



# Rock River Reflections

A publication of the Rock River Coalition  
in cooperation with the Rock River Stormwater Group

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## How's the Water? Rock River Streams Get a Grade

By Nancy Sheehan, RRC Citizen Monitoring Coordinator

The Rock River Coalition is continuously being asked, "How good is the water in the Rock River Basin?" Thanks to the work of our Stream Monitoring Coordinator, Nancy Sheehan and all the hours and hours of sampling by our volunteer stream monitors, we are beginning to tell the Rock's streams water quality story.

In 2015, RRC received a WDNR River Planning grant to develop the recently completed Rock River Basin Report Card.

Nancy, working with a new steer committee, was able to develop a process to grade stream health for 180 sites monitored by our volunteers from 2005 to 2015.

Then working with several great volunteers, she was able to use the power of the Internet to display the information interactively.

Both maps are available through our web site, [www.rockrivercoalition.org](http://www.rockrivercoalition.org), or directly through the links listed.

### Protecting Streams in the Rock River Basin

This online map graphically illustrates grades for each water quality parameter at every site monitored by volunteers from 2005 to 2015 using ESRI ArcGIS software. <http://arcg.is/2fclFJ7>

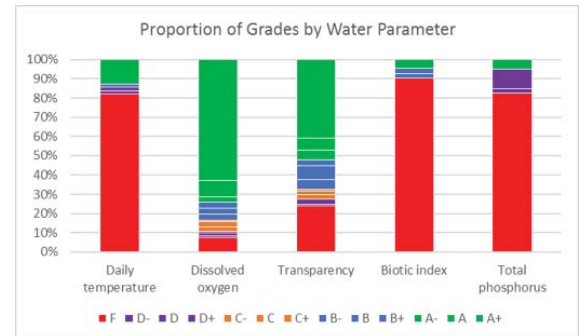
### Volunteers Taking Action: Stream Station Report Card

This story map creates an interactive report geared to a general audience. The map summarizes the broad findings from the data analysis and links these findings to the ArcGIS map. The story map also provides links to the 86 HUC-10 watershed maps. (HUC - USGS Hydrologic Unit Code) <http://arcg.is/2htYMLY>

### What are the results?

There is good news and bad news. A larger proportion of stream sites met targets established by RRC for dissolved

oxygen and water clarity. However, very few As, Bs or even Cs were given to stream sites based on results for stream temperature, biotic index or total phosphorus. In terms of these water quality parameters, many of our streams are in trouble, which is why the WDNR completed a total maximum daily load (TMDL) study and is implementing water quality improvements throughout the basin (see Rock River Recovery article page 6).



Proportion of grades by water quality parameter. (Ungraded stations are not included.)

This finding is graphically illustrated in a stacked column chart of site grades shown in Figure 1, above. Stream water quality grades have been summarized in Figures 2 through 6 on page 4.

### What do the grades mean?

Basically, we have our work cut out for us if we hope to improve our water quality grades over the next 10 years.

We learned several lessons from this process which will influence our monitoring efforts in 2017 and beyond.

One, we need to do a better job collecting stream monitoring data consistently over each monitoring season so we can assess current conditions and future changes. Too many times, sites lacked sufficient data for a grade to be assessed.

Story continued on page 4



*Our goal with this project is to make our thirteen plus years of data more useful to our volunteers, the Rock River Coalition Board and our county and conservation group partners.*

*We hope you travel on-line and take a look. Let us know how we, 'your' organization, can improve our monitoring program. We do appreciate your thoughts and input.*

*Thank you,  
Nancy Sheehan, RRC Stream Monitoring Coordinator*

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# Rock River Coalition President's Message

It's early January and I still haven't made any firm New Year resolutions, but I resolve to make at least one by the end of this article. Like most of you, I have been reflecting on the past year and thinking about what could happen in 2017 and beyond. 2016 was an outstanding year for the Rock River Coalition, thanks to our old and new members, old and new employees, our citizen volunteer water quality monitors, and successful events and projects.

Our most significant accomplishment of 2016 was the Testing the Waters - a Paddle and Probe Adventure event reported in the last issue of Rock River Reflections. We demonstrated a new way to collect and report water quality data, raised awareness about how to improve and protect our water resources, enjoyed paddling the river, and gained several new members.

Thanks to a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and other contributors, Nancy Sheehan and a skilled cadre of volunteers, completed a water quality report card project in 2016. Available data from our citizen monitoring sites over a ten-year period is now summarized and can be viewed through our web site, [rockrivercoalition.org](http://rockrivercoalition.org). Please refer to Nancy's article in this issue for additional information. As expected,

many sites had low grades for water quality parameters like phosphorus. But some sites had surprisingly high grades, despite pressures from urban and agricultural activities upstream.

We hope lessons learned in these high quality watersheds can be transferred elsewhere, so sites with low grades continue to improve.

