



Friends of the Mukwonago River Newsletter 2011-2012

President's Letter

Hello everyone,

We've come a long way in a year. With help from many of you, we finished our strategic plan, we launched committees (Education, Communication, Advocacy, Fundraising, and Finance), and we carried out several successful projects and events this last year. Hopefully you joined us for a meeting, a paddle, a planting, or to learn about aquatic invasive species identification.

Your hard-working Board of Directors and our equally hard-working Coordinator Cynthia Holt succeeded in landing a \$10,000 River Protection Planning grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources last summer, which we are very excited about. You'll find more details inside on the exciting educational outreach and continued organizational growth that grant will help us to accomplish.

Under the rubric of "change is the only constant" comes the news that Jean Weedman, a terrific long-time volunteer for the Friends and a board member (the ultimate level of volunteer) for the last couple of years, will be moving on from her role. Jean's advocacy for the watershed and all of its inhabitants, be they furry, scaly, feathered, or otherwise, will not slow down; that much is certain. Jean will be missed. If we are lucky, as she moves on to focus on other passions and leaves a spot on the board open, we will bring on a new board member, and indeed we hope this year to bring on three new board members. If we are really lucky, they will all be on the ballot at the annual meeting in March, though the possibility exists that we may need another special meeting to vote in new directors later this year. Stay tuned.

It's an exciting time right now, as we witness an expansion of landowners' awareness of the need to manage their land actively yet humbly so as to help nature express herself fully unencumbered by a plague of invasive species. We see landowners seeking information and volunteer helpers and opportunities to compare notes and share their stories with others. The Friends just wants to see that these wonderful stewards of the land get the recognition they deserve

Our Mission

The mission of the Friends of the Mukwonago River is to protect the Mukwonago River and its associated watershed ecosystems by way of education, advocacy, and promotion of sound land use throughout the watershed.

March 24

Join us for our

Annual Meeting

See page 2 for details

President's Letter continued

for the important role they play in restoring the incredible resources we're blessed within the Mukwonago River watershed.

It's exciting because our organization is growing and adapting, which means where we're headed is different from where we've been, but we know that's a good thing.

It's exciting because we're connecting with all of the youth camps in our watershed (numbering half a dozen or more!) and tapping into the incredible history and deep love for this place that the camps and successive generations of campers and counselors represent.

It's exciting because the Mukwonago River Watershed Initiative is going stronger than it ever has before, with a number of incredibly active volunteers and professionals leading the charge on coordinating the activities of numerous nonprofits, agencies, municipalities, lake districts, and other entities to maximize the one thing we all have in common, a love of the Mukwonago River and its watershed and a desire to see it protected and restored.

Please join us in the excitement this year--come to an event, a meeting, a paddle, a hike, a tour, or join in whatever way works for you to show that you are a Friend of the Mukwonago River. It's all very exciting!

*Thank you for all that you do!
Ezra Meyer, President*

Join us

Members and friends welcome!

Friends of the Mukwonago River Annual Meeting

Saturday, March 24

9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

**Mukwonago Community Library
511 Division Street
Mukwonago, WI 53149
262-363-6411**

Light refreshments will be served.

Our regular annual meeting business will be followed by guest speakers:

Dr. Rex Hanger and Kristie Hansen, from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, will present results from snail studies done in the Mukwonago River.

Brian Glenzinski, DNR Wildlife Biologist, will talk about the newly-formed Oak Savanna Alliance.

Friends receives \$10,000 River Protection Grant

By Cynthia Holt

A DNR River Protection Grant of \$10,000 was awarded to the Friends of the Mukwonago River on July 15 to support Phase 2 of our capacity building project. Part of our commitment in this grant is to match the \$10,000 to support this \$23,000 project with both cash and volunteer hours. The work of the grant is to be completed by December 31, 2012.

A key component of Phase 2 will be to implement our newly-minted strategic plan. Through the work of committees, board members, volunteers, and staff our goal is to build the capacity of the Friends so that by the end of 2012 we are a stronger organization. Some of the grant goals include creating:

- Volunteer Recognition Program
- Water Testing & Monitoring Program with Partner Organizations
- Annual Friends & Watershed Activity Calendar
- Business Best Practices Meeting/Conference & Handouts
- Watershed Camp Consortium Program
- Watershed You Tube Video Channel
- Annual Giving Campaign & Fundraising Event
- Committees, Objectives, & Action Plan
- Board Development & Training Strategies

Strategic Plan completed in summer

From January to June 2011, board members, friends, and volunteers worked diligently to craft the Friends' first ever strategic plan.

The last meeting to draft final details was attended on May 26 by Dick Jenks, Sharon Royston, Jacki Lewis, Christina Rye, Eric Howden, Julie Bender, Pam Meyer, Jean Weedman, and Ezra Meyer, hosted at Phantom Lake YMCA Camp.

