Rock River Reflections

A publication of the Rock River Coalition produced in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Extension Summer 2006 Volume 9, Number 3

Meet Your New President - Joe Dorava

Joe Dorava, PE, is a professional engineer with Vierbicher and Associates. He has a BS in Civil and Environmental Engineering from UW-Madison and a MS in Environmental Engineering from UA Anchorage. Joe has more than a decade of experience as a research hydrologist with the US Geological Survey and six years experience as a consulting engineer. Joe has specific training and experience in conservation minded design principles, infiltration basin and rain garden design, wetland identification and delineation, aquatic habitat preservation and fluvial geomorphology. He has used his education and experience to design innovative solutions for municipal and private clients that address a variety of regulatory challenges. Joe has designed rain gardens, biofilters and infiltration trenches to promote infiltration and comply with stormwater regulations.

After serving for several years on the Rock River Stormwater Issues Team, Joe was elected to the Rock River Board of Directors in 2005. In early 2006, Joe was selected to fill in as Vice President, before being named president in 2006.

Some of Joe's goals for the RRC include:

- Promoting and expanding our citizen-based monitoring programs.
- Continuing our issue team programs and directing their involvement to specific basin issues that address the needs of local communities.
- Expanding our public educational activities with an initial emphasis on basin-wide water quality issues, such as phosphorus runoff and continuing our long-term effort providing valuable educational workshops.
- Emphasizing more public relations activities by seeking out additional partnership opportunities with local communities, non-government organizations, agencies and legislators.
- Staying active in the basin and well informed of basin issues so the Coalition is relied upon as a resource others can draw upon. This will include continued involvement in promoting rain gardens, river walk developments and conservation minded design practices that protect our natural resources.

The Rock River Coalition is viewed as a model organization in Wisconsin which has been very successful in meeting its mission: "To educate and provide opportunities for people of diverse interests to work together to improve the environmental, recreational, cultural, and economic resources of the Rock River Basin."

I look forward to serving as President. - ***Joe***

Meet your 2006 RRC Board and Staff

The Rock River Coalition is pleased to announce its 2006 officers and Board of Directors. Officers are:

Joe Dorava, President
Lisa Conley, President-elect
Tim Reel, Secretary
Jan Ruster, Treasurer
Warren Topel, Past-president

Pictured above are the 2006 directors and staff: from left, back row are Ed Grunden, Monitoring Director; Ken Wiesner, retired DNR; Tim Reel, Fort Atkinson Waste Water Treatment Plant; Warren Topel, Test America; Suzanne Wade, UWEX; Joe Dorava, Vierbicher and Associates; Jan Ruster, Premier Bank; Roger Kist, Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Ellen Rulseh, Outreach Coordinator. Seated from left: Lisa Conley, Wisconsin Association of Lakes and Tracey Novak, Pleasant Valley Acres. Not pictured: Bryan Huberty, Wetland Restoration Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator.

We are particularly pleased with the diversity of board members this year with business, non-profit, municipal, University, tourism and agriculture representation.

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Jefferson, WI 53549
In cooperation with
Rock River Coalition
PO Box 141
Watertown, WI 53094

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RRC Position Openings

Wetland Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator

This part-time position averages 12 hours/week, more during the monitoring season. Responsibilities include:

- Develop and publicize an annual wetland monitoring calendar: listed on web, in newsletter.
- Develop and maintain volunteer monitoring network for wetlands.
- Organize and train team leaders for all major monitoring protocols including, but not limited to: frog and toad, bird, Odonata, Lepidoptera, floristic, mammals, water quality and benthic macroinvertebrates. Directly oversee protocols without a team leader.
- Organize photojournal of restoration.
- Oversee data reporting, working towards volunteer input of data.
- Work towards accomplishing all goals as listed in successful grant proposals.
- Prepare reports and meet with board as needed.

Position pays between $11 and $14/hour. Position reports to the RRC Monitoring Director. Most work will be done at home or at the monitoring site. Monitoring is typically done in the evenings or on weekends. Deadline Aug. 11, 2006 or until a qualified candidate is hired. For more information contact ed@rockrivercoalition.org.

Administrative Assistant

The primary purpose of this position is to provide administrative assistance for financial record keeping, payroll, grant oversight, membership and recordkeeping of the Rock River Coalition.

This is a permanent part-time position requiring typically from 10 – 20 hours per month, with more hours needed during membership drives (Jan – Feb) and whenever grant projects come due. For a total of about 150 hours/year.

