pledge: One of the two teachers who work in this small school has pledged to make the Year of Water a priority in the winter/spring semester. Options include using Xericaping to create a rain garden and planting long, native prairie grass on hills around the school. She will also give the TNS water-based presentation to her class and will encourage students to take up projects based on water.

Monona Grove Audio-Visual Club Pledge tbd (to be determined): The A-V Club is considering water-saving public service announcements for the public news station.

Monona Grove High School Environmental Club Pledge tbd: The Club is also interested in water-bottle-refill stations and a “Ban the Bottle” campaign.

A kick-off to the Monona Year of Water is the Water Conservation Challenge. Monona residents were invited to join the Water Conservation Challenge and more than 100 households took up the challenge. Their meters were read on January 3, 2012 and next January they will be read again. The three contestants who achieve the greatest percentage reduction in water use, compared to the previous year, will each receive a cash award.

But all participants have two other ways to be recognized. 1) All contestants are entered into a monthly prize drawing. 2) Contestants are encouraged to submit their most innovative ideas for conserving water. At the end of the Water Conservation Challenge, prizes will be given to the five entrants with the most innovative methods of reducing water use, as judged by three water experts from outside Monona.

Innovation prizes include: a rain barrel from Fiskars; a one-hour Permaculture consultation from Sustainability on Stilts; four oil change certificates from Monona Motors; a $50 gift certificate from Crema Cafe; and one night in a Whirlpool room from AmericInn Madison/Monona. More information is available at http://www.mymonona.com. Innovation ideas will be judged on:

1. How much water your innovation saves.
2. The clever reuse/re-purposing of materials.
3. How easily it could be adopted by others.
4. Whether it has trade-offs: increased consumption of other precious resources or energy, or additional savings of precious resources or energy.

Water Challenge sponsors include 4 Pillars 4 Health Ecospace, Sun-Mar Global Composting Experts, Gerhard’s Showroom, American Transmission Company, Chad’s Carpenters, Green Builder Supply, and Meriter Medical Group.

QUESTIONS? Email info@tnsmonona.org or monona@ci.monona.wi.us.
Plan for Spring with a Rain Garden Assessment
by Stephanie Prellwitz, Biological Systems Engineering Graduate Student and Rock River Coalition Volunteer

Snow is on the ground, but it is not too early to begin planning for a successful rain garden installation for spring. A rain garden is an attractive landscape feature with ecological functions that reduces flooding and improves water quality.

However, a rain garden is not ideal in every instance. Improper location or soil conditions can result in a rain garden that does not adequately drain and harbors mosquitoes as a result. Those that are poorly maintained can become an overgrown eyesore. These pitfalls can be avoided by conducting a rain garden feasibility assessment before installation.

Is a rain garden right for me?
A rain garden’s function is only as effective as its design allows. While rain gardens can improve water quality and ecosystem health, first consider if your lawn is a good candidate before digging.

Does your lawn, for example, have sufficient slope away from the house? Is there available green space at least 10 feet deep away from the foundation to prevent moisture accumulation? Do you have a healthy soil that is not overly compacted and will allow for adequate infiltration? Are you willing to weed and prevent the establishment of invasive species, particularly in the first year? Are you somewhat knowledgeable with native plant identification to assist during maintenance? If not, your site might be more conducive with other stormwater management tools discussed later.

Location, location, location!
The location of a rain garden is an important consideration to its success. Rain gardens should not be installed above septic fields or under tree cover where excavation could pose a risk to tree roots.

Contrary to intuition, locations that currently experience regular, prolonged standing water are not suitable locations for a rain garden. This is a symptom of a greater subsurface issue such as compacted soil or a high groundwater table.

Rain garden alternatives
If you have determined that your site does not allow for a successful rain garden installation, there are other beneficial stormwater management tools to consider. With or without a rain garden, your lawn has the potential to act as a sponge and infiltrate stormwater into the ground. The natural properties of the soil filter pollutants and reduce runoff.