There is a lot to be optimistic about for 2017 from the Coalition's perspective. Rock River Recovery (TMDL implementation) is underway with plans to reduce phosphorus and sediment pollution throughout the Rock River Basin. Major watershed adaptive management projects are in full swing in the Dane County and Oconomowoc areas. Former Coalition president Scott Taylor helped us apply for a grant to identify additional restorable wetlands in the Basin. Our citizen monitoring program is stronger than ever and will help inform decision-making in all of these areas.

On to resolutions. First, I resolve to make progress on our Board's long-term goal of establishing an executive director for the Coalition. We currently have an all-volunteer board and a staff that is limited by the amount of funds we can generate through memberships, donations, and grants. An executive director could raise more funds and help us accomplish so much more. If you would like to help implement this

goal, please contact me or another board member.

I've also been thinking about advocacy and what it means. Dictionaries suggest it is the act or process of arguing for and supporting a cause, idea, or policy. The Coalition advocates for the protection, protecting and improvement of the economic, environmental, cultural and recreational resources of the Basin by bringing together and educating people of diverse interests.

This approach has led to inclusive and thoughtful problem-solving, and makes us a respected resource for regulators and policy-makers. I resolve to more strongly advocate the Rock River Coalition's mission in 2017, particularly in the environmental and recreational areas. I hope you will join me! Thanks for all you do, and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2017.

*Jane Carlson*  
RRC President



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

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



## Clean Lakes Breakthrough

By Joe Parisi, Dane County Executive

We have had a breakthrough in our lakes cleanup effort that should result in clean lakes decades sooner. My 2017 budget will speed up our lakes clean-up effort by removing the sludge from the streams that feed into our lakes. The \$12 million multi-year budget initiative will eliminate 870,000 pounds of algae-growing phosphorus.

Two years ago, I put \$60,000 in the county budget to analyze the water quality and phosphorus content of the miles of streams and creeks that feed into Lake Mendota. A year of research later, the findings are stark: if we don't remove accrued sludge that sits at the bottom of these streams it will take 99 years to see a 50% reduction in phosphorus that finds its way into our lakes.

Even more concerning, the roadmap to cleaning our lakes completed a couple of years ago (Yahara CLEAN) suggests it will cost \$78 million to achieve that 50% reduction.

No one wants to wait 100 years for clean lakes.

Our community has long cited that 50% reduction as the goal in our lake cleanup effort. We can't accomplish it in this lifetime without getting into these waterways and removing the continuous source of phosphorus that seeps daily into our waters. Spending \$78 million and having to wait 99 years to see the benefits of those investments isn't the answer.

Testing shows the phosphorus concentration in this stream sediment is seven times more potent than what's found on crop fields in the Mendota watershed! There are more than 5,600 acres in the watershed. County staff and farmers have implemented conservation and runoff reduction practices on 90% of those lands. Soil testing shows farmlands in the watershed are on average already two times better than the state standards on phosphorus concentration.

This data says what's been done to date has worked at reducing what nutrients go on the land, when they're applied, and most importantly, keeping them there. We're making progress. We can't accomplish our goal without getting at what's already in the water.



*Accumulated muck in Dane County streams, being measured by Mike Sorge Wisconsin DNR stream biologist*

# Sediment Removal Q&A with Dane County

The Dane County proposal is an innovative approach to reduce phosphorus in our stream and lakes. Innovative approaches require questioning minds and open discussions. In the spirit of fostering innovation and building strong partnerships with Dane County and other groups to protect and improve stream water quality, the RRC stream monitoring program coordinator solicited questions from Friends of Pheasant Branch Watershed Committee, Token Creek Conservancy Committee and RRC Stream Monitoring Steering Committee member Bob Hansis. The following presents the questions (Q) asked, and the answers (A) provided by Dane County staff regarding the County's proposed project. (See story previous page.) The RRC sincerely appreciates Dane County's thorough responses. We recognize that the proposed project has the potential to remove a long-term source of phosphorus and sediment loadings to the Yahara chain of lakes and, eventually, to the downstream Rock River. We encourage RRC members and our partners to stay actively engaged in this effort so this important project can benefit from our collective expertise.

## Monitoring

Q intro: Because of the episodic and seasonal nature of sediment and phosphorus loadings to streams, monitoring the success or effectiveness of the phosphorus-laden sediment removal will be difficult.

Q: Will there be an effort to collect water quality data during dredging to evaluate the effects of the dredging on sediment and phosphorus concentrations?

A: Water samples were collected during a pilot testing of the sediment removal process. The samples are currently being measured by the State Lab of Hygiene to provide insight for full implementation. Future sites that will undergo sediment removal will be evaluated for the need to collect water samples during the removal process.

Q intro: The Rock River total maximum daily load (TMDL) has the goal of restoring stream water quality to meet state standards for phosphorus and total suspended solids. The Yahara WINS Adaptive Management project has a similar goal in the Yahara watershed.

Q: Given that we are unlikely to see an immediate lowering of phosphorus concentrations based on stream samples, how will Dane County measure success in terms of reducing phosphorus concentrations to ultimately "delist" streams that are currently on the state impaired waters list?