Most work will be expected to occur at a home office; however, some time will need to be spent at the Rock River Coalition office, 864 Collins Road, Jefferson, Wisconsin.

Email Jan Ruster at jruster@bankwithpremier.com to receive position description or call the UWEX office at 920-674-7297. Deadline Aug. 11, 2006 or until a qualified candidate is hired.

GFLOW Coordinator

The GFLOW Coordinator's responsibility is to be a liaison between the Rock River Coalition, the Department of Natural Resources, the United States Geological Survey and participating muncipalities. The GFLOW Coordinator will promote the model to area municipalities and groups, host meetings of participants, and work with DNR and USGS to ensure model work is proceeding on pace during the development of the model and to communicate with the Groundwater Issue Team and the RRC Board regarding successes, concerns or obstacles. The GFLOW Coordinator will report to the RRC President. Salary commensurate with abilities. Position could be a direct hire or contracted services. Contact Suzanne Wade at suzanne.wade@ces.uwex.edu or call 920-674-8972 for questions.

Volunteers needed

- Help is needed at our Jefferson rain garden, to weed out the grass that has encrouched. If you'd like to help contact Kim at 920-674-7297.
- Help design a forum to examine emerging issues in the basin and ways to address them. Our last forum was held in 1999 and was instrumental in determining the direction of the Rock River Coalition Issue Teams.
- Wetland and Stream Monitors needed, contact Ed Grunden to find out about these opportunities.

RRC supports phosphorus bans

The Rock River Coalition Board believes that most lawns do not need additional phosphorus fertilizer. Therefore we are pursuing, along with a number of supporters, ways to encourage communities to establish lawn phosphorus fertilizer bans. One way is through grants. Therefore, we are submitting Lake Education grant proposals to pursue this.

If you are interested in working with us, contact Lisa Conley at llconley@yahoo.com

Rock River Coalition

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"

PRESIDENT:
Joe Dorava

DIRECTORS:
Lisa Conley, President Elect
Tim Reel, Secretary
Jan Ruster, Treasurer
Warren Topel, Past President
Roger Kist
Tracey Novak
Suzanne Wade
Ken Wiesner

Outreach Coordinator:
Ellen Rulseh, 920-674-7443, ellen@rockrivercoalition.org

Monitoring Director:
Ed Grunden, 920-423-2673, ed@rockrivercoalition.org

Wetland Restoration Monitoring Coordinator:
Bryan Huberty, 608-345-4024
wetlands@rockrivercoalition.org

GFLOW Coordinator: vacant

Deputy Treasurer:
Kim Buchholz, kim@rockrivercoalition.org

RRC Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 141, Watertown, WI 53094
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Office Address:
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Jefferson, WI 53549

Newsletter Editor:
Suzanne Wade: suzanne.wade@ces.uwex.edu,
920-674-8972

Photos: Margaret Burlingham, Bryan Huberty, Ellen Rulseh, Suzanne Wade, UWEX

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

If you need special accommodation for programs please contact the

GFLOW model update

The following municipalities have pledged financial support for the the RRC sponsored GFLOW Computer Model.

Dodge County
Fitchburg
Lake Mills, City of
Lake Mills, Town of
Green Lake County
Watertown
Jefferson County
Johnson Creek
Theresa
Whitewater
Janesville
Shields, Town of
Sumner, Town of
Friends of Horicon Marsh

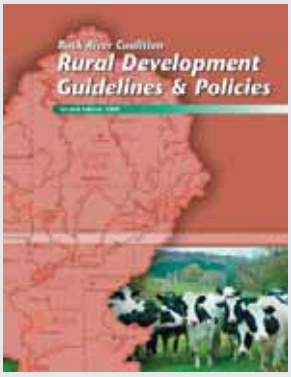
As of July 24, 2006 we have funds or pledges for $48,400 of the $61,700 needed for USGS to begin the model. Other communities continue to work on approvals to join the group through their budgetary process.

This is right on target to for the initiation of model development on Oct. 1, 2006.

If you would like to know more about the model or have other questions, contact Suzanne Wade at suzanne.wade@ces.uwex.edu. The RRC will be looking for a firm or an indiviidual to oversee the process: set-up meetings, make presentations about the model and encourage additional municipalities to join the effort. We anticipate this will take on average 10 hours a month. If interested contact Suzanne Wade at 920-674-8972.

The next meeting of the RRC Groundwater Issue Team to discuss the GFLOW Model will be Sept. 6, 2006, 9:30 -11:30 in Madison contact Suzanne for location information.

