



Rock River Reflections

A publication of the Rock River Coalition in cooperation with the Rock River Stormwater Group, Town and Country Resource, Conservation & Development and the University of Wisconsin-Extension

Fall 2009 Volume 12, Number 4

Reducing Stormwater Pollution Through Targeted Landscaping

By Rebecca Dill, Biodiversity Project & RRSR Education Coordinator

The Rock River Stormwater Group has been busy online and on the ground promoting the *Clean water. Bright future.* campaign to clean up stormwater in the Rock River Basin. The new website, www.cleanwaterbrightfuture.org, was officially launched in August and two free rain garden workshops were held in Whitewater and Watertown on September 23 and 24, respectively.

The two rain garden workshops were a great success. Over 40 people attended from all over the area, including Whitewater, Ft. Atkinson, Newville, Lake Geneva, Milton, Janesville and Beloit. The group included master gardeners, city employees, members of lake associations and other citizens who were interested in rain gardens as a solution to landscaping questions. Suzanne Wade from UW-Extension led the two-hour long workshops that explained why rain gardens are valuable, not only to our environment, but also to individual homeowners.

As a part of the Rock River Basin, the water that flows from our yards, cars and streets affects the entire interconnected community. Rain gardens are one of the many simple actions we can take to keep water out of storm drains. Made from flowers and shrubs that are planted in shallow depressions, rain gardens allow rainwater from impervious surfaces



"Rain gardens are beautiful landscape projects. Ms. Wade said at the Watertown Rain Garden workshop. "Not only do they add value to your home, but they also make an incredible difference in the amount of water and pollution that reaches our waterways. They are a win-win solution to water pollution!"
Photo by Rebecca Dill

like sidewalks and driveways to soak into the ground instead of flowing into storm drains.

The Whitewater workshop was held on Cravath Lake in the Cravath Lakefront Community Center. The center, which is frequently used for family reunions, weddings and community events, provided a great backdrop to highlight the importance of clean water to our communities. A lake full of algae or brown with

sediment that was washed down storm drains is not a place where citizens want to come to celebrate.

Trinity-St. Luke's Lutheran School, home to a new rain garden that was added just three months ago, hosted the workshop in Watertown. Andrew Willems, Director of Technology and the eighth grade science teacher, has been teaching a stormwater curriculum to his students, many of whom also came to the workshop, along with

their parents. His class works in and maintains the garden as part of their science lessons; weeding was on the schedule for the week after the workshop. Students in Mr. Willems' science class also created posters on stormwater topics in the Rock River Basin. These posters decorated the cafeteria where the workshop was held.

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President's Message

Dear Rock River Coalition Friends and Members,

It's fall, it's beautiful, and it's time to renew yourself!

The Rock River Coalition is leading the way to demonstrate and share the best and newest ideas and practices that will allow us to live, work and play here in harmony with our land and water.

Your membership support is critical to our ability to build partnerships and to carry out projects. Please enjoy this newsletter, read about all the good things we do and support our work for the coming year - join us, or renew your membership today.

Eating your way to cleaner water: Have you been to your local farmers market? Fall is abundance time, and it's a great pleasure to see the fruits and vegetables of the land and to meet your local farmers.

Rock River Basin farms produce more than food for your table. A well-managed farm provides a place for rain to recharge our groundwater,

for wildlife to prosper, for green open space, for carbon sequestration and for wind and biomass energy sources.

By shopping at your farmer's market, you can support your local economy and much more. Buying organic food, grass-fed meat, free range poultry and artisan Wisconsin cheeses are great ways to contribute to your family's health, clean water, the pleasure of good meals together - and it's a whole lot of fun!

Clean water, local food, healthy families - more and more we are seeing the importance of linking these aspects of our quality of life. A great guide to Wisconsin farms and farmers markets is at www.farmfreshatlas.org Want to learn more? www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer



Lisa Conley, RRC President



The Rock River Coalition sadly announces the passing away of past President and founding member Warren Topel. Warren and his wife Carol have been strong supporters of the Coalition and its mission and vision. Warren was most passionate about protecting farmland and agriculture within the Rock Basin and the idea of working in partnership with people of diverse and sometimes opposite interests to make positive steps we could all agree on.

Warren was instrumental in making the RRC a basin-wide entity; growing from its roots as a river corridor group focused on tourism, historical preservation and water front improvements to a stronger organization with an emphasis on full watershed protection, while retaining our roots in economic strength and historical preservation.

Warren was on the board starting in 1994 and was president from 2001 to 2006. While he was president, we initiated our "Rain Garden in Every Community Program" and had the largest and most effective stream monitoring effort in the state. During his tenure as president, the RRC was honored with the following awards, which shows the strength of his leadership:

- 2005 DNR Citizen-based Monitoring Program & Wisconsin Stream Monitoring Group of the Year
- 2004 Wisconsin Rural Partners Wisconsin's Top Rural Development Initiatives
- 2003 Wisconsin Groundwater Guardian Team Award
- 2003 Wisconsin Extension Community Development Association Outstanding Team Award
- 2003 Karst brochure wins national University Extension Excellence Award

Warren was always an advocate for the RRC mission. He recognized that this mission applies in ways that go beyond party lines. He was never shy about asking support from all of our elected officials.