A: We have found that the stream sediments contain abundant amounts of phosphorus. Additionally, through sample collection and data analysis, the in-stream sediments can have a negative impact on the phosphorus concentrations of water in streams. Long term water quality samples will continue to be collected from USGS gage stations and periodic grab samples from Dane County and partners. In addition to phosphorus reductions, we hope to achieve biological improvements.

Q: How will Dane County measure overall impact on stream health?

A: In partnering with WDNR water quality experts, monitoring of biological, physical, and chemical parameters over the years has been conducted. These parameters will continue to be collected to aid in evaluating stream health.

Q: Which agency will be responsible for collecting these measures of success?

A: Dane County, WDNR, and other partners are working together to not only leverage expertise but to share resources and responsibilities of the various project components.

Q: Does the County foresee a role for citizen stream monitors who are already collecting nutrient samples as well as sampling macroinvertebrates and measuring dissolved oxygen and water temperatures?

A: Any additional information to provide past, current, or future data on stream health and water quality would be welcome to the project.

## Stream Banks

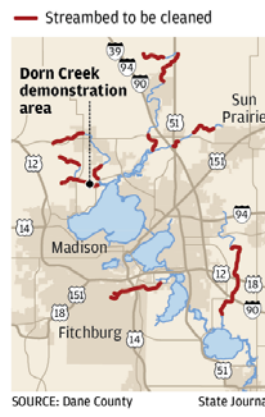
Q intro: Dredging operations could create opportunities for increased bank erosion, spread of aquatic invasive species and disturbance of sensitive vegetation.

Q: How will Dane County track channel width to make sure the channel doesn't widen from bank slumping?

A: Prior to stream sediment removal, elevation surveys will be conducted to measure the stream cross section. After sediment removal, a follow-up survey will be conducted to evaluate changes in cross sections.

## Proposed Dane County streambed cleanup

County Executive Joe Parisi is proposing a \$12 million project to remove 870,000 pounds of phosphorus from 33 miles of streambed.



Q: How will sensitive vegetation be identified prior to moving in equipment?

A: Prior to sediment removal, permits will be obtained from WDNR which requires assessment of threatened or endangered species that may be impacted by the project. In addition, removal plans will be developed to minimize, to the maximum extent feasible, the impacts on sensitive vegetation.

Q: Have project managers considered using remote sensing and possibility drone-based photogrammetry to map bank boundaries?

A: Due to the nature of these streams with varying landscapes of tall vegetation grasses, tree cover, and meandering pathways, it can be difficult to use such approaches. We are intending to use orthorectified photos to reveal stream stability/changes over the course of many years.

Q: What measures will be taken to stabilize stream banks during and after sediment removal?

A: The bank stability will be evaluated pre-removal using satellite images, site investigations, and/or modeling. Those results will provide information on measures to be installed after sediment removal. For example, one approach to be utilized is bioengineering using traditional engineering practices with ecological principles to establish living vegetative systems to provide erosion protection and slope stability.

Q: Will there be an immediate replanting effort of these disturbed areas to avoid the spread of reed canary grass, Japanese knotweed and other prolific, fast growing plants? Immediate planting is key to preventing establishment of these invasive plants.

A: Reestablishment of vegetation on disturbed areas will be evaluated on a case by case basis and will be incorporated into each site's plan and associated permit.

Q: What efforts will be made to avoid the spread aquatic invasive species during the dredging operations and prevent, for example, bits of Japanese knotweed roots from floating downriver to establish in another spot?

A: Any equipment placed in the river will be monitored for attached plant and animal species. Prior to placing equipment in the stream or moving to another waterbody, the implementation of quarantine and cleaning protocols will be evaluated and implemented.

Q: Will there be an effort to convert the work area to native plants? If yes, who will choose the appropriate native plants for each work site?

A: Depending on the land use (e.g. agriculture field, wetland, forest) native plants may be considered when applicable. We will be working with those who specialize in the field (e.g. ecologists and hydrologists).

## Economics and Impacts

Q intro: Given that there are many sources of phosphorus loading to the lakes and there is agreement that efforts should be made to reduce phosphorus loads from as many sources as possible, we cannot lose sight of the fact that there is legacy phosphorus stored in soils where manure and other fertilizers are and were applied heavily. Conservation practices are critical for controlling this runoff source.

Q: Can we be assured that proportional investments will be made to deal with agricultural runoff from fields, especially particulate and dissolved phosphorus?

A: Efforts by the agricultural community, Dane County, and NRCS have and will continue to promote and reduce the amount of soil and nutrients leaving agricultural fields. There are a number of organizations (Clean Lakes Alliance, Yahara Pride Farms, Yahara WINS, etc.) that continue to support the implementation of conservation practices to prevent soil and nutrients from entering surface waters.

Q: How does the phosphorus loading from sediments deposited in the inlets and upstream channels compare with the internal loading of the lake from lake-bottom sediment?

A: Our efforts have started with prevention of phosphorus runoff on the uplands and this project focusses on cleaning up headwater streams. Together, phosphorus prevention and stream cleanup are intended to reduce loadings to the lake.