Revised Rural Development Guidelines Available



The second edition of the RRC Rural Development Guidelines and Policy Manual is now available. This version includes a cd of the Washington County Farmland and Open Space Preservation Tools Manual, which provides more details on the suggestions in our manual.

The first manual ordered by a muncipality in the Rock River Basin is free, otherwise the cost is $3/manual. To oredr contact Kim at 920-674-7297 or email Marie at marier@co.jefferson.wi.us to order.

Rain Garden in Every Community completes three projects this spring

Rock River Coalition's Outreach Coordinator, Ellen Rulseh worked with two communities and three schools to complete three rain garden projects this spring. What makes this program unique is the partnerships that are developed between a municipality and a school system. The communities get a valuable rain garden to help control storm water and the schools have a hands-on project that brings science alive and shows how problems such as storm water can be controlled. Pictures of the projects are on page 4.

Middleton Stricker Pond Project

The first project, a major Water Quality Improvement Project at Stricker Pond, was a partnership among: The City of Middleton's Public Lands Department, Elm Lawn Elementary School, CONTECH Stormwater Solutions, Inc., Earth & Water Works, LLC and the Rock River Coalition. Fourth grade teacher, Lynn Karle, who has worked with her students in the past on prairie restoration work, took on this project which will continue to be a teaching laboratory in the future.

This project was challenged by the weather. After Lynn Karle's 26 fourth graders and three parents worked for more than two hours to plant some 900 plants in holes that were pre-prepared by City of Middleton public lands crew, a late afternoon "monsoon" dumped two inches of rain in less than 40 minutes on the site. Wood chipped mulch was swept off the site by volumes of 120 cubic feet of water per second that blasted from a 48 inch stormwater pipe, filled to capacity from impervious surfaces of the adjacent neighborhood. Even so, due to "triple checking" of plantings done by the fourth graders to make sure plants were securely planted, more than 90% survived. When teacher Lynn Karle and her students returned the next day, they got a dramatic lesson when they were crestfallen to see many of their plantings in ponded water, being visited by ducks. The valiant fourth graders picked up their hand trowels and planted another 600-some plants. The grant awarded by CONTECH Stormwater Solutions, LLC includes a "picnic in the park" which is planned for students, teachers and members of the public as a community education event in the fall.

The students planted 1,100ft^2 within a 2,500ft^2 water quality improvement swale feed by more than 100,000 ft^2 of impervious surfaces which will result in more than 2,700,000 gallons of rain/year being infiltrated instead of running off.

Johnson Creek Water Treatment Plant Rain Garden Project

The Johnson Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Rain Garden Project was a partnership among: the Village of Johnson Creek Water Utilities, the Village Board of Johnson Creek, Ecology and Fish and Wildlife classes at Johnson Creek High School, LanDesign and Dutch Designs, and the Rock River Coalition. The rain garden establishment was initiated by LanDesign and Dutch Designs and funded by the Village of Johnson Creek.

The project includes a 6,400ft^2 rain garden outside the wastewater treatment plant with 65,000ft^2 impervious surface. The rain garden will infiltrate 975,000 gallons of rain/year.

Johnson Creek High School teachers Ed Bielinski and Brian Zachgo plan to incorporate the "A Rain Garden in Every Community" into their curriculum for the next two years and, possibly, beyond.

Johnson Creek "Village Green" Parking Lot Infiltration Islands

The Johnson Creek "Village Green" Parking Lot infiltration islands were a partnership among: the Johnson Creek "Green Team", the Village Board of Johnson Creek, Johnson Creek Middle School students, Earth & Water Works, LLC, and the Rock River Coalition. This project, initiated by Earth & Water Works, LLC and the Rock River Coalition was funded by the Village of Johnson Creek. TDS Telecom Inc. and Earth & Water Works, LLC provided sponsor support.

The "hands on" component of student involvement in planting the site was completed this spring due to the end of the school year, and the need to get the site planted. Next fall, Johnson Creek Middle School science teacher Fritzi Heckel's students will return to survey the results of their spring plantings, attend two classroom sessions on storm water, benefit of rain gardens and rain garden design as well as assist with rain garden maintenance (weeding).

These three rain gardens join the previous ones at the Boys and Girls Club in Madison and the Stoughton Rain Garden. Schools interested in working on the project are still being recruited for programs this fall. If interested contact Ellen Rulseh at 920-674-7443 or by email at ellen@rockrivercoalition.org.

