

Friends of the Mukwonago River



Longear Sunfish
(*Lepomis megalotis*)

The Mukwonago River watershed is home to over 50 species of fish including the threatened Longear Sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*), several species of rare freshwater mussels, an incredible diversity of wetlands, and some of the highest water quality in Southeastern Wisconsin. 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.

2009-2010 NEWSLETTER

We apologize for sending our 2009 newsletter a few weeks into 2010. We've been working through some major changes over the last few months.

The biggest change is that our fearless co-founder, Nancy Gloe, moved on in December, resigning from her roles as president and treasurer and giving up her spot on the board of directors.

Nancy was our co-founder, board member/president/treasurer, and volunteer extraordinaire. The truth is: Nancy took the word "volunteer" to a new level. She is responsible for the existence of this organization, having organized a meeting in early 1999 that brought her together with co-founder Ezra Meyer and key early supporters of the organization. She generated enough interest and momentum to lead to our creation within that year.

Since that time, Nancy has worked tirelessly to see to it that the Friends made a real difference for the health and long-term well-being of the Mukwonago River, its watershed, and all the people and other inhabitants (fish, mussels, animals, and more) who live or at least spend time here. Thanks in large part to Nancy, we've had some great successes in the past ten years.

We will miss Nancy, and we wish her well in all of her pursuits. It's guaranteed that we'll continue to see her making headlines for her principled activism on behalf of the environment, animals, and whatever other causes she works to support.

Nancy leaves behind some big shoes to fill on the board. Immediately following Nancy's resignation,

the remaining members of the board of directors took action to bring on Jean Weedman, a long-time Friends volunteer, to fill the remainder of Nancy's board term ending in 2012. Jean has been designing the newsletters for us for many years and is involved in many ecosystem protection and restoration activities in the watershed. She will be a great asset on the board.

Following the direction of the membership at our 2009 annual members meeting, we will provide a slate of candidates that would increase the size of the board to be approved at the 2010 annual meeting on Saturday, March 27.

Also, we plan to honor Nancy Gloe with an award at this year's meeting, in recognition of all of the great things she has done to help bring this organization into existence and to make it so successful over the last ten years. She certainly deserves it.

Friends Annual Meeting...

March 27, 9:30 a.m.

Members and friends welcome!

**Mukwonago Community Library
Meeting Room**

**300 Washington Avenue
262-363-6411**

Turning now to our on-the-ground work, development activity in the watershed remained very slow again in 2009, due mostly to the

economic slowdown facing our country. That allowed communities in the area to navigate the transition into the era of Smart Growth land use decision-making (see article below), and it allowed us to continue our focus on building the capacity of our organization for the long term, so that we can be here protecting and restoring this river and its watershed for a long time.

The Friends now has a presence on the Web: we have our own Facebook page (please become a fan!), and our website is going live this month at www.mukwonagoriver.org. We are also planning to have at least one Friends' event in the watershed in 2010. Stay tuned for details.

As always, thank you for your interest in the Mukwonago River! We appreciate your support tremendously! We wouldn't be here without it!

If you're due for a renewal, please use the form on the back page and donate what you can. Thank you, and let's have a great 2010!

All correspondence regarding the Friends of the Mukwonago River and related business should be directed to the three members of the Board of Directors. Ezra Meyer can be reached at ezra_meyer@yahoo.com or (608) 843-3972. Jean Weedman can be reached at weedmantandj@aol.com or (262) 594-5996. Pamela Meyer can be reached at pmeyer1@wi.rr.com or (262) 470-6511.

Friends' focus for 2010—Capacity building

With the help of three different grants received in 2008 and 2009, we have significant financial resources to invest in the long-term viability and sustainability of the organization. It took some hard work, along with the graciousness of one of our long-term Friends. The work we committed to do with these grants, and that they now enable us to do, will dominate our efforts as a board and as an organization in 2010.



To recap, we received a River Protection Planning grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in early-summer of 2008 that was designed to help us build the capacity of the organization to achieve its clean water/healthy watershed mission for the long term.

Specifically, the DNR grant was to help us hire outside help to set up our website, shore up our membership and reach out to potential members, create both a strategic plan and a fundraising plan for the organization, raise our profile in the community, and work with landowners, local officials, and partner organizations. The DNR committed \$10,000 to help us do that work.