Consider grading your lawn surface to include localized depressions that slow stormwater velocities and, in turn, improve water quality and promote infiltration.

Reduce the amount of impervious area of your yard, such as patios and driveways. A decrease in impervious area results in a decrease in stormwater volume.

When possible, choose native plants in your landscape design. Native plants produce significant amounts of root biomass which can reach over 10 feet deep in some instances! This structure improves compacted soil texture, infiltration rates, and organic matter content over time.

For a minimalist approach, install a rain barrel which captures water from downspouts. This prevents the flow from entering the storm sewer system and downstream water resources.

A rain barrel in use. Flowering plants love rain water as it is slightly acid, so in addition to saving precious water, a rain barrel will help give you beautiful flowering plants. photo by Suzanne Wade

While a rain garden might not be a good alternative for every site, there are still valuable management tools that can improve stormwater quality. Planning ahead and choosing the most appropriate method is an effective solution for enhanced watershed health.

RRC Monitoring Efforts
The Rock River Coalition supports a number of monitoring efforts, here is a short summary of each:

Become a WAV Monitor
Level One: New monitors are trained in the Wisconsin WAV (Water Action Volunteer) techniques. They learn to sample dissolve oxygen, temperature, clarity, flow, habitat and perform a biotic index.

Monitors then go out once a month from spring until fall when water levels allow. They collect habitat data once a year, biotic index spring and fall and all others once a month.

The monitors enter their data in the WAV database. It is reviewed by a basin coordinator before it becomes publicly available.

WAV data is used for education and for baseline and trend data.

Snapshot Days
Be a monitor with just a twice a year commitment. Snapshot Days gives the RRC a cross-basin look by having all monitors take their measurements on the same day. Monitors sample at a minimum turbidity, temperature and dissolved oxygen.

2012 Snapshot Days are May 19 and Sept. 22. Everyone out on a single day tells us a great story about water quality in the Basin.

WAV Level Two Monitoring
The program, sponsored by the DNR and UW-Extension, is generally for experienced monitors. At this level, citizens are trained to use Department of Natural Resources’ methods for monitoring streams. Dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature and transparency are monitored monthly between April and October on pre-determined dates. Continuous temperature monitoring devices are placed in the stream and record temperature hourly until they are removed from the stream and data is downloaded. Meters for monitoring pH and dissolved oxygen must be calibrated by the citizen monitors on each sampling day. Due to the high cost of equipment for this level of monitoring, citizen groups share equipment, thus providing as much data as possible in a given area.

More on mussel, wetland and other level 3 monitoring in the greater Lake Wingra watershed.

UW-Arboretum Science Day: Winter Enrichment Lecture
February 9, 2012
9:00-10:30am
Students and faculty will present findings of research projects conducted on Arboretum lands and in the greater Lake Wingra watershed.

A rain garden down slope from a house’s rain gutters and down spout. This rain garden features flowers and shrubs and blends nicely with existing trees and shrubs. photo by Suzanne Wade

Hawk moth on swamp milkweed in a Jefferson rain garden. photo by Suzanne Wade
Stream Monitor Training
A training session for individuals interested in stream monitoring will be held at UW-Waukesha field station, Waterville on Saturday May 12, 2012. You must preregister by contacting Jayne Jenks at 262-896-8305 or jjenks@waukeshacounty.gov.

Agenda
8:30 Welcome, introductions
8:45 Watersheds—what are they and what’s happening to them?
9:30 Dissolved Oxygen, Temperature and Turbidity
10:15 Biotic Index (critters)
12:00 Lunch (bring your own)
12:45 Measuring Flow/Habitat
2:15 Where We Go From Here!
2:30 Adjourn

Hip boots/waders: If you do not have them, please give your boot size when you register.

Dress appropriately for the weather, as we will be in or near the creek for an extended period of time.

Bring your calendar to schedule first monitoring visit.