Johnson Creek rain gardens

Middle school students from Johnson Creek pose by their newly planted Village Hall rain garden. photo by Ellen Rulseh

Johnson Creek High School students pose by the Wastewater Treatment Plant rain garden and in the second photo students are digging into the mulch pile, as they put the finishing touches on the garden. photo by Margaret Burlingham

SYLDR in Janesville showcases the beauty of our southern rivers

The annual Send Your Legislator Down the River was a beautiful evening paddle down the Rock River north of Janesville. This year the event, co-sponsored by both the Rock River Coalition and the Green Rock Audubon Society, was enjoyed by 40 paddlers and a small group in a pontoon boat.

After a pleasant picnic supper, Warren Topel, RRC President welcomed everyone and asked the elected officials to talk about key issues and successes for the river.

It was an interesting mix of state, federal and local officials, Democrats and Republicans, and agency staff who all stated the importance of the Rock River to our area and the need to keep working to improve it.

Many were surprised by the quality of the paddle which often reminded folks of the north woods, with the wooded bluffs and dense shorelines. It wasn't until getting close to the city that the river showed the homes and shorelines more typical of southern Wisconsin.

Weekday evenings are often quiet in these urban river areas with only a few motor boats. Caution should be taken if paddling these same waters on the weekend.

Next year we anticipate hosting the event in Dane County on June 11, 2007 during the annual Take a Stake in the Lake week.

The DNR Voyageur canoes were again a big hit during the event, with most people choosing to paddle these, rather than individual canoes.

photo by Ellen Rulseh

Above the Voyageur canoe is reflected in the calm waters at dusk.

photo by Suzanne Wade

Middleton Water Quality Improvement Project

Fourth graders from Elm Lawn Elementary School in Middleton worked on this immense project as part of the Rock River Coalition's 'A Rain Garden in Every Community' Project.

Learn more about this, the Johnson Creek projects shown above and other successful projects on page 3.

If interested in learning how your community can join our effort, contact Ellen at 920-674-7443 or ellen@rockrivercoalition.org.

photos by Ellen Rulseh

Challenges with being a farmer: What to do with the manure!

by Suzanne Wade, UWEX Rock River Basin Educator

A few weeks ago I went to a farm field day demonstrating issues with manure and tile lines (underground lines that drain fields). As I listened to the specialists discuss their research, it got me thinking about the challenges that today's farmers face in managing manure.

First, farming has changed over the years. Today many farms are run by several adult family members working together such as brothers and sisters, fathers and sons. Together they operate one larger farm rather than several small ones. This has great benefit for the families: each person can specialize in what they do best, whether it's cropping, herd management, herd health or financials. With multiple families working together, farmers can have a family life - they can go to their kids sporting events, school functions and even take vacations instead of being tied to the milking schedule. They can get involved with their local community, providing leadership to groups or running for elected office. Because of the benefit of better management and increased size they can hire employees and build better milking facilities and better housing for their cows.

Along with this better way of life for both them and the cows, comes a by-product: large quantities of manure. Years ago, farmers would spread manure from their 80 head herds every day and spread it on fields close to the barn, just to get rid of it.

Today it isn't as easy as just loading up the manure spreader and heading to nearby fields. Manure takes a great deal of management. Here are just a few variables the farmer needs to consider regarding manure use:

Manure spreading based on plant nutrients

Manure is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus - key plant fertilizers. Most farmers take this into account when calculating fertilizer needs by decreasing chemical fertilizer used when they spread manure.

Manure isn't a perfectly balanced fertilizer. If a farmer adds manure to meet the nitrogen needs of the plants, too much phosphorus ends up being applied. This leads to a build up of phosphorus in the soil. Ultimately this phosphorus can runoff the field, either dissolved in the runoff or attached to eroding soil particles. This is a problem as phosphorus in lakes and rivers lead to excess rooted plant and algae growth. One pound of phosphorus in a lake can lead to the growth of 500 pounds of algae.

Farmers, who receive any federal money through the Farm Bill or those who need a state water quality protection permit, must follow a nutrient management plan (NMP). These programs either have, or have proposed, new standards requiring that manure phosphorus levels are accounted for in addition to manure nitrogen levels. Many fields that have had years of manure application may not be able to have additional manure until this excess phosphorus is drawn down. Currently, only 3% of Wisconsin's farmlands follow a phosphorus-based nutrient management plan. The Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) have a 2008 deadline for all farmers to follow such a plan. However this is voluntary, unless cost share funds are available.