Second, later in 2008 we received \$10,000 in unrestricted funds from the Patrick and Anna M. Cudahy Fund. This grant came as a surprise to us.

We received it because of a long-time friend and watershed steward. Our board decided the money would be best used to hire staff to help boost the organization's ability to do what's best for the river, bolstering the activities listed in the DNR grant.

Midway through 2009, we received another \$4,500 in financial support from the River Alliance of Wisconsin. We became eligible for the River Alliance grant because our board members participated in their Organizational Capacity Building training in early 2009. We were extremely pleased when that organization, which works hard to help groups like ours in Wisconsin, awarded us this grant. Again, this money will help us to accomplish the organizational capacity-building that is our top priority.

Recently, the board was given a partial scholarship to attend the National River Rally to be held this year in Snowbird, Utah from May 21-24. Sponsored by the River Network, the sessions will provide information that should help in this year's efforts. (See www.rivernetwork.org.)

Given all of these resources, we have a unique opportunity now to take the organization to a new level in terms of its ability to accomplish its mission relative to our namesake river. 2010 is the year of building the capacity of our small but effective organization, and we are very excited about it!

Watershed happenings...

Friends' Earth Week 2009 activities



Friends' Earth Week 2009 activities included a river cleanup and sign dedication on April 24. In celebration of the fact that brook trout live in Jericho Creek, a cold water stream and tributary to the Mukwonago River, members of Friends, along with Town of Eagle Supervisor John Davis, posted and dedicated a sign at Hwy X and Jericho Creek. There was a brief creek clean up at that location and on the Mukwonago River near Hwys. E and LO.



Photos by Jean Weedman

John Davis (above) makes it official.
Nancy Gloe (right) wades in to gather trash in the Mukwonago River. For additional photos of the clean up, visit us at [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com).

Joint project protects Phantom Lakes, Mukwonago and Fox River systems

A major step has been taken to eliminate some of the stormwater-related erosion that occurs where Phantom Woods Road slopes to the channel linking Upper Phantom and Lower Phantom Lakes. Pollutants like sand, gravel, oils, and road salt would drain into the lakes, then into the high quality lower portion of the Mukwonago River, and ultimately into the Fox River system.

Funding for the approximately \$45,000 project came 90% from a grant from the Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission and 10% from the Town of Mukwonago budget. The improvements included: paving of the lower portion of the road, pulling the road back from the channel, and creating a vegetative buffer zone. The purpose of the buffer zone is to provide an area to naturally process the runoff from the road, thus preventing pollutants from entering the lakes. Biologists are proposed to help stabilize the banks.

This spring, native shoreland plants will be planted to help to stabilize the embankment and limit the amount of runoff into the lakes. An email will be sent to Friends members when the planting is to begin, and volunteers would be welcome!

Our thanks go to the Fox River Commission and the Town of Mukwonago for this remediation effort.

The Southeastern Wisconsin Fox River Commission works to develop and implement plans or projects that improve water quality along the 36.5 miles of the Fox River that it is charged with protecting, extending from the Village of Waterford dam north into the City of Waukesha. Since its founding in 1997 by the Wisconsin legislature, the commission has used \$1.25 million for water quality projects.

Friends work with The Nature Conservancy

A joint work party with Friends of the Mukwonago River and The Nature Conservancy took place on June 13 at the conservancy's Newell and Ann Meyer property. The rugged band of volunteers cut their way through heavy brush and buckthorn, clearing a trail.

The trail, leading west for about ¼ mile, is part of the three to four miles of trails that will eventually be completed at the Meyer Preserve. Jerry Zeigler, land steward for The Nature Conservancy's properties, led the group and later placed signs along the newly cut trail.

Photo courtesy of Jerry Zeigler , The Nature Conservancy

Nancy Gloe holds a buckthorn trunk as Dick Smith cuts it down. Jean Weedman stands ready to spray the stump as Tom Weedman heads off to another project.



Wisconsin DNR adds to Lulu Lake Preserve

The Lulu Lake Preserve was expanded to further protect lands in the Mukwonago River watershed while conserving land for public use. The state Natural Resources Board approved purchasing 86 acres for more than \$1 million in the summer. In late May, the board approved spending \$360,000 to acquire 50 acres. The properties eventually will be open to outdoor recreation, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking and cross-country skiing.