The plan provides long-term planning strategies for capacity building, integrating newly-refined organizational tenets.

These goals include:

- *Leadership & Advocacy
- *Membership
- *Education
- *Communication
- *Financial Resources
- *Scientific Resources

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources supported this process with a previous DNR River

Protection Grant awarded in 2009. Cynthia Holt, Holt Community Consulting, was contracted to facilitate the process and compile the plan.

A final report can be found at www.mukwonagoriver.org on the resources page. Hard copies are also available. Contact friendsofthemukwonagoriver@yahoo.com.



Members work on portions of the strategic planning document in May at the Phantom Lake YMCA Camp.

Committee structure established in Strategic Plan

Up and running...

Committees to support the various parts of the strategic plan were formed in late 2011. If you are interested in helping us move forward to support the watershed, it is not too late to join a committee. Each committee meets 3-6 times a year.

The **Education Committee** supports a major portion of the mission of Friends of the Mukwonago River. The group will work to partner with area camps and schools to involve youth in educational projects. Our focus will not only be on “No child left indoors”, but also adult awareness of the interconnectness of nature’s elements as they contribute to water quality, enhanced habitat, and human health and well-being through contact with nature.

We will also present and support activities that address the needs and interests of watershed individuals and groups. Our early work has centered on learning about the Waukesha Water Action Volunteers (WAV) and considering whether to get members involved after a training session in May.

To determine school needs and awareness relating to environmental education and the Mukwonago River, we sent out a survey to three school districts—Mukwonago, Palmyra-Eagle and East Troy.

Our “Glacial Refuge...” CD has been supplied to local access television channels, via Mukwonago and Palmyra-Eagle schools.

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The **Communication Committee**, with a charge of overseeing organizational messaging, will work on items like the annual newsletter, regular e-newsletters, press releases, invitations, displays, and a speakers bureau for local presentations.

We reviewed our current “tool box” which includes: the video “A Glacial Refuge...”, a tri-fold display board, our website, our Facebook page, a large watershed map, a welcome sign, our annual newsletter, t-shirts and sweatshirts, e-newsletters, a banner, the DNR poster mounted, and our new brochure. In addition, we have obtained copies of booklets with educational information from other organizations, like SEWRPC.

For the future, we suggest a watershed map that clearly shows canoe put-in areas, fishing and recreational spots, and other points of interest.

Our need in December was for a banner to carry in the Mukwonago Christmas Parade (see photo on page 5). It was decided that fish hats would be consistent with our message; they arrived just in time for the parade! During our second meeting, we planned the current newsletter.

The **Advocacy Committee** met in October and January. We discussed our name, which we do not feel is adequately descriptive of the charge of this committee. We hope to come up with a better descriptor which certainly includes advocacy, but also includes promotion of sound land use, protection of the Mukwonago River resource, watershed issues, and broader natural resource issues that impact the Mukwonago River watershed.

Our work could spill over into promoting land purchases by land trusts and others, advocating for education for landowners to preserve and protect their shorelines and uplands, promoting all watershed landowners to learn how to deal with aquatic and riparian invasives species. We are promoters, advocates, educators, and orators.

We will continue to work with developers to mitigate the impacts of development to our waters and with municipalities, lake districts and associations, government partners, and others to ensure best practices and best outcomes in the watershed. We will help to implement SEWRPC’s Mukwonago River Watershed Protection Plan.

Got a better name? Pass it along. We have large possibilities for this committee, with much overlap with our other committees and continue to need help from our Friends whenever there is an issue that needs airing to our legislators or local officials, and to stomp out fires as they come up. We will continue to advocate for the Mukwonago River and, with your help, keep it in its pristine condition.

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The **Fundraising Committee** has been working since last fall to bolster our ability to engage more watershed residents, businesses, organizations, and others as donors and members. Our fundraising goal this year is to raise \$8000 through individual donations and memberships, \$5000 in seed money for a long-term endowment, \$1000 at an annual event and corporate sponsorships for several key projects.

Since we began in October 2011 with our charge to oversee organizational fundraising, we have:

- * Reviewed organizational budgets and fundraising goals
- * Mailed our first ever end-of-the-year appeal to over 200 Friends’ contacts
- * Set a goal of creating an endowment plan before the end of 2012
- * Begun planning an educational and invitational mailing that will reach over 2000 people in the watershed
- * Begun planning our first ever annual event in celebration of Watershed Awareness Event in May
- * Put in motion soliciting sponsorships for new Friends’ t-shirts, caps, and shopping bags that will be for sale
- * Discussed strategic partnerships to coordinate efforts within the watershed

Fun with Friends



A sunny and warm day greeted the group of Friends on the May 22 canoe trip on the Mukwonago River.