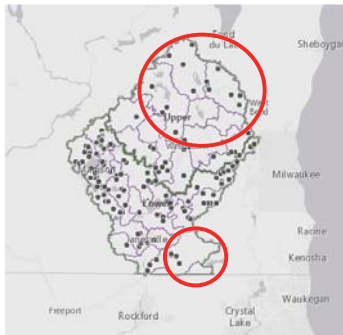
Q: How scalable is the legacy sediment removal especially if suitable adjacent disposal sites for the sediment are not available?

A: The current proposal is to evaluate and remove sediment from 33 miles of streams entering the Yahara Lakes. (Refer to accompanying map.)



## How's the Water continued

In addition, we need to expand our network of volunteer stream monitoring sites. In particular, we need volunteers to help monitor tributaries in Dodge and Walworth Counties (see Figure 7). A greater number of monitoring sites with consistent and continuous monthly data would allow us to grade a whole subwatershed. Originally, our intent was to do just that. However, after a review of the data, there was neither the breadth nor depth of water quality data available to assign water quality grades for each of the 28 subwatersheds in the Rock River Basin. Instead, grades were assessed for each parameter monitored at individual sites. Over the next few years, RRC hopes to work with partners to create a water quality index that will allow us to combine and aggregate results from all five water quality parameters typically monitored by volunteers—and then to use this water quality index to assess grades at the subwatershed level.



NUMBER OF SITES GRADED = 119

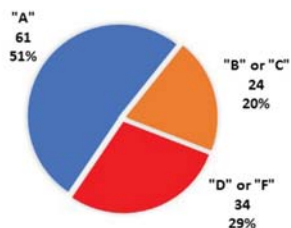


Figure 2: Water Clarity  
119 sites out of a potential 180 sites could be graded. All other sites had insufficient data.

- Of these 119 sites:
- 61 sites received an "A".
  - 24 sites received either a "B" or "C"
  - 4 sites received either a "D" or "F"

NUMBER OF SITES GRADED = 55

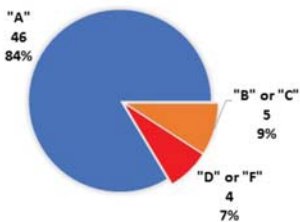


Figure 3: Dissolved Oxygen Concentrations  
Only 55 of the potential 180 sites could be graded. All other sites had insufficient data.  
Of these 55 sites:

- 46 sites received an "A"
- 5 sites received either a "B" or "C"
- 4 sites received either a "D" or "F"

NUMBER OF SITES GRADED = 81



Figure 4: Stream Temperatures  
Only 81 sites of the potential 180 sites had sufficient data to be graded.  
Of these 81 sites:

- 15 sites received an "A"
- 1 sites received either a "B" or "C"
- 65 sites received either a "D" or "F"

NUMBER OF SITES GRADED = 43

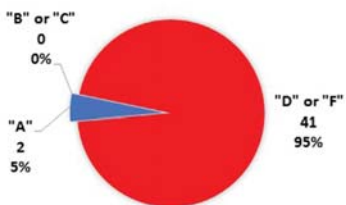


Figure 5: Total Phosphorus  
Only 43 sites of the potential 180 sites had sufficient data to be graded.  
Of these 43 sites:

- 2 sites received an "A"
- 0 sites received either a "B" or "C"
- 41 sites received either a "D" or "F"

NUMBER OF SITES GRADED = 44

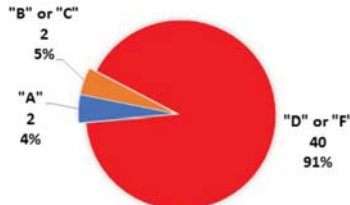


Figure 6: Biotic Index  
Only 44 sites of the potential 180 sites had sufficient data to be graded.  
Of these 44 sites:

- 2 sites received an "A"
- 2 sites received either a "B" or "C"
- 40 sites received either a "D" or "F"

## Citizen Engagement of Elected Officials

By Laura DeGolier, Citizen Monitor, Water Warriors of Fond du Lac

Passion is word that describes every citizen monitoring volunteer. Nothing else can explain leaving a warm, dry place to don a rain coat and gloves and head outside to record or collect data.

Data is believing that what your eyes are seeing is real. Your rivers are not just a lot of flowing water; you get to know them intimately and when they exhibit traits of illness you worry about them just as you do a child.

Rivers have names; they are not just a lot of flowing water with each one having different characteristics.

When you look at water in a lake or river, you wonder about the nitrates in this body of water. Has buffering started along this stream to protect it from the phosphorus that flows off of the farmers' fields?

That's passion! Your passion has been translated into action by your participation in monitoring programs. Now, can you get your light to shine and share the passion with the people who have an impact on the laws we live by?

This is the next step; a democracy does not function without participation. You already participate by monitoring; now introduce your local, state and federal lawmakers to what you do.

Why would they care? Because they are not experts in everything. Many have not ever stood in a river or bothered to ask the name of a river they drive over every day.

You probably already know someone in government, whether it is your town supervisor or a city council member or member of the county board. Someone who knows you will trust you enough to join you on a monitoring day or for part of a day. Now ask.