The 86 acre former Horn property consists of 7 acres of wetlands, a 4-acre pond, 60 acres of upland woods and 15 acres of oak savanna. The 50 acre former Keske property is primarily farmland. The DNR plans to "restore the land to mesic prairie using local genotype seed to provide habitat for grassland species including badger, Henslow's sparrow, dickcissel, bobolink, eastern meadowlark, sedge wren, grasshopper sparrow, vesper sparrow, savanna sparrow, blue-winged teal, northern harrier and short-eared owl."

According to a memo presented by Richard Steffes to the board, the Lulu Lake nature area

consists of high-quality and diverse wetland and upland communities. It has been identified by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission as among the most valuable natural areas in the state and is a high priority area for protecting burr oak openings and medium-sized rivers and streams.

Designated by the Wisconsin Wetlands Association as one of the 100 "wetland gems" in Wisconsin, the Lulu Lake nature area provides habitat for 17 bird species, three fish, two amphibians and four invertebrates that are species of greatest conservation need, says the memo.

Lulu Lake, a 40-foot deep, drainage kettle lake fed by the Mukwonago River, is home to diverse fish, amphibian and reptile fauna, including the longear sunfish, pugnose shiner, Blanding's turtle and pickerel frog.

The two parcels expand a green belt corridor including the Kettle Moraine State Forest's Southern Unit in Eagle and the Newell and Ann Meyer Nature Preserve to the south, with Lulu Lake and Rainbow Springs to the east.

Mukwonago River Unit of the Kettle Moraine-- Update

Recent work

The Department of Natural Resources has been developing this 971 acre property since its purchase in 2008 for restoration and public access. The main focus this past year has been in Walworth County on reclamation. In a purchase like this some percentage of the sale price is set aside for reclamation work.

Jim Jackley, DNR Real Estate Specialist for the Southeast Region, reported that all the buildings on the Walworth County side have been razed, underground wells and tanks have been removed, the logged pine trees have been sold and moved. A prescribed burn of substantial acres has been done. A ditch that flows into the FJ Bay was plugged, restoring a 30 plus acre wetland.

Portions of the Walworth County property have been open for public hunting since late fall of 2008. The golf course continues in operation until the fall of 2010.

A brief look back

At last year's Friends annual meeting in March, then President Nancy Gloe provided a brief history of the land that eventually became the Rainbow Springs Resort prior to its October 2008 purchase by the DNR. From a farm directory listing owners to a map indicating the land as "wasteland", the early history of this land suggested little promise.

In the 1960's, owner Francis J. Schroedel created his "dream" country club/resort with every amenity: a 700 room hotel, scheduled grouse and pheasant hunts, swimming pools, a shopping arcade, golf course, restaurant, ski hill, and an airplane landing strip. Much of this work involved changing the topography and altering the course of the Mukwonago River.

The resort never fully opened and after continuing financial trouble, the complex fell into foreclosure.

Oddly, the hotel "opened" for a Haunted Hotel event in 1992. The resort grounds continued to be used for "haunted" Halloween events in October for nearly 10 years.



Photo by Jean Weedman

DNR wildlife biologist, Brian Glenzinski, (above) provided Friends' members with DNR plans for the property at our annual meeting in March 2009.

It was purchased from the bank in 1997 for \$8.5 million. Tax delinquencies plagued the resort for years. As if to seal its fate, a fire causing \$3 million in damages to the hotel complex occurred on April 16, 2002. By September 2002, owners Alan and Michael Feker vowed to rise from the ashes. But by late 2002, when fire-damaged buildings had not been removed, the town and county revoked the conditional use permits for a hotel and convention center on the site. In early 2003, requests to connect the resort to Mukwonago sewer and water systems also failed. A proposal for a conservation subdivision was prepared by nationally-known conservation land use planner Randall Arendt in 2005.

In negotiation for four years, the purchase by the state of the 971 acre property for \$10.8 million was the largest in history for the southern part of the state. The state's final offer was presented in August of 2008.

Vice-President Ezra Meyer shared the Friends' involvement in working for public ownership of the land for about ten years and "fighting for the least damaging impact on the river." The land surrounds a good distance of the 18 mile long Mukwonago River.

Holding the land in trust – a trusted partner

In addition to the Department of Natural Resources, a government agency and a major landowner on behalf of the public, there are also some critically important private nonprofit organizations that work to protect land and water for the long term in the interest of the environment and the public. These organizations are called land trusts or land conservancies. Some are you may be actively involved with them. There are several land trusts that operate in our watershed and with whom we work closely.