Enjoying the day were (from left): Mike and Jenny Rule, with children Luke and Josh, Jeremy Pinc, Cynthia Holt, Kitty Welch, Pam Meyer, Nick Wambach, John Mann, and (kneeling) Tom Day.

Our first entry in the annual Mukwonago Christmas Parade... Wearing one of our newly-created fish hats, Satchel Welch carries our banner. To the left is Pam Meyer. Center is Paola and Ezra Meyer with children Vianne and Luca. Kristin Schulteis, Mike Marek and children also joined in.

Photos by Jean Weedman



Project RED

Workshop targets invasives

A Project RED workshop, sponsored by Friends of the Mukwonago River, was held on August 3 at The Nature Conservancy's Lulu Lake Preserve.

The River Alliance of Wisconsin's Project RED (Riverine Early Detectors) is a monitoring program that trains citizens to identify and report 16 invasive plant and animal species potentially found in river corridors statewide.

The morning training session, from 9- noon, was followed by lunch and an afternoon paddle to practice invasives identification.

Our thanks to those who attended and are trained to help maintain clean waterways in the Mukwonago River area! Special thanks to the River Alliance of Wisconsin and Allison Werner who helped the Friends organize this event.

The River Alliance will also provide online data management tools available from the Wisconsin DNR that help report the findings. The protocols are easy and fun.



Photo provided by Allison Werner
Following the Project RED workshop at Lulu Lake, attendees participated in a paddle to locate and identify invasive aquatic plants.

Want to help keep our waters clean? Please fill out our volunteer form on our webpage at www.mukwonagoriver.org and let us know that you want to help with this effort.

Help prevent the spread of invasive aquatic plants

- **WIPE YOUR FEET** Wipe off when you get out of your boat.
- **INSPECT ALL EQUIPMENT** This includes your boots and boats before and after monitoring.
- **CLEAN UP** Clean off all plants, animals, and mud.
- **BAG IT NOW** When collecting samples, be sure to bag them immediately. Do not place specimens in the bottom of the boat to be bagged later. It only takes a fragment of a plant or one snail in most cases to start a new infestation.
- **GO WITH THE FLOW** Monitor from upstream to downstream to help prevent the accidental introduction of invasives in the headwaters.
- **LOSE THE FELT** Felt-soled wading boots are more likely to harbor invasive species. Hard rubber boots are recommended.
- **LEAVE 'EM HIGH AND DRY** Let all equipment dry before moving from one body of water to another.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week

What can you do? February 26-March 3, 2012

Learn all you can about the invasives lurking on your land. Where to look: DNR website, SEWISC.org, www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov

Join the fight on your land.

Help a neighbor to clear out buckthorn, pull garlic mustard, and plant native plants, shrubs, and trees.

Contribute to local organizations that work to fight invasive plants and animals.

Friends help SEWISC attack Wisconsin's "outlaws"

By Jean Weedman

They are unwanted. They sneak into woodlands and waters. They destroy native habitat by using available resources to keep themselves alive. They cost landowners time and money. They can destroy the plant and animal diversity of any area. Call them outlaws, renegades, or invasives...they are under attack in Wisconsin. And we have joined with others in the fight!

The Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium, Inc (SEWISC), armed with a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding grant, trained an army of 174 volunteers to begin the attack. SEWISC volunteers were trained in May for two hours on how to identify the three species targeted for the summer of 2011--common and cut-leaved teasel, common reed/phragmites, and Japanese knotweed--and how to rate the size of the infestation.

In teams of two, the volunteers looked for and mapped locations of the three targeted species. Those species were described by trainers as "newest to our area with the hopes of controlling them within the 8-county area."

Teams found 2,057 populations of the targeted plants, traveled 11,176 miles in 96 townships, and logged over 1200 hours!

Friends of the Mukwonago River had four teams covering five townships: John and Julie Mann, Jean Weedman, Barb Holtz, Pam Meyer, and Jacki Lewis.

Surveying each township took from 6-12 hours and was done from May 14 to July 24. Teams submitted all data forms and maps to the SEWISC Coordinator Marc White by August 1. Results were then folded into a national database. Using GIS software has been helpful.

SEWISC maintains, "The cost to the U.S. economy to monitor, contain, and control these species is estimated at \$100-200 billion per year--an annual cost greater than that for all natural disasters combined."

Southeastern Wisconsin is the primary gateway for invasive species into our state due to the high rate of roadway travel to and from Illinois as well as the maritime traffic into the Port of Milwaukee from Lake Michigan, according to SEWISC. Estimates suggest that five new invasive plant and animal species may be entering the region each year.