Manure spreading after seeding crops

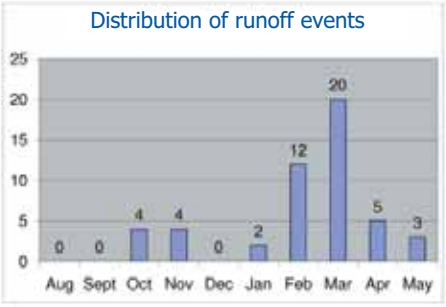
Once crops are growing, especially corn, manure can't be applied since it would cover the leaves; blocking the sun or burning the plants. Thus it's hard to spread manure from June through October on many fields except for cut hay or alfalfa.

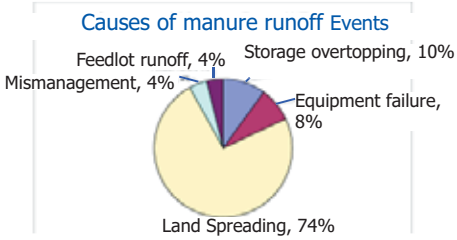
Winter manure spreading

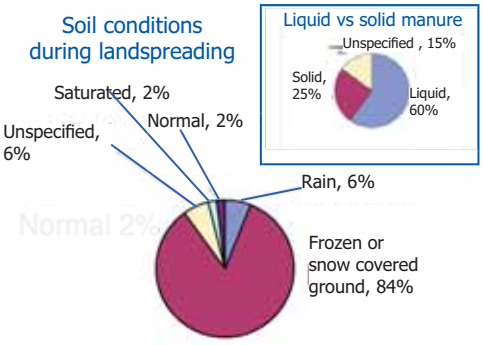
Research shows that most of the severe manure runoff events leading to fish kills occur during snow melt and early spring rains. To prevent this farmers need to watch the weather and not spread manure during periods of fast snow melt or prior to early heavy rains. Actually because of the risk of runoff from frozen or snow-covered ground, it's best not to land spread manure once the ground freezes or becomes snow-covered.

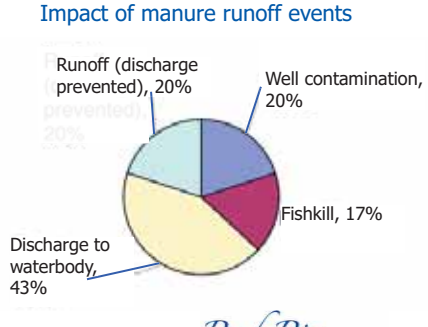
See attached charts to see the distribution, causes and results of manure runoff incidents and the impact of poorly timed spreading.

The following graphs and charts from the Manure Task Force are study results of manure runoff events from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005. They show when events occurred, conditions, causes and the impact of runoff events.









Recapping the Challenges

Manure is a valuable fertilizer and soil amendment.

Manure should only be spread until the phosphorus needs of plants are met.

Many soils already have excess phosphorus, so no manure should be applied.

The limit of how far manure can be hauled economically is roughly 3-5 miles.

Manure can't be spread on most crops from June – October.

Manure shouldn't be spread on many fields during snowmelt and early spring rains: Feb – March. It really shouldn't be spread on fields after the ground is frozen, to prevent it from washing off with snow melt, so that's anytime after mid to late November.

What about worms and droughts?

One of the most amazing stories I heard at a recent field day is a case which is unlikely to every happen again. Almost no one would have ever predicted it, but conditions were right for an unfortunate outcome. This is a case where a farmer spread manure exactly the way he was supposed to, on a relatively flat field with deep silt loam soil (more than 15 feet of it!). Even University experts would have said no problem. Yet in just a few hours, out of the neighbor's faucet was pouring manure. What happened! How was it possible for the liquid manure to have moved that quickly? Well, county staff, soil scientists and other professionals from the University of Wisconsin, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and UW-Extension investigated. They dug deep pits in the field and could actually follow the manure's path.

To understand what happened we need to go back to the previous year. A drought had settled over the land starting in late summer. When clay and silt soils dry out, they tend to crack. Then the ground froze, cracks in place. I think you can imagine what happened when the manure was spread – it flowed unabated down these cracks. The researchers noticed something else – the manure was also traveling down through nightcrawler holes. These worm tunnels went all the way down to the limestone. So it was no problem for the manure to move down through these holes as well. It then spread out along the top of the limestone until it came to a crack through the limestone and continued to follow the limestone layers and cracks until it reached the neighbor's drinking water aquifer.

The reason I'm relating this story is to show to non-farmers again, how difficult the whole issue of manure management is, but I want to reiterate, this was a unique situation and may not ever happen again.