Trusts and land ownership

Land trusts' main role is to help private landowners, whether families or companies, to maximize their stewardship of the land for the long term. In cases where landowners are interested, land trusts will purchase land from landowners. Land trusts may also accept land given as gifts or willed to a trust. The land trust organization then becomes the owner of the land and accepts the long-term stewardship responsibilities that come with ownership... forever.

The Nature Conservancy is an example of a land trust operating in our watershed that has done a great deal to protect watershed land and the river by purchasing land from willing sellers. To see their inspiring accomplishments, tour their preserves at and near Lulu Lake.

Conservation easements

In other cases, land trusts assist landowners in stewarding their land, but the land continues to be owned by the family or company. A conservation easement is an innovative tool

that includes an agreement between the landowners and the land trust organization. The easement guarantees the long-term environmental protection of the land by eliminating the right to develop or subdivide the land. It leaves all of the rights to use and enjoy the land in environmentally friendly ways with its owners. Easements, like land itself, can be donated or sold.

Conservation easements provide a return in public benefits of \$6 for every \$1 invested according to researchers in Colorado, as recently reported by the Trust for Public Land. Benefits resulting from permanently protected land included: scenic beauty, water quality protection, flood control, fish and animal

habitat protection, erosion control, and other factors. For the complete study, go to www.tpl.org.

Once a piece of land is covered by a protective easement, the owners can give away or sell the land, but the easement protections remain in place, so that future owners must abide by the shared responsibility to maintain the land in an ecologically sound state. Several properties in the watershed or nearby have been protected in this way by the three groups listed

in the boxed item above.

We meet and work with our neighborhood land trusts regularly. They are critical partners in accomplishing our long-term mission to protect the Mukwonago River and its ecosystems.

If you are a landowner and would like to learn more about your options for working with land trusts, please contact them or us, and we will work to put you in touch with the right people.

Local land trust organizations:

Kettle Moraine Land Trust

phone: (262) 949-7211;
email: info@kmlandtrust.org
online: <http://kmlandtrust.org>

The Nature Conservancy

Pat Morton
phone: (262) 642-7276
email: pmorton@tnc.org
online: <http://www.nature.org/wisconsin>

Waukesha County Land Conservancy

Ellen Gennrich
phone: (262) 821-2044
Marlin Johnson
phone: (262) 965-2227
email: wclc@wi.rr.com;
online: <http://www.waukeshalandconservancy.org>

Smart Growth: Comprehensive Planning in the Mukwonago River Watershed

We are happy to report that every municipality whose land use decisions will impact the Mukwonago River watershed has adopted a “Smart Growth” comprehensive plan prior to 2010 in Waukesha and Walworth counties. Many Friends members served on development committees and spent months and years creating the laws which minimize the negative impacts that land use decisions might have on the watershed. You can find the comprehensive development plans at the local library or on the municipality’s website.

As background...

In 1999, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted a comprehensive planning law which is set forth in Section 66.1001 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The comprehensive planning law requires that comprehensive plans be completed and adopted by local governing bodies by January 1, 2010 in order for a county, city, village, or town to enforce its zoning, subdivision, or official mapping ordinances.

The law requires that all comprehensive plans address the following nine elements: issues and opportunities, housing, transportation, utilities and community facilities, agricultural, natural, and cultural resources, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, land use, and implementation.

Many issues that were further considered under the nine elements:

- Coordination of land use planning with school district planning
- Groundwater Supply
- Cost of Community Services
- Public Participation
- Transportation: analysis of North-South Corridor issues
- Use of Regional Storm Water Facilities
- Infrastructure for Commercial and Shopping Center Location (how located and transportation impacts)
- Coordination of Public Interest
- Defining Rural Character and Development Design options to preserve Rural Character
- Needs of the Business Community-New Technology Businesses
- Business Retention, Expansion, and New Start-Ups
- Land Use Development Patterns and Transportation Impacts
- State Input and Legislation Effecting Land Use
- Keeping the County Competitive for Business in light of Global Competition
- Tax Structure
- Timely relationship between land use and transportation
- Government Role/Relationship between Communities and Land Use
- Future of Agriculture in the County
- Impacts of Annexations
- Revenue Sharing Options
- Review of Urban Growth Areas-Sewer Service Areas
- Identification of Existing Housing and Affordable Housing Needs

What you can do...