There is no charge for the training and equipment will be provided. But don’t forget, pre-registration required by calling or emailing Jayne Jenks.

More Opportunities
At least one more workshop will be held this spring in the western region of the basin.

Coordinators can train monitoring teams at their site if they can’t make it to a training workshop, time permitting.

Coordinators are:
- Dane County: Pete Jopke, 608-224-3733, jopke@co.dane.wi.us
- Jefferson: Patricia Cicero, 920-674-7121 patriciac@jeffersoncountywisconsin.gov
- Rock County: Anne Miller, 608-754-6617 ext 118 amiller@co.rock.wi.us
- Waukesha County: Jayne Jenks, 262-896-8305
- All others contact Jennifer at 920-674-9380 or monitoring@rockrivercoalition.org

Celebrate 10 Year Landmark at the Monitoring Confluence April 28, 2012

The Confluence: a Gathering of Monitors is an opportunity for veteran and new monitors to get together, share experiences and get advanced training on a variety of topics.

This is the only time in the year that we bring all monitors together: stream, wetland and lake. So if you are a monitor in the basin, put this date on your calendar.

Learn about exciting new monitoring initiatives and celebrate with your fellow volunteer monitors.

Pre-register by April 25 with Jennifer at 920-674-9380 or by email to monitoring@rockrivercoalition.org.

2012 Citizen Monitoring Confluence:
A Gathering of Citizen Monitors
April 28, 2012
Lake Mills Community Center (City Hall), 100 Water Street

Confluence Agenda
8:15 - 8:45 Registration
8:45 - 9:15 Welcome & 10th Anniversary Celebration honoring long-term monitors
RRC President Scott Taylor and DNR Lake Monitoring Coordinator Susan Graham

Lake Monitors Breakout
9:30 Welcome and Introductions
9:40 Secchi and Chemistry Procedures Review
10:45 Break (coffee, tea, juice and refreshments provided)
11:00 Update Database & Distribute Supplies
11:15 Open Discussion

Stream Monitors Breakout
9:15 Stream Monitoring Status Update & New Opportunities: Christina Anderson Tier 2 Monitoring Coordinator
9:45 Monitor Sharing:
Koshkonong Creek Mussel monitoring: Janice Redford
Road Salt Monitoring: Jim Kerler
Stage Monitoring: tbd
Macroinvertebrate Monitoring: Samantha Foster
Raccoon Creek Monitoring: Dave Hinde
10:45 Break (coffee, tea, juice and refreshments provided)
11:15 Breakout Sessions:
The Exciting World of Mussel Monitoring: Lisie Kitchell, WDNR Mussel Specialist
How to Become a Level 2 Monitor: Christina Anderson WDNR
Macroinvertebrates - Detangling the Commonly Confused Critters: Suzanne Wade

Lisie Kitchell working with monitor Chuck Heidt at the 2010 Confluence on mussel identification.  photo by Suzanne Wade

12:15 - 12:45 Lunch: Bring your own or order a Jimmy John sub and pay during registration
12:45 - 1:45 Keynote: To be announced

1:45 Official close of Confluence but for those interested we will reconvene at Tyrenena Brewery Company with RRC board members for a tour, tasting and continued discussion about monitoring and the Rock River Coalition.

Jayne Jenks, Waukesha County monitoring coordinator works with Richard Schlondrop, a volunteer monitor, on identifying macroinvertebrates at an earlier Confluence. The Confluence is a great place to meet other monitors and hone skills.
First Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase by Jefferson County

Last December Jefferson County closed on its first agricultural conservation easement on the Rodell Lea farm in the Town of Oakland. The County’s Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements program (PACE) is administered by the Jefferson County Farmland Conservation Easement Commission, which was created by the County Board in 2007.

The 220 acre dairy farm ranked 1st in the state and federal agricultural conservation easement programs and received 50 percent cost sharing from the state PACE program and 50 percent from the federal Farmland and Ranchland Protection program of the NRCS.