It turns out; however, that worm holes in farm fields with drainage tiles can result in manure flowing from the surface right down to the drain tiles. These drain tiles connect directly to farm ditches and eventually to streams, lakes and rivers.

The Discovery Farms, an on-farm research program, is working to see if new methods of managing tiles can keep both the water level right for crops and decrease this pollution source.

Challenge of being a farmer continued.

Many farmers now use liquefied manure which increases the potential of runoff events depending on the weather and soil conditions.

Manure Storage

One solution is to build manure storage. This of course is extremely expensive. Typically storage systems are built to hold six months of manure. Such a system for 200 cows cost in the area of $130,000 to $150,000. This allows spreading after crops are harvested until ground freezes and then again in April and early May. But what happens if we have a very wet spring or fall, and farmers can't get into their fields to spread during those windows of time? What if fall droughts make soil susceptible to cracking? Some farmers do have facilities for 12 months of storage, which of course, is even more expensive.

Many state, federal or local programs exist, typically administered by counties, to cost-share these systems, but funds are limited and not every farmer qualifies. Cost share rates for manure storage is usually at 70% unless hardship is shown which increase the level to 90%, but again, there isn't much money and their are a lot of requirements a farmer must meet.

Storage doesn't work for all. With expenses for fuel, fertilizer, and health care increasing it's hard for many farmers to come up with their share of the cost. Also many of our farmers are 60 years old and older. Unless they have children interested in farming, it's not a good investment for them, or for tax payers, to build storage.

Here is an in-ground manure storage system, above ground tanks are also popular.

Other Solutions:

Manure Digesters

Some large dairies have installed manure digesters. The manure is pumped into the digester where bacteria feed on it, usually in a no oxygen (anaerobic) environment. The bacteria breakdown the manure resulting in methane, heat, liquid and digested solids. The methane, often called "biogas", can be used to generate electricity for the farm or added to the electric network; the digested solids can be composted and sold, or used for cow bedding; the liquid which still contains nutrients can be land applied, sometimes through irrigation. Anaerobic digestion has an added benefit of helping control the odors typically associated with land spreading.

In Dane County they are investigating the development of anaerobic digesters situated in several locations in the county. This would allow farmers to haul their manure to the digester.

Grazing

Years ago many cows spent their lives out on pasture coming in to be milked. Most dairies today house their cows in specially buildings called, 'freestall' barns. Here cows have freedom to walk around protected from heat and weather. They have special bedding to insure comfort and herd health. However all of their food must be provided and their manure closely managed.

Some farmers have gone to a special type of grazing known as Intensive Grazing or Intensive Rotational Grazing. With this method, the cows are turned out to pasture, but instead of having the whole area to roam in, the pasture is broken up into smaller sections. The size is just right for the cows to eat down the plants in one day without overgrazing. The next day they go to another section. Thus, they do the harvesting of food and spread their own manure in different areas every day. It takes lots of management to make grazing work – to insure that the pasture is at it's peak, with the grass high in the proteins cows need to produce milk. But since the cows are harvesting their own food, there are savings in machine repair, energy and manure handling. There are many challenges with grazing operations. Town and Country R, C & D, whose area includes southeastern Wisconsin, including the entire Rock River Basin, has recently hired Haly Schultz as their grazing specialist. She will be promoting grazing in the basin and counties to our east, helping producers who want to explore changing to this method. Contact her at 262-335-4808 or haly.schultz@rcdnet.net

New research

One of the recommendations of the Manure Management Task Force convened by DNR and DATCP in 2005 was to research small-scale technologies feasible for individual farms; everything from feeding regimes to reduce phosphorus in the manure to filter presses to separate solids from liquids, or storage bladders to control storage overflows.

I wanted to write this article to show non-farmers how complex this issue is. Since I started working with UW-Extension, I have seen a shift from many farmers looking at manure as a waste to be gotten rid of, to a resource to be managed. The Manure Management Task Force held a number of listening sessions last year in order to get public input on its recommendations for manure management. The final report containing the Task Force recommendations recognizes both the importance of agriculture and the needs of the farming community, balanced with protection of the environment. For the Task Force's final report and more information, go to: http://www.manuretaskforce.wi.gov/index.html

What's an SSO?

By Tim Reel, RRC Board and Fort Atkinson Waste Water Treatment Plant Foreman

SSO's or Sanitary Sewer Overflows have been the buzz for some time now…especially with the newfound interest and regulations on stormwater issues. An SSO occurs when sanitary sewage is released into the environment. Examples of this could be a plugged sewer line that would back up through a manhole into the adjacent area or when a storm sewer, or a facility can't handle water from excessive rains or snowmelt and it overflows. The result is an "untreated" or "partially" treated discharge.