We are the eyes and ears of the Mukwonago River watershed, so please report to the authorities any development, dumping, spills, land altering activities, and anything that you feel might impact the water resource. We have laws and mechanisms in place to protect the surface and ground waters in the watershed, but we need your help to monitor the environs in which we live. If you see a potential problem, please call any board member who can then notify the proper authorities.

The Friends has a long history of addressing local governments for assistance in fostering sound protections for our resources and has established very good working relationships with municipalities in the watershed to maintain the quality and quantity of the river and its surrounds. We intend to continue those relationships with your continued participation.

Work Parties...

Local organizations work through winter

With snow flying and a chill in the air, land restoration activities may seem to have been suspended, and yet volunteers carry on the battle against invasive plants and shrubs at many locations within the watershed. If you'd like to "get out and enjoy a winter's day", contact any of the organizations listed in the land trust article (page 6) or the DNR and ask them about where and when volunteer help is needed. For work at The Nature Conservancy properties, contact land steward Jerry Ziegler at jziegler@tnc.org or 262-642-7276. You can receive notice of work parties usually via email.

Education...

Master Naturalist Program

Want to know more about your natural surroundings? Learn from experts? The Master Naturalist program is a series of classes to train volunteers as either a Citizen Naturalist or a Teaching Naturalist.

The series of 14 classes costs \$120. Topics include winter ecology, geology of WI, plant ID, etc. For more information, contact the Wehr Nature Center at 414-425-8550.

This is the first year for the Citizen Naturalist training. "I saw a need for this addition with the growing number of volunteers who are interested in doing community service and or becoming involved in citizen science activities. The background in Wisconsin natural history and environmental issues will enhance their volunteer activities," explained Jo Williams, volunteer coordinator for Milwaukee County Parks and Wehr Nature Center & Nature in the Parks.

Graduates volunteer in Milwaukee County, but that may change to include Waukesha and possibly Walworth counties this year. A statewide program is being organized, but don't expect to see it before 2011 or 2012. The program was not offered in 2009.

Field Trips...

The Natural Resources Foundation

The Natural Resources Foundation is offering more than 100 outdoor adventures across the state, from April through October. The trips include 38 birding hikes, 37 opportunities to learn about Citizen Science volunteering, 30 trips to State Natural Areas, and 18 family-friendly trips. Each experience is led by expert naturalists and DNR professionals. Registration begins in mid-March for foundation members.

The mission of the foundation is to "create opportunities for people who care about Wisconsin's lands, waters and wildlife to deepen their understanding and appreciation for these natural resources, to support state and local conservation programs, and to establish conservation endowments." The foundation was established in 1986 by the Wisconsin DNR to further "support public conservation priorities throughout Wisconsin."

For more information visit: www.Wisconservation.org .

Visit with us in Eagle

Come visit our display table at the Eagle Area Community Showcase on Saturday, March 20, from 8 a.m. to noon at Eagle Elementary School. We will have photos of our work and t-shirts for sale.

Remembering special people and events...

A gift that lives on in memory

By Dick and Judy Wagner

The Friends of the Mukwonago River was organized to protect the Mukwonago River and its watershed for the future. In order to do this they need support in the form of volunteer workers for clean-up events and donations to help defray the expenses of professional help for issues associated with the protection of this river and its watershed from the ravages of development.

We have found a wonderful way to help both the Friends of the Mukwonago River while bringing comfort to the families of loved ones who have passed away. We make a donation in the name of the person who has passed away to the Friends. We then send a card to the families telling them of our donation and the fact that the memory of their loved ones lives on in the flowing stream of the pristine Mukwonago River. We tell them about the Mukwonago River and the work being done to protect this exceptional resource.