Rodell Lea and his partners, the Ned Healy family, employ many conservation practices on their farm and are excited that the land will be protected for future generations of farmers. Healy, who has worked in partnership with Lea since 1980, owns half the animals and machinery and would like to purchase the farm. Without the easement, development pressure would make that goal difficult.

In an article by Gloria Hafemeister in the State Farmer Magazine, Lea is quoted “There is a subdivision across the road and some houses around us. A lot of land in the area is also being set aside for parks. I want to see this farm stay in agriculture and I’m hoping others in the area will do the same.”

For more information on the Jefferson County program or to get an application for the easement program, contact Michelle Staff at the Zoning Department, 920-674-8638.

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2012 RRC Members as of January 17, 2012 - Thank You!

Individual/ Senior
Sharon Beall
Patricia Beike
Andy & Debbie Bissonnette
Curtis Blakeway
Bill Boettge
Frank Brazelton
David & Darice Brumm
David Carpenter
Walt Christensen
Patricia Cicero
James Dancy
Leslie Demuth
Greg Farnham
Nelson Fischer
William Fogarty
Kevin Freber
Thomas Garfield
Donnell Geib
Ruth Hartwig
Frances Highsmith
Tod Highsmith
Mike Hoppenrath
Ed Huck
Peter Jacobs
Ruth Johnson
Sue Jones
Chase Kelm
Paul Lange
Steve Lewis
Jeanine Mason
Richard Mclaughlin
Eric Mittelsadt
Daniel Moore
Steve Nass
Dean Paynter
Urnsula Petersen
Janice & Fred Redford
Gerald & Dolores Richardson
Eugene Roark
Dan Sable
Tom Schnaderbeck
Debora Sielski
Rose Smith
Emily Stanley
Joleen Stinson
Kristen Kordet & Scott Taylor
Mary Thompson

Individual/ Senior continued
Marsha Vomastic
Bob Weiland
Caroline Werner
Ken Wiesner
Steven Wurster

Family
Steven Apelbaum
William & Cindy Arbure
Jan Axelson
Ron & Nelda Bergsten
Dean & Kim Buchholz
Jane Carlson & Family
Don Christensen
James & Cheryl Congdon
Bob & Lisa Conley
Sam & Kaye Cooke
Skip and Wendy Drew
Patrick & Lloyd Eagan
Ralph Froelich
Carl & Peggy Glassford
Eric Janikowski & Jennifer Hanneman
James & Lisa Kerler
Roger & Denise Kit
James & Mary Koepke
Margaret & Ralph Krueger
Carl Mendelson & Carol Mankiewicz
Tracey & Tom Novak
Charles & Evelyn Payson
Penny & Gary Shackelford
Suzanne & Larry Wade
James Welsh
Tony & Kate Yuhas

Affiliate continued
dodge County Land Resources &
Parks Dept.
Fox Lake Inland Protection &
Rehabilitation District
Friends Of McCarthy Park
Green Diagnostics
Lake Koshkonong Wetland Association
Lake Sinissippi Improvement District
Loeb-Lorman Metals, Inc.
North Lake Management District
Rock Aqua Jays
Rosy-Lane Holsteins, LLC
Taylor Conservation, LLC
T.C. Products Company
Town Of Dunn

Affiliate continued
U.S. Geological Survey
Upper Nemahbin Lake Mngt Dist
Village Of Oconomowoc Lake
Watertown Rotary Club
Whispering Wings Game Farm
Widmer’s Cheese Cellars
Yaggy Colby Associates, Inc.

Corporate
Aquarius Systems
Frontier FS Cooperative
Horizon Bank
Kunkel Engineering Group
Landesign by Margaret Burlingham
Village of Theresa

New Municipal Membership Category

The RRC Board recently tackled the question of municipal memberships.