Outline for "Outlaws"

They became "outlaws" on **Feb. 3, 1999**, when Executive Order 13112 was signed by President Clinton establishing the National Invasive Species Council. What "outlaws"? Invasive species across the United States!

Wisconsin followed in **2001** when the Wisconsin Legislature directed the Department of Natural Resources to establish a statewide program to control invasive species. Wisconsin Statute Section 23.22 (1) (c) officially defines invasive species as "nonindigenous species whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health."

National Invasive Species Information Center (NISIC) was established in **2005**. NISIC maintains the website www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov.

On **September 1, 2009**, the DNR established Wisconsin's Invasive Species Identification, Classification and Control Rule, Chapter NR 40, Wis. Adm. Code, which identifies all of the current Wisconsin "outlaws" and seeks to control invasive species statewide.

The aim of the project was to go after small populations and catch them early. SEWISC's goal is to continue monitoring this year and to garner volunteers to form combat teams to attack those invasive populations already identified.

"Tiny fragments of natural areas are remaining, and we need to protect these, to stop the spread (of invasives)," explained Coordinator Marc White at one of the training sessions. He also referred to the work as, "preserving our natural heritage."

The Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium, Inc. (SEWISC) is a broad-based coalition that promotes efficient and effective management of invasive species throughout an 8-county region (Sheboygan, Washington, Ozaukee, Waukesha, Milwaukee, Walworth, Racine, and Kenosha).

For additional resources on invasives and how to combat them or how to recognize our native plants, go to our website www.mukwonagoriver.org, and check out the Sites We Appreciate section (scroll down to Tools for Land Restoration).

Holtz Farms: Lessons from a local oak savanna

By Jean Weedman

It's one of those rare winter mornings—well, not so rare this winter—when it is 40 degrees outside with minimal snow cover. A perfect day to continue the “attack,” or as Barb Holtz calls it, her “very valuable work”.

Barb Holtz reaches for her Husqvarna 346XP chainsaw, a birthday gift from her mother. Marching in full battle array--chainsaw chaps, helmet with eye and ear protection, thick leather gloves and boots--she heads to the back section of the Holtz Farms, where she and her family—husband Andy, son Charlie, and daughter Helen, along with Andy's sister Marcia and their mother Jean-- wage the war against invasives, in the effort to restore the oak opening/oak savanna that first drew Andy's parents, Carl and Jean, here in 1957.

This morning she works alone and approaches the enemy cautiously. It's thick, ugly, and covered with razor-like thorns. It dominates and kills 90% of native plants. It's buckthorn. She resolves, “It's time to fight back.” The WDNR website indicates that the control of buckthorn alone has been estimated at \$500-\$2,000 per acre over multiple years.

Restoration is “the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed,” according to the Society for Ecological Restoration. Just what had been destroyed through the decades? One of the most diverse ecosystems in the Midwest: the oak savanna or oak opening. A great deal of that restoration work is to “attack” invasive plants, trees, and shrubs, like buckthorn.

On a continuum from prairie land to forest, oak savanna and oak openings are a transitional middle ground. Oak

openings/oak savannas used to cover 5.5 million acres in Wisconsin. Now, there are fewer than 500 acres in Wisconsin, or 0.01%, according to the Oak Savanna Alliance (OSA). As such, this rare ecological type is “among the most threatened in the world...Oak openings now share equal billing with tallgrass prairies as the most threatened plant community in the Midwest,” states the OSA webpage. The bur oak opening is of global significance.

Our part of the Wisconsin, called the South East Glacial Plain Ecological Landscape, is the area where oak openings and savannas would occur naturally. These swaths of open land scattered with oak trees, particularly bur oak trees, have provided habitat for hundreds of animals and plants. Early settlers who found this landscape type perfect for housing, grazing, and farmland, consequently destroyed the complex web of interactions that create an ecological type.

The beautiful oak opening on Holtz Farms near the edge of Jericho Creek at the western edge of the farm is where the family's work is focused for now. “I've gotten addicted to it. When you work really hard (to clear an area), you can stand and discover amazing oaks you couldn't see before,” Holtz continued.

This section of the farm was fenced off in the early 1970's, allowing a portion of the farm to go natural—no crops, no grazing, no man-made activity. The suggestion for the fencing came from Carl's UW-Madison professor and wildlife ecologist Aldo Leopold, author of *The Sand County Almanac*. Unfortunately, the suggestion came before the massive and insidious invasion of buckthorn, honeysuckle, and other non-native species into Wisconsin.



restoration

Ironically, the areas that had been left to grazing had fewer invasive plants and shrubs since the sheep ate the small invasives, keeping them in check.