There have been a few high profile SSO events in Wisconsin which have been predominately associated with large rainfall events. The concerns and impacts are very obvious to all involved. However, there are many differing opinions on the best way to approach the overflow issue. Throughout most communities in our basin the sewer collection systems are indeed "out of sight, out of mind". This infrastructure requires thorough planning, routine maintenance, and updating as with any large municipal expenditure. The task of coming up with "reasonable" regulation on this topic has been put on the WI DNR shoulders with broad assistance from the federal level in the form of a guidance document. Opinions range from absolute zero tolerance and severe legal ramifications to new design standards for treatment facilities. In a "perfect" world the answer would be simple. No SSO's are tolerable and we should do whatever necessary to accomplish this. But, some realism and practicality should accompany good regulation. The economics of accomplishing zero SSO's would be unbelievable. Some people feel utility rates are high now…imagine your city or town installing new sewer lines down every road? To find a middle ground that is acceptable has become the issue. Luckily, in Wisconsin the stakeholders are all interested in maintaining and bettering our environment to the best of their ability! The WI DNR and several key groups are currently looking at different strategies to accomplish the goal of decreasing the number of SSO events. Perhaps late this year or early next year we will see a new statute to help get us there.

Thanks Margaret, Kim, Bryan and Orson

The Rock River Coalition has had the pleasure of leadership from many wonderful people over the years and has to say good-bye when new opportunities arise. This year we say good-bye and thank you to four of our friends and colleagues as they go to new endeavors.

Margaret Burlingham has left the RRC Board, but thankfully will continue her work with us. Margaret has been a board member and treasurer for the past 6 years. Margaret will continue to be a leading force on the Planning the Rock Issue Team. Margaret believes in our mission and feels we need an Executive Director to reach it, so she will also do some fundraising for the Coalition. She is leaving our board in order to join the 1000 Friends of Wisconsin Board; our loss is their gain.

Kim Buchholz has been the RRC Deputy Treasurer for the past two years, helping us organize our books, handling membership responsiblities and overseeing grants and employee financial matters. Kim is finding she wants and needs to spend more time with her rambuncitous 18 month son, Matthew and her handicapped daughter, Kayla. Kim, we appreciate your help, your positive demenor and your dedication more than we can say. Enjoy your family.

Bryan Huberty had all of the skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to establish our wetland monitoring program. Because of his work with specialists in many fields, everything we measure at either the Zeloski property west of Lake Mills, or the Jefferson Marsh east of Jefferson is done with an eye toward scientific credibility. Unfortunately for us, great for Bryan, his business, Ecological Restoration has grown to the point where he can't give our program the attention it needs to grow. But Bryan can't completely leave us and the project, so he has asked us to hire a new Wetland Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator, and he will join the volunteers taking over the team leader responsibilities for both the Odonata (dragonfly and damselfly) and the Floristic (plant) surveys.

The Coalition is looking to hire a new coordinator, contact Ed Grunden at ed@rockrivercoalition.org if interested. More information can be found on page 2.

Orson Tingey interned with the Rock River Coalition last summer helping get the RRC GFLOW project off the ground. His work with local municipalities set the stage for a fruitful information meeting in January. Today because of his work we are close to having all of the funding necessary to begin model development. Orson received his Masters Degree from UW-Madison this spring and is now the manager of a gold mine facility in Nevada. He's using his work at the UW to develop postive relations with neighboring ranchers. Good luck Orson to you and your family.

Invasive Species Alert: Japanese Stilt Grass

You think garlic mustard is bad?? Just imagine an ANNUAL grass that grows in undisturbed forests, spreads rapidly, blankets the ground and is highly flammable!!

Japanese stilt grass came to the eastern U.S. accidentally and has been spreading rapidly into the Midwest. There are now several hundred populations in Illinois and Indiana and it is highly likely to spread to Wisconsin. The only way we can keep it out is to have lots of people looking for it, reporting it and immediately eradicating it.

DESCRIPTION: Stilt grass is weak-stemmed, has a sprawling habit and looks like a miniature bamboo. It grows slowly through the summer months, ultimately reaching heights of 2 to 3 feet. Leaves are pale green, relatively short and wide (1-3 inches long), and have a distinctive silvery stripe down the midrib caused by reflective hairs.