There has been some confusion about how a municipality fits into our Affiliate membership category. Our description states that a municipal department can become an Affiliate member, but what if a municipality has multiple departments that work with the RRC? Today we work mostly with the public works or engineering departments but over the years our projects have also involved parks departments, planning departments, wastewater treatment plants as well as elected officials and administrative staff. This could mean multiple memberships to cover an entire city.

To meet the needs of the different municipalities in the basin they will now be able to choose the level that works best for them:

$50 Affiliate membership: Appropriate for a single department or a small town or village. Only that department would receive newsletters or be entitled to discounts at workshops or member events such as Send Your Legislator Down the River. Multiple departments in a municipality can each be Affiliate members.

$125 Municipal membership: provides complete coverage to all departments in the city. Municipality can designate multiple individuals to receive newsletters and can receive discounts to workshops or member events for any staff member or elected official.

Contact us if you would like more information on current memberships at info@rockrivercoalition.org.
Get the Scoop on Dog Poop!

Ok, it’s disgusting, but how bad is it really when piles are left in the street, when it comes to water quality? While it’s a problem year round, during the winter the evidence is generally more visible than other times of the year. And those dog feces can be a real water quality problem.

In Wisconsin 35% of households have dogs, and the average number of dogs per household is 1.5. The average size for dogs is 40lbs and each average sized dog deposits 3/4 pound of feces/day. Now this happens each and every day so a mid-sized dog produces roughly 550 pounds a year.

Using state averages, Watertown, a typical mid-sized city with 8,022 households, would have 4,235 dogs.

Not all of that washes to our rivers and lakes of course. Several studies along the East Coast found 75% of dog owners don’t walk their dogs. Not all of that washes to our rivers and lakes of course. Several studies along the East Coast found 75% of dog owners don’t walk their dogs.

What does that mean for water quality?

- Of dog fecal waste flowing into the rivers and lakes in the Rock River Basin through our stormdrains every single year.
- One spot of good news for the basin, in a 2003 Dane County survey of 500 residents, only 10% reported that they didn’t currently pick up after their pets. Hopefully that’s true throughout the basin. If so you can decrease the numbers by 2/3 but 233 tons is still a lot from just ten cities.

A note from a currently dogless board member: With regards to dog poop... for those who (still) get a paper delivered in a plastic bag, these bags make great poop-picker-uppers. Just pull the bag out of your pocket, thread it over your hand like a glove, hold your breath and pick up the doggie doo with the bagged hand. Then invert the bag and tie a knot to seal it. No hardware needed! Send it in the trash to the landfill and they’ll make methane out of it! A bread bag from the grocery store works too.

RRC Outreach Challenge!

Does your group have a flyer or handout for dog owners encouraging them to pick up?

If you do, submit a link to them on our Facebook page. We’d love to share the good work from our partner stormwater groups and cities in the basin. If you see one you like, you could include it with your municipal dog license or ask local veterinarians to post them or hand them to their clients.

Interested in the Dog Pooh Calculator so you can learn how much pooh washes from your municipality? Just go to www.rockrivercoalition.org.
Rock River Reflections -- Are You Blue?

The Rock River Coalition would like to thank the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension for their long-term support of this newsletter. Unfortunately Extension can not continue to provide the same level of financial support as in the past. This means we can no longer provide the number of complimentary newsletters we have historically been able to.

In general those who will continue to receive a print copy of the newsletter include:

1. 2012 Rock River Coalition members (2012 members as of 1/17/12 are listed on page 6).
2. Active Rock River Coalition monitors.
3. Rock River Stormwater Group members: The RRSRG funds one printing of the newsletter annually.
4. DNR staff headquartered at GEF 2, Fitchburg, Janesville or Horicon.
5. Extension and LWCD county offices in the Basin, the UWEX/UW-Madison Environmental Resources Center and Extension Natural Resource Educators and Specialists.
6. Additionally, non-member municipalities will receive one newsletter sent to the top elected official. Municipalities who are paying members can designate additional staff to receive newsletters.
7. Libraries and media outlets including basin newspapers, radio and television.