What made you take on this task? “A friend got a grant to do similar work, so I thought I could, too.” A grant to burn 140 acres! “It educated us on the importance of burning,” explained Holtz. Fire is essential to this ecological type. Holtz’ advice: “Hire an expert. It’s the best way to learn how it’s done; now we know what to do.” She has also taken burn classes offered locally through The Nature Conservancy and the DNR and at the Aldo Leopold Center.

Through the centuries, oaks have developed the thick, corky bark as protection against fire. Competing shrubs and underbrush, most of which have been declared “outlaws” by Wisconsin’s NR40 ruling, are destroyed by occasional prairie fires.

Another method of attack on buckthorn is cutting and applying herbicide. The best times are late fall and winter. “Never cut buckthorn without treating the stump,” is another lesson. They resprout readily. A winter’s day with snow cover is a good time to burn the piles of cut buckthorn since fire is not as likely to spread.

Another point learned in the restoration process concerns the natural cycle. It’s not about “cleaning up” the land but rather allowing death to create life. “A dead tree is one hundred times more valuable to wildlife than a live one.” Dead and dying trees are used as habitat for over 70 species of Wisconsin birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles.

A hollow, standing dead oak (called a hard snag) can serve as a perch for owls, hawks, and other predatory



The Oak Savanna Alliance

The recently-formed Oak Savanna Alliance (OSA) has as its mission “to promote the protection, restoration, and awareness of oak savannas on public and private lands in the greater Southern Kettle Moraine area.”

Holtz Farms received the Land Steward of the Year Award from the Oak Savanna Alliance. For a photo and complete information check out www.kettlemorainelandtrust.com and look for the Oak Savanna Alliance page (temporarily housed at this site).

A recent Oak Opening Workshop put on by the OSA in February at the Kettle Moraine State Forest Headquarters, featured speakers on Pre-settlement to Present history of savannas, Prescribed Fire, Brush Management and Habitat Reconstruction, Management Tools, Resources, and Monitoring.

birds. They also can serve as dens and bird houses. Soft snags are faster-growing trees that have died; they become a great source of insects serving as food for birds. Once the tree falls, it continues to play a role as habitat for salamanders, etc. As it decays, it creates rich soil which becomes food for other plants.

Why do this work? To provide habitat for our native birds, mammals, amphibians, etc. According to the WDNR website, “About 42 percent of the species on the federal threatened or endangered species lists are at risk primarily because of invasive species.”

Aside from knowing that restoration will provide the specific habitat needed for red-headed woodpeckers, bluebirds, scarlet tanagers, savanna sparrows, indigo buntings, northern orioles, and many other creatures, it is the love for the land that inspires.

Holtz cited Aldo Leopold, pioneer wildlife ecologist, “He who owns a veteran Bur Oak owns more than a tree. He owns an historical library, and a reserved seat in the theatre of evolution. To the discerning eye, his farm is labeled with the badge and symbol of the prairie war (with the forest).”

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Photos at left show the same area at three stages of restoration: before clearing out invasive shrubs and trees, winter during the clearing work, and after the area has been cleared.

Native plantings supported by Friends

By Jean Weedman

A garden of 50 native plants was added to Eagleville Elementary School, in a cooperative project between the school and Friends of the Mukwonago River in May 2011.

Funding for the plants and fencing came from a private donor. Gillette's donated mulch. Volunteers John and Julie Mann, Jean Weedman, and Frank Nardine donated time and equipment to prepare the soil, removing grass, stones, etc. Several Friends donated time to help on planting day.

Planting day began with a classroom discussion and participation activity on the benefits of native plants. Sixth graders selected which plants to plant and prepared planting stakes on which they wrote the plant name.

Prior to planting day, Coordinator Cynthia Holt and Board Member Weedman met with the classroom teacher. Julie Mann and Weedman planned the planting area based on light requirements for plants. Weedman and her husband kept the plantings watered through the unusually long, dry summer.



Environmentally-focused charter school

Eagleville Elementary school, near the intersection of Highways LO and E, is a Mukwonago Area School District (MASD) school with a different take on learning. In 2004, Eagleville became a charter school with an emphasis on environmental education.

Eagleville teachers make full use of its unique setting to provide students with access to the natural world. A wooded area provides students with a unique "classroom," and Jericho Creek creates a natural border and learning laboratory that is utilized each spring to teach about water quality and the importance of the local watershed. Students also compost leftovers from their lunches and participate in environmentally-focused activities each year.

The school is open to students from across the district and beyond and offers full MASD curriculum and enhancements such as music, art, a gifted and talented program and Spanish. Enrollment is open until April 30.

Information about the school is at www.masd.k12.wi.us/eves/ or call 262 363-6258, email robergi@mukwonago.k12.wi.us.



Eagleville classroom and garden pictured above and left.

YMCA Camp Planting Project

Friends Watershed Coordinator Cynthia Holt managed a garden project in late summer with the Phantom Lake YMCA Camp. The garden area was planted near the bottom of a hill, at a woodland edge, about 20' from the shore.