Warren had one of the biggest hearts and most caring personality of anyone involved with the Coalition. He was always there doing all the big and little things that the organization needed, such as ensuring a great meal at our Send Your Legislator Down the River events or welcoming and thanking our volunteers at our annual Confluence. He truly enjoyed being the spokesperson for us at our major forums and events.

Warren will be sorely missed. The RRC Board will be developing a memorial in his honor, if you have suggestions please contact RRC President Lisa Conley.



Mission

"To educate and bring together people of diverse interests to protect and improve the economic, environmental, cultural, and recreational resources of the Rock River Basin in Wisconsin"

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

Town and Country RC&D joins Rock River Reflections Partnership

Many groups, with similar and compatible missions, are active in the Rock River Basin. Four of them have come together to co-publish *Rock River Reflections*. They'll share the benefits of the extensive contacts that the Rock River Coalition has developed, share the good work all are doing in the area, be able to use the newsletter as a vehicle to announce initiatives and to keep partners up-to-date and assist with the increasing costs of producing, printing and mailing.

Over the past ten years, the University of Wisconsin Extension and the Rock River Coalition have jointly produced and funded this newsletter. This past summer the Rock River Stormwater Group, with their *Clean water. Bright future.* campaign became a partner, and now the Town and Country RC&D completes our partnership. Each organization is helping to fund one issue, but all will have articles and pictures in each of the four issues.

Here is more about our newest partner:

Town and Country RC&D (TCRCD) exists to enhance and improve the quality of life in the 13-county area of Southeast Wisconsin (includes most of the Rock River Basin plus Ozaukee, Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha counties) by promoting healthy communities, a healthy environment and sustainable economic growth.

The Town and Country RC&D Council provides an area-wide structure for locally led action and cooperation. The TCRCD's current theme and guide for the next several years is:

Clean Water and Healthy Food for Our Region

Led by a Board of Directors and Vision Team, they do most of their work through the guidance of three issue teams: Food and Farms, Sustainability and Water.

They have six membership levels:

Individual Membership	\$ 35
County Membership	\$100
Family Membership	\$ 50
Corporate Membership	\$400
Organizational Member	\$ 50
Lifetime Membership	\$3,000

Their staff include:

Craig Ficene, RC&D Coordinator
 Peter Pitts, Grazing Specialist
 Beth Gehred, Issue Team Coordinator
 Kirsten Jurcek, Grazing Education Specialist

You can find them at:

134 West Rockwell Street
 Jefferson, WI 53549
 920-541-3208
 920-674-6195 Fax
 tacrcd@townandcountryrcd.org

For more information and to become a member:
<http://www.townandcountryrcd.org/>

Countryside Nursing Home a Cooperative Care Alternative?

By Greg David, TCRCD Vision Team Member and Jefferson County Board Supervisor

Due to budget issues, the Jefferson County Board has had to make the tough decision to divest themselves of the cost of operating a county nursing home. This decision was made after a failed referendum to increase the county tax levy.

On September 19, 2009, at the invitation of Town & Country RC&D's Sustainability Issue Team and the Jefferson County Inventors and Entrepreneur's Connection, Margaret Bau presented a workshop on cooperatives as an organizational model for business development. The presentation was well attended, as well as filmed, which is now available free on the Internet and via DVD for home viewing.

Several weeks later, a notion struck in the middle of the night to apply the cooperative model to Countryside as an alternative to selling the nursing home to a corporate investor. Few of the details were known about how this may play out, but a letter was drafted stating the intent of the effort and citing detailed resources for greater background information. The letter was sent to top-level County staff and officials, as well as trusted advisors to garner input as to the applicability of this cooperative scenario.

All responses came back favorable, ranging from grand enthusiasm to guarded optimism. All wished the effort well and none said, "Don't bother trying."

Several informal meetings were held with top level county staff, employees, union representatives, cooperative specialists, facilitators, Town and Country advisors and others deemed necessary to proceed with the cooperative exploration process.

Since that time, interest has grown exponentially. The movement has taken on a life of its own, with interest coming from the public, workers, the media, nursing home administrators around the state and county board supervisors. It seems nearly everyone is interested in finding a better solution to nursing home woes than sale to an out of town corporation.

Toward that end, a lot of work has been done and much more is expected to occur in the near future:

- A public informational meeting will bring experts and stakeholders together to explore the concept of cooperative organization for Countryside.
- On Wednesday, Oct 28, 9:00 -11:00 am, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges Analysis of the situation will occur at Jefferson County UWEX. Further strategic planning will be forth-coming from that meeting.
- Core Planning Team meetings are occurring regularly to set up a timeline for education, planning and implementation of this effort.