When you have done it for one, work to invite another person. Maybe this time your Assembly or Senate representative. Take them along; explain what information each step provides. Share the problems that your river has and its successes. Always remind them that much of the data state-wide is collected by volunteers saving the DNR thousands of dollars each year.

Clean water is not only for the fish, but for everyone. Tourists don't come to places with dirty water. They want clear water to enjoy from a kayak or the bank of a stream when they wet

their fishing line. No one comes to swim in lakes that are contaminated or overgrown with weeds. Tourists come to clean water for great outdoor recreation. Tourism is an important industry in Wisconsin. Remind the lawmakers that clean water matters to tourists.

If you won't step forward to share your passion with those who decide the fate of our natural resources, then who will? For legislators, knowing that there are people with a passion for the lakes and rivers that surround us everywhere puts them on notice that constituents care and are paying attention.

And please do that; read the bulletins that come from your monitoring groups, the League of Conservation Voters, River Alliance, and others, and follow the legislation.

Become informed beyond your passion. Everyone has access to Land and Water Conservation people in your area, code enforcement people in your city and county, and public health departments. Personnel in those staff positions can make you real experts along with your passion and intimate knowledge of the rivers and lakes that you monitor.

Share this information with your passion with your lawmakers.

If not you, then who?

And what good can one voice do?

"If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito."

—Dali Lama



Water Warrior Team at their November lunch



Thank you WEA Trust for your donation to our monitoring program.

# Stream Side Notes

by Nancy Sheehan, RRC Stream Monitoring Coordinator

## Reinvigorated Monitoring Steering Committee

The stream monitoring program would not be a success if not for the hard work of our steering committee.

As the new year approaches, it is time to thank the members on this committee who have given freely of their time and talents to support volunteer monitors working in the Rock River Basin.

In 2017, I will be working with steering committee members to develop a "road map" to prioritize stream water quality monitoring efforts over the next three years.

Thanks to the 2016 members. In 2017, we will be welcoming new member to the team.

- Mindy Habecker, UWEX Dane County
- Anne Miller, Rock County
- Jayne Jenks, Waukesha County
- Susan Sandford, Dane County OLW
- Patricia Cicero, Jefferson County
- Dave Hoffman, Rock County
- Tom Steinbach, City of Oconomowoc
- Bob Hansis, retired WDNR
- Joe Van Rossum, formerly UW-Extension
- Rachel Sabre, WDNR/CLMN
- Peggy Compton, WAV
- Ilana Haimes, WAV
- Mike Sorge, WDNR
- Greg Searle, WDNR



The "Flow Team"

photo by Nancy Sheehan

## 2017-2018 Citizens Continuing to Monitoring Stream Health in the Yahara River Watershed

Yahara Watershed Improvement Network (WINs) granted funds to continue our successful volunteer stream monitoring project in the Yahara River Watershed. In 2017, I will continue to support volunteer teams as they assess baseline water quality parameters at 51 sites and collect nutrient samples from 35 sites. Volunteers will also maintain continuous temperature data loggers at 27 sites.

New in 2017 will be an exploratory study to assess the feasibility of using water level gauges to estimate stream flow on low gradient, mucky bottom streams in the Yahara River watershed. Volunteer stream monitors Neal Gruber, Jim Thornbery, and Berry Eichinger have agreed to work with me on this effort.

Thanks go out to the Friends of Yahara River Headwaters; we will be using their flow meter at a site along Pheasant Branch Creek to conduct this exploratory study.

## Many Thanks to Our GIS Volunteers

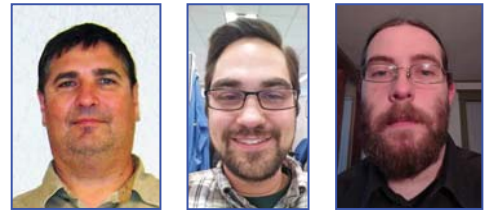
Three volunteers with expertise in Adobe Illustrator and GIS created 86 static maps, providing an invaluable "watershed perspective" for 13 HUC-10 sub-watershed in the Rock River Basin. RRC wishes to thank Gerald Kokkonen, Jeffrey Wilson, Michael Sweet.

## 2016 Confluence – A Success

Thirty-eight (38) volunteers attended this year's Confluence. The majority (30) were volunteer stream monitors. There were 10 presenters and 9 organizers. A variety of topics were presented from the history of the Horicon Marsh to tips for identifying macroinvertebrates and monitoring aquatic invasive species.

Couldn't attend? Conference materials are available on our RRC website.

Our stream monitors are offered this enrichment experience to help better understand the work they do, provide interesting details about the natural world in the basin and provide time to meet with other monitors, sharing, experiences, tips and suggestions.