As part of their Nagi Teen Day Camp program for 12 & 13 year olds, eight to twelve kids met each week. During the four meetings, Cynthia led discussions about the watershed and brainstormed ideas for projects that would make a difference at the camp. The gardening and planting took two days.

Also in the watershed...



Photo by Julie Bender

Pictured from left to right are: Alex Bender, Garrett Ramstack, and Jesse Megadantz.

The group looks forward to volunteering for more projects in conjunction with the Friends.

By Julie Bender

The United Unitarian Universalist Society of Mukwonago's youth group has taken a special interest in water conservation and management. They learned about the Mukwonago River watershed with the help of the Friends of Mukwonago River. They watched informational videos and looked at maps of the watershed, learning the importance this watershed for the local community, for the health of the Fox River and eventually the Mississippi River.

On November 12, they spent an afternoon collecting garbage along the roadside in one area of the watershed. We began on Hwy X, east of where Jericho Creek passes under the road. We separated the garbage into recyclable glass, cans and paper and non-recyclable trash. We were all surprised by the amount of trash we collected. The closer we looked, the more we found. Three hours later and with five bags filled with other peoples' waste, we headed home. We felt like we barely made a dent.

The Nature Conservancy moves ahead on several watershed projects

By Jean Weedman

Restoration work continues at Meyer Property--- Through this winter, the restoration work on the Meyer Property included clearing the way for an eventual 65 acre prairie to be planted in the winter of 2012-13 in the northeast section of the property off of Hwy LO. The 66 acres in the southwest section will also be planted during this coming winter.

"With those two plantings, we will have about 215 acres of the 374 acres at the Meyer Preserve planted to restored prairie," explained Jerry Zeigler, Southeast Wisconsin Land Steward for The Nature Conservancy. Photos below show some of the work.

TNC aims to acquire property in Walworth County---The Nature Conservancy applied for a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program grant to purchase the 79 acre James J. Hirschboeck property in Walworth County at the junction of Eagle Road and the Waukesha County Line. A former nursery, the property is north of TNC's Crooked Creek Preserve and "adjoins private land in conservation, assuring more uninterrupted wildlife corridor," noted Pat Morton, Director of the Mukwonago River Watershed Project.

The support letter prepared by Friends, noted the land "provid(es) an important corridor piece connecting other parcels of conservation land owned by TNC, WDNR, and private landowners. Conserving this grassland tract, one with the highest altitude in the area, will help protect conservation lands below from chemical and sediment run-off." The Department of Natural Resources intends to dedicate the property as part of the Lulu Lake State Natural Area, according to a press release. TNC plans to "remove trees and restore the property to native prairie," added Morton.



The clearing of invasive and non-native trees and shrubs along the drive of TNC's Meyer Preserve continued through this winter.

Photos by Jerry Zeigler

What's happening at the Mukwonago River Unit?

Demolition and planning ...

By Jean Weedman

Known for decades as Rainbow Springs Country Club, the Mukwonago River Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest will experience dramatic changes soon.

"Bids are currently being solicited for the demolition of the Lake Lodge, pool house, convention center, former kitchen building, irrigation pump house, covered bridge (bridge/culverts & entrance road will remain) and various other items around the property including the former sewage disposal plant, some large holding tanks, etc." explained Paul Sandgren, forest superintendent of the Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine State Forest.

"It is anticipated that demolition will start in March." The clubhouse and cottage will remain, pending the completion of the master plan.

A master plan will be created for the Rainbow project beginning this spring. "The goal is to have a draft prepared by December 2012. There will be opportunities for all entities and individuals to weigh in on the potential use and restoration of the property," noted Sandgren.

Sandgren added, "At this point the assumption is that the golf course will no longer be a golf course."

Brian Glenzinski, WDNR wildlife biologist, indicated that a grant request has been made to remove some of the culverts in the Mukwonago River on the property.

This would improve navigability and improve the river quality. The project involves restoring the portion of the Mukwonago River that runs through the area where the Rainbow Springs golf course used to be. The sponsor of the project would be The Kettle Moraine Natural History Association. Funds are also requested through the Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission.

The first step in the restoration would be the removal of seven culverts that had been installed in the golf course area. Photos presented to the Fox River Commission by Brian Glenzinski showed that the culverts are an impediment to the navigability of the river.

The timeline for this project would be most likely the summer of 2013. A north channel may be used to divert the river flow so that the removal of five of the culverts can be done without any water flowing through them, according to the Fox River Commission meeting minutes from February 3.

At the same meeting, Dr. Jeff Thornton pointed out that this (culvert removal) project would be consistent with the commission's Implementation Plan, which incorporated the Mukwonago River Watershed Protection Plan prepared by SEWRPC. That report indicates that the removal of these culverts is critical.