If your label is printed in blue ink, then this is your last mailed newsletter.

If you want to keep receiving a print copy of our newsletter all you need to do is either become a member by filling in the form on page 7 and mailing it in with your check, or on-line at www.rockrivercoalition.org. Of course you can also become a RRC volunteer monitor.

You can view or print the newsletter from the RRC website. Notifications of when it’s available are sent out via the Rock River Basin Update List. This moderated list provides a monthly source for events, websites, publications and grants. Sign up for the update at https://lists.uwex.edu/mailman/listinfo/rock-river-basin-update. This is a moderated list with one message sent a month. Contact Marie Rubieta at marier@jeffersoncountywi.gov if you want a pdf of the newsletter emailed to you.

Jim Congdon Retires from DNR- Many Thanks!

A true friend of the Rock River Coalition who worked tirelessly for water quality improvements in the basin has retired. Jim Congdon, DNR Upper Rock Water Team leader after the DNR’s major reorganization in the mid 1990’s, helped lead us to major heights as a basin partnership organization.

Jim’s belief that achieving true water quality improvements relies on viewing water as a system, with all aspects analyzed and dealt with as a whole, rather than in narrow regulatory silos is part of what lead to our unique DNR, UW-Extension, Rock River Coalition partnership.

Jim helped the RRC put together an extensive nomination of the Rock River as a National Heritage River in 1998. More than 100 letters of support were generated toward the nomination. Many of the ideas born of that effort were later realized through the RRC issue teams. Jim’s hard work on issue teams resulted in the Rural Development Guidelines and Policy Manual, Send Your Legislator Down the River and our stream monitoring program.

The Rock River Coalition Board at its January 21 retreat recommitted to the basin citizen monitoring program.

2012 is the 10th anniversary of the stream monitoring program and the 7th anniversary of our wetland restoration monitoring at Zeloski marsh. The Board will officially recognize long-term monitors at the biennial Confluence on April 28, 2012 at the Lake Mills Community Center.

The board will hire a monitoring coordinator with a proposed start date of April 2, 2012. The RRC Monitoring Coordinator position description will be ready by Feb. 1, 2012 and will be posted at http://www.rockrivercoalition.org and announced on our Facebook page. Copies can also be requested from info@rockrivercoalition.org.

The monitoring coordinator will be a flexible position with an average of 10 hours per week, with more hours in the spring and summer and fewer hours other times of the year.

The key job responsibilities will be to:

- Recruit new stream monitors for all three levels of WAV
- Organize, lead and promote workshops
- Provide on-site training of monitors
- Ensure monitors know how to enter data and review their data
- Recruit wetland monitors for bird, amphibian, butterfly and Odonata studies
- Keep accurate records of monitors
- Provide regular communication with all monitors, coordinators and board
- Keep equipment and chemicals up-to-date
- Raise funds to support the program through donations and grants.

A monitoring assistant will work with the coordinator on record keeping, publicity and communication tasks.

Congratulations Jim Koepke - Sand County Foundation’s Leopold Conservation Award Winner

RRC board member, Jim Koepke, and his three co-owners of the Koepke Farms, were recently honored by the Sand County Foundation at the Farm Bureau’s annual banquet. This national award recognizes excellence in agriculture conservation and is given to those who exemplify Aldo Leopold’s land ethic. More on the great efforts of the Koepke family in the President’s Message on page 2.

We thank Jim for his past efforts, we know Jim will not be far away from the Coalition and our efforts to improve water quality. Already he has agreed to be our representative on the Dodge County Land & Water Management Plan Advisory Committee.

Citizen Monitoring Award Nominations

Who do you know who has given a significant amount of time to conducting volunteer stream monitoring and sharing their knowledge with others? The nomination process is simple, it just takes writing one letter and if you want, including a few supporting documents. Nominations are due by February 20, 2012 to Chad Cook. Details are available on our website at: http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav/monitoring/awards/about.html