Slender stalks of tiny flowers are produced in late summer (August - September). The seeds ripen soon after flowering and the plant dies back completely by late fall. Patches of dried plants burn readily.

LOOK-ALIKES: Virginia cutgrass (Leersia virginica) looks similar and grows in forested areas. Cutgrass blooms earlier (August), has hairy nodes, and does not have the silvery stripe down the midrib.

BIOLOGY & SPREAD: Stilt grass reproduces exclusively by seed. It also spreads by rooting at stem nodes that touch the ground. Individual plants may produce 100 to 1,000 tiny seeds that fall close to the parent plant. Seed are easily carried further by water or moved in soil on shoes, camping gear and tires. Stilt grass seed remains viable in the soil for five or more years and germinates readily.

This is an ANNUAL weed – producing seed the first year of an infestation. Any suspected population should be accurately identified, reported (and vouchered) and eradicated. Do not allow this plant to go to seed.

For more, see:
http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/mivi1.htm
http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/japanstgrass.htm

Clay Irrigation Tile Salvage Day a Hit! More to come.

More than 50 folks poured over the piles of irrigation tiles taking home more than a thousand to use in gardening and landscaping. Still nestled beneath the gentle giants of a remnant oak opening at the Zeloski Wetland Restoration site are scads more of old clay irrigation tiles. Almost everyone who participated asked for another opportunity to collect more. So, because of this success, and the large number of additional requests we've received, we are offering two more chances to scavenge the piles. The contractor has to have all remaining tiles buried by August 15, so these will be the last chance to get any.

August 2, Wednesday 5:00 - 8:00pm
August 12, Saturday 1-3 (tentative)

Directions: Please preregister by calling 920-674-7297. Event may be cancelled because of restoration work or weather.

Access from Alley Road off of County S on the west side of Rock Lake. From I94, take Hwy 89 south one block to County V west (right turn). Follow V until it T intersects with County B, turn west (right) to County S, turn south (left) go 2.5 miles to Alley Rd, turn right follow signs to Oak Opening and the tiles. The area is rough, so wear rugged footgear and bring heavy gloves, mosquito repellent and sunscreen. A plastic sled is useful for hauling tiles.

Picking through the tiles is like a treasure hunt to find the best or unusual. Below, a couple of the folks, pick through the tiles on the July 8 Tile Salvage Day. Above, the tils are loaded, and ready to be taken home and turned into a landscaping project.

photos by Bryan Huberty

Calendar of Events

Tile Salvage Day, Zeloski Wetland
July 27, 2006 5:00 - 8:00
Aug 2, 2006 5:00 - 8:00 see article this page

River Friendly City
July 28, 2006 1:00 - 3:00 Dane County LCD offices

Deadline for application for Administrative Assistant and Wetland Volunteer Monitoring Coordinator positions
August 11, 2006 see page 2

GFLOW Meeting
Sept 6, 2006 9:30 - 11:30 am

Send Your Legislator Down the River
June 11, 2007 Dane County (tentative)

Newsletter Deadline
Deadline for the fall newsletter is Oct 9, 2006

For more information about these and other RRC Events or to enter or view other organization meetings, workshops, or conferences go to www.rockrivercoalition.org.

The 2006 Send Your Legislator Down the River event was a beautiful evening paddle down the Rock near Janesville. Here Jefferson County Supervisor Greg David floats by in his home-made racing canoe. More pictures can be found on page 4.

photo by Ellen Rulseh

Wetland monitoring calendar for August

The following dates are tentative - please contact Bryan if interested in attending:

Satruday, August 12 7am to 9am, Breeding Bird Survey at Zeloski Marsh, then from 9am to 10am, refreshments will be provided before the monitoring continues (see next item).

Saturday, August 12: 10am to noon, Water Quality Monitoring and Plant Sampling of Wetland Seeding at Zeloski Marsh.

For all these events, meet at the tarmac by the bike path. Take Hwy S 2.5 miles south of Cty B. Turn right on Alley Rd, drive west on Alley Road for about 1 mile (the road will turn into gravel), when you get to a T intersection of gravel roads turn right and you are now on the Zelsoki site. Continue north for about 1/2 mile (driving by the oak island on your left), when you get to the stop sign at the bike trail continue straight over the bike trail and park on the tarmac near the ag equipment. PLEASE NOTE access to Zeloski wetland is only allowed during monitoring events or scheduled activities. At any other time it is considered trespassing.

For more information about any of these or other monitoring activities contact Bryan at wetlands@rockrivercoalition.org or by calling 608-345-4024.