"The Waukesha section of the property will remain closed to the public for the immediate future," wrote Sandgren.

Kettle Moraine Land Trust applies for accreditation

The Kettle Moraine Land Trust completed their application for accreditation to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission in Saratoga Springs, New York last fall. The accreditation is an assurance that the trust follows the highest standards in their work.

In Wisconsin, only one out of 40 land trusts is accredited. The process includes a rigorous review of the trusts' work, from enforcing conservation easements to how land that is owned by the trust is managed. It took three boxes, containing 15, three inch thick, three-ring binders, to meet the requirements in the trusts' application. The review will follow standards that were established in 2004 by the National Land Trust Alliance.

In other trust news... The Kettle Moraine Land Trust will host the Beulah Bog State Natural Area Walk on June 9, at 1 p.m. The natural area features many rare plants, four kettle areas and a bog. The area is managed by the trust. <http://www.kmlandtrust.org>

Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling on high capacity wells—a mixed blessing for watershed

By Laurie Lawlor

Legal controversy swirling around a high capacity well, located 1,200 feet from Lake Beulah, ended in July 2011 with a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling.

This ruling affirms that the DNR has the responsibility to enforce the public trust doctrine to protect all state navigable waters as opposed to current legislation that only provides limited protection to certain trout streams and very large springs. This ruling will have statewide impact on the protection of inland waterways in the future.

The dispute began in 2003 when the Village of East Troy applied to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for a permit to construct a municipal well with a pumping capacity of 1.4 million gallons per day. Well Number Seven is located near a subdivision north of St. Peter's Road.

Concern about the well's impact on the surrounding wetland, ground water supply, and lake's water level prompted the Lake Beulah Protective and Improvement Association (LBPIA) to legally challenge the DNR's permitting decision and shut down the pumping operation.

Throughout eight lower court cases, LBPIA cited lack of proper testing done to evaluate the potential effects of the well on the environment. The well and Lake Beulah draw from the same deep and shallow aquifers.

The Supreme Court overturned a portion of the June 16, 2010 ruling by the Waukesha District Court of Appeals that would have required the DNR to reconsider the permit issued in 2005. This ruling has halted the LBPIA's effort to shut down the well.

The court also affirmed the Appeals Court decision that the Lake Beulah Management District's ordinance

requiring the Village to return 95% of the water pumped from Well #7 to the Lake Beulah watershed is in violation of state law and is in conflict with the authority of the DNR.

On a more positive note for the watershed, the court affirmed the portion of the Court of Appeals ruling that states, "The DNR has the authority and duty to consider the environmental impact of a proposed high capacity well if presented with sufficient scientific evidence suggesting potential harm to waters of the state".

Meanwhile, on-going monitoring of groundwater flows into and out of Lake Beulah remains critical. Since 2005, volunteers have taken weekly water level readings from May to November at five "strike point" monitoring wells on the lake shore.

Data is loaded into a UW-Madison computer program that tracks changes in water flow both before and after the installation of the well and during various changes of normal rainfall and weather conditions.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) samples and analyzes changes in the chemistry and temperature of Lake Beulah waters as they flow toward the Mukwonago River downstream.

The village and the Lake Beulah Management District (LBMD) are working together on data collection utilizing two deep monitoring well "nests" to measure water

flows between the deep and shallow aquifers that feed the well and the lake.

This information, analyzed by hydrogeologists, is shared and archived as part of the USGS database and is published in the Wisconsin Science Center's annual lake report.

As LBMD Chairman Dave Bitter said in a recent East Troy Times article, "It's never going to be over for us. We are never going to stop protecting Lake Beulah."

A note from Friends' President Ezra Meyer
The Friends have always supported our friends from the LBPIA and LBMD in their quest to bring sound science to bear on the DNR's evaluation of this well.

We will always advocate for that whenever high capacity wells are proposed in the watershed as the potential long-term damage they can bring to the watershed is too great to justify otherwise.

We will always encourage water conservation and efficiency measures and well locations that don't pose threats to the Mukwonago River and its associated ecosystems.