## Rock River Coalition Report Card Kudos

*"I saw the link on Facebook with the report card maps that were generated. How awesome!!! This is a really powerful tool that is a great visual of stream health. I think it also is a great "way to go" to volunteers who collect the data to make these possible. I've enjoyed looking at various site in the watershed and am awed at the information this "quick look" told me.*

*When I first saw the maps, I also thought of my kids and how this can reinforce why we monitor and tells us about the streams in a real easy to read format. Then, since there is a spot right next to our house, I thought of how this can also show them that right in our own back yard there are problems. They know this because I talk about it, but this type of visual reinforces the lame messages Mom talks about at the dinner table :-).*

*I think this is a great thing to share with schools or youth groups from elementary on up. Students can explore the maps and find where they are at elementary levels and their area's stream health. For older students, this could play into not only the technical aspect of map making and its many uses, but bring all things from the chemistry, biology and physics of monitoring into a more meaningful experience. I think the scout group my son is involved in would love to see this!*

*Great work to everyone involved!!"*

Lisa Griffin  
Lake Manager, Lake Ripley Management District  
Volunteer Stream Monitor, Oconomowoc River at County Highway F, Jefferson County

Learn more about the RRC Report Card on the front page of this newsletter.

Don't forget to Like us on Facebook so you hear about RRC events and activities as soon as they are announced.

## Become a RRC Stream Monitor 2017 Spring Training Workshops

Several spring stream monitoring training workshops have been scheduled. Check our calendar of events on our website to check for newly added ones.

Saturday, April 29, 2017 (9:00am-2:30pm)

Co-facilitated with Kyna North, Program Coord., Waunakee Village Center  
Waunakee Village Center, Waunakee

Saturday, May 6, 2017 (9:00am-2:30pm)

Co-facilitated with Patricia Cicero, Water Specialist, Jefferson Co. LWCD  
Amundson Center, Cambridge

Saturday, May 20, 2017 (9:30am-2:30pm)

Co-facilitated with Anne Miller, Conservation Specialist, Rock Co. Land Conservation Dept. & David Hoffman, Community Coord., Rock County Parks  
Turtle Creek Parkway Facility, Clinton

Saturday, June 10, 2017 (9:30am-3:00pm)\*

Co-facilitated with Amanda Perdzock, AIS Prog. Dir. River Alliance of Wisconsin  
March Haven Nature Center, Waupun

*\*This workshop will be a combined stream and aquatic invasive species monitoring training workshop co-hosted by RRC and the River Alliance of Wisconsin.*

A RRC Stream Monitor agrees to take measurements at their site once a month from May through October. Beginning monitors take tests for dissolved oxygen, water clarity, temperature and flow. Twice a year they take a sample of the insect, worm and crustacean life hiding in the rocks, plants and under banks to develop a biotic index. This information is entered into a database and eventually allows us to give the stream a grade. More information about becoming a monitor can be found at [www.rockrivercoalition.org](http://www.rockrivercoalition.org)



# Much to be Thankful About: The Johnson Creek Watershed Alliance

Johnson Creek Watershed Alliance has a great deal to be thankful for this year. We appreciated the training provided by Patricia Cicero, compliments of the River Alliance, on "Identification of Invasive Aquatic Species" before our annual creek clean-up event on September 10th. We now know what those tiny zebra mussels look like, among other invasives. We are thankful to the Johnson Creek Historical Society for allowing us to use their museum for our event and meal. Volunteers had the opportunity to see a bit of our local history while passing around the specimen jars.

We are especially grateful to the nine families who volunteered for this year's creek sweep. We collected a significant amount of trash from along the creek shoreline and behind the compost area. High water prevented us from actually getting into the creek to look for refuse but the creek looked healthy and vibrant with such a strong current, moving so much water downstream to the Rock River.

During this holiday season, we hope our community continues its generous support of JCWA by renewing or becoming new members of our chapter. Keeping up with so many commitments is sometimes a challenge but it is gratifying when you can actually see the results of your efforts. Protecting our precious water resources depends on all of us to do our part. Our creek is cleaner because we made a commitment to keep it that way, now and next year too.

See you on September 9th, 2017.



Many steps in the stream clean-up process are pictured here, clock-wise starting at the top left: Patricia Cicero of Jefferson County Land and Water Department trains JCWA volunteers to recognize invasive plants; JCWA hard workers ready to tackle the day; thanking and feeding the volunteers when a good day's work is done and Peter Hartz taking one more load to the dumpsters.

Photos by Heidi Hartz



## Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed Update

The Friends are making great progress on a new canoe landing on Badfish Creek at Old Stage Road.

Included here is a photo of the picnic table/kiosk that WDNR built at the parking area for the landing.

Andy Paulios of the WDNR got it built and it was finished this fall.

Two FBCW members, Jim Post and Ingrid West, are making an informational poster about the Badfish Creek to post there.

The canoe landing should be complete this spring.



## Time to Renew

The Rock River Coalition membership is by calendar year, so now is the best time to renew,

You can increase the value of your donation by going to the website, or by mailing in the membership form in this newsletter and renewing today.

You can also sign up for an emailed rather than mailed newsletter by sending a request to [info@rockrivercoalition.org](mailto:info@rockrivercoalition.org).