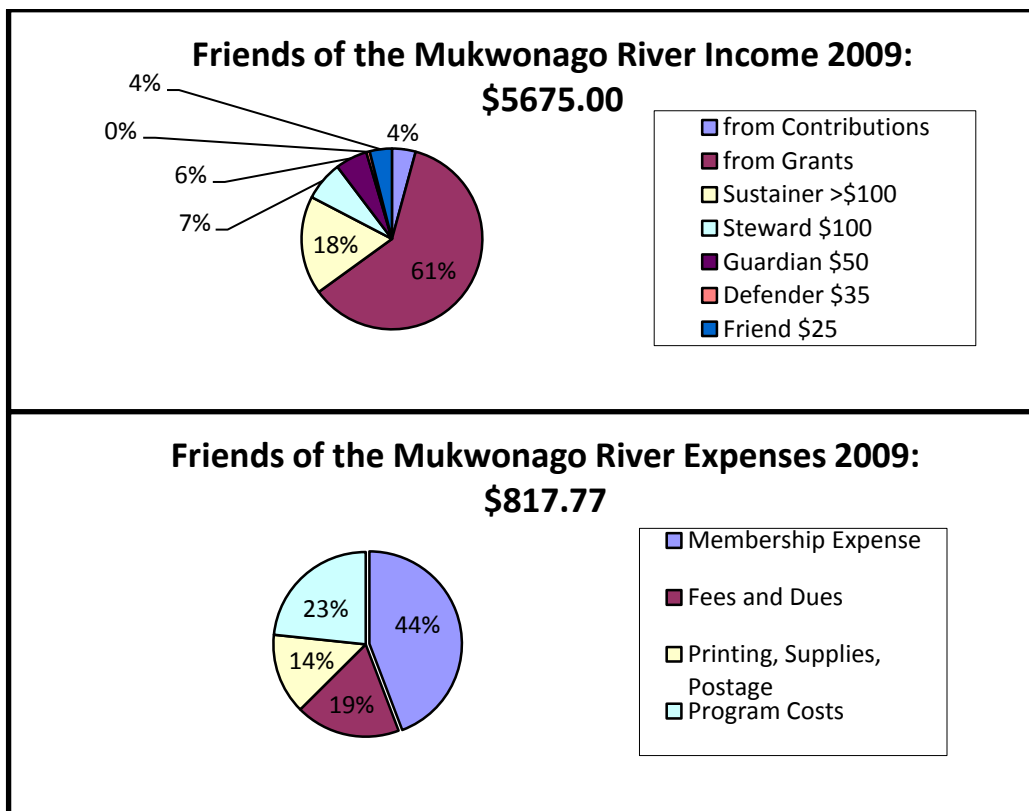
A Friends board member then sends a note as well to express sympathy. We have also occasionally asked to have a T-shirt sent to a family member as well.

This gift has been well received. Flowers are nice, but they soon die. The Mukwonago River flows free and brings life to the habitats within its boundaries and echoes the memories of those who have passed on as it flows downstream. This seems to bring families a sense of peace, knowing that their loved one's memory lives on.

It may also spur a family to continue to donate in their loved one's name at special times of the year such as birthdays and Christmas. Think about this as a way of keeping a memory alive and helping the Friends of the Mukwonago River to continue their mission.

Friends of the Mukwonago River financials...

Below is our financial statement for 2009. Contact our treasurer if you would like additional information. We are recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 tax-exempt charitable organization.



THE FRIENDS OF THE MUKWONAGO RIVER

Please join us or renew your membership with the Friends of the Mukwonago River! The river continues to face impacts from development throughout the watershed. We encourage more people to embrace the singular importance of this river and its watershed, unique for incredible fish and wildlife diversity and unparalleled quality.

As we work to provide a voice for the river in the planning and decision-making processes associated with development projects, we occasionally need to hire experts to help make the case for solutions that allow sensible development while protecting the Mukwonago River.

We intend to increase the capacity of the board of directors and our membership to make strides toward our watershed protection and restoration goals. We have sought assistance from the River Alliance of Wisconsin to assist us with this organization building effort. Your membership in 2010 will help to do these important things.

Bequests and gifts of stock or other monetary instruments are also accepted.

Please join us at the level that's appropriate for you. Fill out the form below and mail it with a check to:

**Friends of the Mukwonago River
P.O. Box 21
Eagle, WI 53119**

Circle one:

Friend (\$25) Defender (\$35) Guardian (\$50) Steward (\$100) Sustainer (>\$100) \$_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

E-mail: _____

Please indicate here if you'd prefer an email newsletter and notifications in the future. This helps us save energy, postage, trees, and reduce our carbon footprint!

Look for us at our website www.mukwonago.river.org (coming soon) and become a fan at facebook.com-- friends of the mukwonago river.

Thank you!