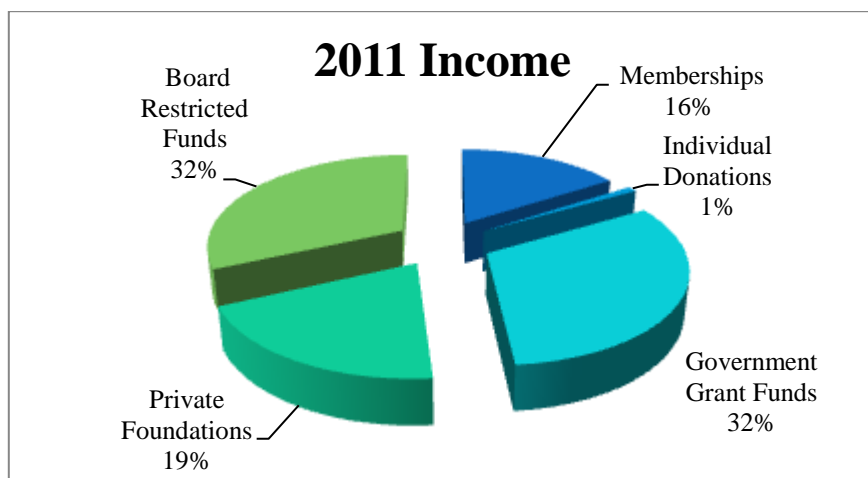
Coming soon...

Spring/Summer The official 2011 Year of the Turtle has ended, but it is time to think about the coming turtle nesting season. Join us in our efforts as we continue to protect our local turtle populations! Drive watchfully on area roads from April-July.

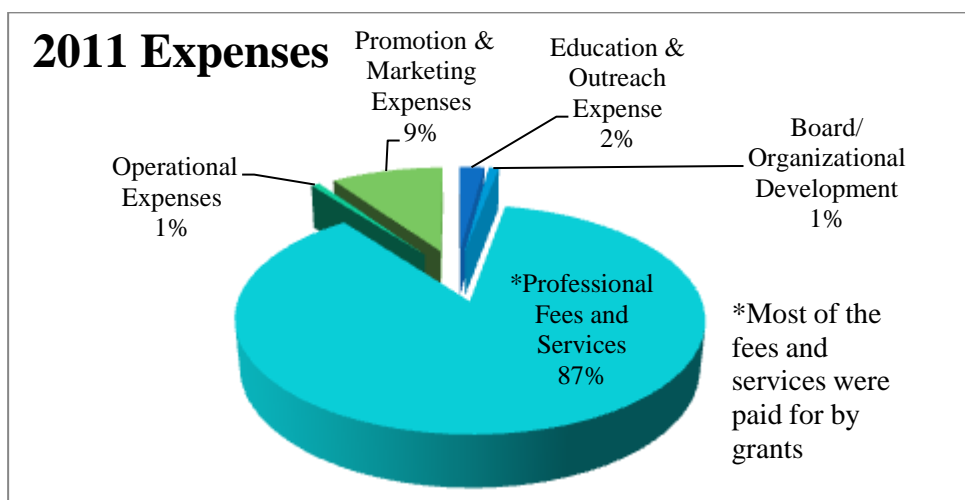
March 31 *Earth Hour* is the world's largest voluntary action for the environment, a global movement that has gone from one city to more than 130 countries. This year 135 countries/territories, 5251 cities and towns will be participating. Earth Hour 2012 is set for March 31, at 8:30 p.m. Switch off your lights for one hour. The larger goal is to save the environment...not just for one hour but by on-going actions. www.earthhour.org Want to get inspired? Watch any of the beautiful Earth Hour videos on YouTube.

April 22 *Earth Day* is Sunday, April 22. This day in 1970 is, by many, considered to be the birth of the modern environmental movement. Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, established Earth Day after witnessing the ravages of the 1969 massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. It has become a world-wide movement. www.earthday.org

Friends of the Mukwonago River financials...



We are recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 tax-exempt charitable organization.



Please join the Friends of the Mukwonago River

Benefits of membership:

- Receive our newsletter and periodic updates on volunteer and educational activities.
- Know that yours isn't a lone voice in support of protecting the phenomenal Mukwonago River.
- Be armed with the information you need to advocate for the river in community planning and decision-making processes.



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- Please indicate here if you prefer to receive our newsletter and other periodic notifications by email rather than by mail. This helps us save energy, postage, and trees and reduces our carbon footprint!*

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Thank You!

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all of our members, donors, volunteers, and partners who made this past year a success. Your time, talent, and treasure have helped preserve the health of the Mukwonago River watershed and educate others about its importance.

Special thanks to the River Alliance of Wisconsin and The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for supporting our work with grant awards.

We look forward to working with you this coming year!

INDIVIDUALS*

Scott Anderson
Tony Ayala
Jeff & Deb Bacon
Julie Bender
Susan & Paul Bergmann
Geoffrey Bishop
Rob & Mary Bunzel
Trish & Jerry Burstein
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River Alliance of Wisconsin
Mukwonago River Initiative (MRI)
Nature Conservancy
Kettle Moraine Land Trust
WI Department of Natural Resources

**We do our best to keep track of our members, donors, volunteers, and partners. If we have omitted your name, please contact us, and we will adjust our records and properly acknowledge you in our next publication.*



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