## Rock River Recovery

By Mark Riedel, Wisconsin DNR

Welcome to 2017! With the start of the new year, it's a good time to review progress in 2016 on implementation of the Rock River TMDL (approved Sept. 2011):

Over 90% of WPDES wastewater permits in the Rock River basin have been reissued with limits consistent with TMDL Implementation (the remaining are being reissued as they expire);

Numerous communities and private industries have taken advantage of Adaptive Management or Water Quality Trading permit compliance alternatives, and based upon interest and inquiries, we anticipate this trend to continue growing through 2017;

New stormwater guidance was developed and published;

Scrap Recycling and Auto Parts Dismantling Industrial Storm Water General Permits (GPs) were reissued;

All ten counties in the Rock River Basin have either updated, or are in the process of updating their county land and water management plans;

Three large farmer-led initiatives are driving widespread advances in NPS implementation in the Yahara watershed, Oconomowoc watershed, and Dodge County; and

The new Rock River Recovery website has been launched, along with the revamped monthly newsletter.

Coming up in the first quarter of 2017, we'll be scheduling meetings of the Education & Outreach and Ag/NPS Sector Teams. Dates and locations will be published in the Rock River Recovery monthly newsletter. Readers can subscribe via Gov-Delivery, or the Rock River Recovery website, <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/tmdls/rockriver/>

Please contact the WDNR Rock River Recovery Project manager, Mark Riedel, if you have questions or would like to learn more.

# Call for Rock River Award Nominations

**Do you know a watershed hero? Or a business or organization that has made a truly outstanding contribution to the health of the Rock River Basin?**

It is our privilege, every two years, to celebrate and honor the achievements of those who have made a difference in our Basin by improving our local economy, our environment, and our cultural and recreational resources. Now is your chance - nominate a Rock River Basin Protector today!

River Protector awards are offered in the following categories:

- Individual: For individuals, teams and families.
- Educator: K-Adult educators, both classroom and informal educators.
- Organization: Non-profits, agencies, municipalities and municipal departments.
- Legislator: An elected official at any level: state, federal or local.
- Business: An LLC, partnership or corporation that has provided support, completed projects, or instituted procedures or methods improving our Basin's environment.

Awards will be based on significance and results of the accomplishment. All actions must either be completed or major results realized.

Nominating someone is easy; just send the following information to the RRC: nominator and nominee name(s) and contact information; the award category; and a two-page maximum description of accomplishments, detailing why you feel the nominee deserves the award. We also need the contact information of two other people who would corroborate the accomplishments. Supporting documents can be included.

Nominations are due by March 17, 2017.

Send them to: Rock River Coalition Awards Committee, 864 Collins Rd, Jefferson WI 53549 or email to [info@rockrivercoalition.org](mailto:info@rockrivercoalition.org).

A full list of winners is on our website, Here are some of the most recent.

#### Elected Officials

- Joe Parisi, Dane County Executive: support of conservation and water quality initiatives
- Mayor Bob Miller, City of Monona: Year of Water and Water Conservation Challenge

#### Individuals

- Rick Eilertson, City of Fitchburg: Green Tier Legacy Community and water quality efforts
- Greg Farnham: Rock River Trail and Lake Sinissippi work

#### Business

- Berres Brothers Coffee Roasters: For Green Tier and Travel Green Travel
- Land Design by Margaret Burlingham: rain gardens and shoreline work

#### Organizations

- City of Beloit: salt reduction strategies and removal of flood prone buildings.
- The Rock River Trail Initiative: nationally recognized water trail with supporters in every municipality
- Friends of Allen Creek Watershed: quality research, extensive monitoring and BioBlitz
- Lake Sinissippi Improvement District: watershed based work to improve the lake as well as pioneering of geotubes (no 'P' fertilizer coupons and rain garden workshop with subsidized plants

#### Educators

- Linda Reid, UW Whitewater: director of Institute for Water Business
- Joseph Hardgrove, University Lake School: For Oconomowoc River monitoring, studies and clean-up
- Jim Lorman, Edgewood College: For Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW), Clean Lakes Alliance Board

Come Celebrate!

Awards will be presented at the RRC Annual Members Meeting in May.



## Rock River Stormwater Group (RRSG) Teams Up With UW-Whitewater Students for Outreach

The Rock River Stormwater Group remains committed to educating the public about the impact of stormwater on Rock River Basin waterways, with plans to launch new education outreach efforts in 2017. The group has partnered with Creative Marketing Unlimited (CMU), a student-run marketing consulting group from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, to create and implement the 2017 outreach plan.

Over 25 students developed a plan that includes a new website, increased social media engagement, a "Stormwater 101 Video Series," and an event marketing team that will attend select events in the Rock River Basin to engage and educate the public. Together, the RRSG and CMU have prioritized efforts targeting K-12 educators and students, outdoor enthusiasts, and homeowners in the Rock River Basin. As part of these efforts, the group will hold video and coloring contests targeting K-12 students and a calendar photo contest for all residents to highlight the beauty of our waterways when we all contribute to making stormwater cleaner. Keep an eye out for an update on our new vision in early 2017 and learn more about how you can spread the message about protecting our Rock River Basin waterways.

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

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

### Tax Deductible Donations

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



## Official Grand Opening of Rock River Trail Set for June 3, 2017



Six years ago the effort to create a system of recreational trails encompassing the Rock River in Wisconsin and Illinois was launched. Today the Rock River Water Trail is recognized as a National Water Trail by the National Park Service. Also established is a scenic and historic road route, a biking route, a hiking route, a horse trail and an air route that links the nine airports along the river.

The Trail Initiative recently produced a brochure titled The Art Route of the Rock River Trail and is currently developing a Chocolate Trail!

To celebrate this success the Rock River Trail Initiative is planning a grand opening of the Rock River Trail on Saturday, June 3, 2017, at the Rotary River Center, 1160 S Riverside Drive, Beloit, WI with events held in both Beloit, Wisconsin and South Beloit, Illinois.

This event coincides with National Trails Day, and all trail events for that day will be highlighted on the National Trails Day website. Following the ribbon cutting ceremony there will be a canoe/kayak paddle, a bike ride, an automobile road tour, a nature hike and a horseback trail ride in the Beloit and South Beloit area to celebrate the grand opening.

The Rock River Trail Initiative is also inviting communities and organizations to participate by holding their own local event sometime between June 3-11, 2017 to celebrate the Rock River and all the recreational, cultural and economic benefits it offers. Ideas include local hikes, canoe/kayak trips, bike rides, art exhibits, music performances and other events that might gather your community to socialize or recreate along the Rock River.

If your agency or one of your community's local outdoor groups would like to join in the celebration of the grand opening of the Rock River Trail by staging a local event, please send your event plans to [info@rockrivertrail.com](mailto:info@rockrivertrail.com) and they will be posted on the website.



## Dodge County Healthy Soil, Healthy Water Workshop and Evening Event

Featuring Ray Archuleta of North Carolina NRCS

Dodge County is hosting a workshop for farmers and producers on February 8, 2017 at the Juneau Community Center. It is co-sponsored by the Dodge County Farm Bureau and UW-Extension. Registration is first come, first served, and preference will be given to the agricultural producers of Dodge County if more than 200 register.

The seminar's major speaker, Ray Archuleta of NRCS in North Carolina, will meet with people and organizations deeply interested in water quality in Dodge County and downstream after the workshop. The evening event is February 8 at 7:00 pm will be held at the Dodge County Administration Building, Juneau. Ray will inform the audience about improved agricultural best management practices and the positive effect on runoff and water quality.

## Using Biology to Fight Invasives

By Clare Carlson, Friends of Glacial Heritage Area

This summer, volunteers from the Friends of the Glacial Heritage Area, Lake Ripley Management District, and the Cambridge School District reared purple loosestrife beetles, also known as *Galerucella*. Beetles were raised to help control the invasive purple loosestrife plant found at Lake Ripley and Red Cedar Lake in Cambridge.

In very early spring, plants were dug from Red Cedar Lake and potted with help from Cambridge High School agricultural studies students and volunteers from the Friends and the Management District.

The Cambridge School District generously donated the rearing location at the Severson Learning Center, the school district's farm and environmental education center. The partnership also had great assistance from Wisconsin DNR.



Next, plants were placed in kiddie pools (to mimic lake conditions, keeping roots and soil wet) with closed nets fastened over the top foliage. Beetles were placed inside the nets. Over the summer, the beetles ate these plants and laid many eggs that grew to maturity. *Galerucella* beetles only eat the leaves of purple loosestrife plants, and they will die without this food source.

Ten beetles introduced on plants in May yielded 1,000 beetles by June. Later in the growing season, all plants were returned to the lakes so the newly-raised beetles could feed on shoreline plants.

WDNR is seeking local hosts for the April-harvested purple loosestrife plants and the beetles that are to be introduced to the plants. Hosts can be 4-H families, wildlife advocate groups, or anyone interested in helping out. However, all hosts must register their project with the DNR.

Although there are other methods of controlling purple loosestrife, this biocontrol method (without chemicals) has proven to be one of the most effective throughout the country.

For more information on the effort, visit the DNR's informational page on the project, located at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/loosestrife.html>.

Friends of  
Glacial  
Heritage  
Area



## The Big Share - Giving Day March 7

On Tuesday, March 7, Community Shares of Wisconsin (CSW) is hosting an online giving day, The Big Share™.

The RRC goal is \$1,500- this will provide critical support for our monitoring effort including providing equipment, training and support to four new teams.

The RRC is asking you to:

- Mark your calendar for MARCH 7, 2017.
- Follow us on Facebook and help build the buzz.
- We're counting on you to spread the word. Share our Facebook posts with your friends and family members along with a personal note as to why you believe in our work, and **why they should give** on MARCH 7, 2017.

The minimum gift is \$10. The maximum is . . . up to you!

For more information or to pledge your support go to: <http://thebigshare.org/>



**\$50**  
One Team  
Receives a  
Turbidity  
Tube to  
Measure  
Water Clarity



**\$100**  
Trains a  
Team of  
Monitors at a  
Spring  
Workshop



**\$500**  
One Team  
Equipped and  
Trained:  
A NEW SITE  
COVERED!