Because of the incredibly short time-frame to explore the cooperative option for Countryside, all the educational and organizational efforts have been put on a fast track. There's tons to do, but also great enthusiasm and commitment to see the effort through.

We welcome anyone who wishes to learn more or be a part of this effort. You will be made welcome. This is a people's movement, meant to stem the rupture of a failing model of economics with cooperation and ethical behavior.

Contact Greg at prairiedf@globaldialog.com.

Continued from page 1.

Mr. Willems' stormwater curriculum seems to be working. His eighth grade students at the Watertown workshop answered the question, "What is the greatest source of water pollution in Wisconsin?" on only the second guess. The adults-only crowd at the Whitewater workshop needed 10 guesses before they got it right. Soil is the number one source of water pollution in Wisconsin, followed by manure or other animal wastes and fertilizers.

The workshop began with a discussion of the importance of

reducing the number of impervious surfaces that catch rain water, like roads and parking lots, and increasing infiltration, when water soaks into the ground. Reducing impervious surfaces also reduces flooding, improves water quality for recreational activities like swimming and fishing and helps protect natural habitats like wetlands. Before getting into specific details on garden sizes, location and plant selection, Ms. Wade showed that rain gardens have been scientifically proven to work. In a controlled study, a street where rain gardens had been planted along the length was able to reduce runoff by 90%.



Grazing Information and Classes

Information for consumers:

View the "Meet the Farmers" link on the Organic Valley Cooperative website at: <http://www.organicvalley.coop/our-story/meet-the-farmers/index/>

Learn more about grass-fed foods at: www.eatwild.com

Visit the USDA "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" website: <http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer>



Organic calf drinking its breakfast at R&G Miller & Sons, Inc

Local grazing events:

Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers:

Distance education classroom at UW Extension Jefferson County, 864 Collins Road begins Nov 12; call Heidi Johnson at 920-674-7295 for more information.

Town & Country RC&D grazing services:

Interested in a farm tour or presentation for your school or community group? Contact Kirsten Jurcek at 920-541-3208 for more information.

Interested in individual technical assistance for grazing strategies on your farm? Contact Peter Pitts at 920-541-3208 to schedule a visit.

Organic pasture seed and fertilizer day, Dec 9, Jefferson; call Kirsten at 920-541-3208 for details.



Dairy cattle grazing on lush summer pasture.

Seeing a Future in the Pasture

By Town and Country RC&D staff

We hear of the ecological impacts of our eating—for example, the many gallons of water required to produce a pound of grain-fed beef—but our food choices can benefit the environment as well. Pasture-based beef and dairy provide one such opportunity, and the 1600 acre R&G Miller and Sons organic dairy near Columbus demonstrates those benefits in the landscape. Peter Pitts, Town and Country Resource Conservation & Development grazing specialist, recently invited staff of the River Alliance of Wisconsin to tour the dairy and see firsthand what well-managed grazing can do for water resources.



R&G Miller General Manager Alan Henning profiled the positive trends observed since expanding and intensifying grazing of a 700-cow herd. "The use of controlled grazing has many benefits to animal health, soil health and water quality," says Henning. The herd spends most of the year on pasture, sustained by a diet of fresh grass. The cows harvest their own feed and spread their manure, thus creating a closed loop of nutrient recycling. Henning anticipates the pastures will need no external inputs other than minor mineral amendments in the coming years.

After one-time subsoil tillage to loosen previously compacted soil, the growing root systems of the permanent pasture will ensure groundwater recharge, soil erosion control, and increased soil organic matter long into the future. In addition, veterinary needs

have dropped dramatically due to the animals' improved health.

The key to success in this grazing system is management. The grazer fences the farm into multiple paddocks and moves animals daily to fresh pasture, leaving the recently grazed paddock to grow back to optimal forage condition before being grazed again. Close observation and careful management is required, but capital expenses are limited to pasture, animals, fence, and water. Done right, this system maximizes use of solar energy and becomes more productive over time. In times of rising energy and materials costs coupled with scarce credit, managed grazing offers a business model option for beginning or transitioning farming businesses.

"Imagine the benefits to groundwater, rivers and streams if these practices were applied across an entire agricultural watershed," said Lori Grant, Policy Program Manager for the River Alliance of Wisconsin. Conscious consumers can encourage this by choosing meat and dairy products from grass-based producers, but the choice can still be confusing. Product label claims of 'natural' may imply pasture-based but are not backed by any standard grazing requirement. The USDA organic rules are just now adding significant criteria for grazing. Some sellers such as Organic Valley require their producers to meet additional grazing standards. In the end, Henning cautions people to be savvy consumers. "I urge consumers to visit farms to know how their food is produced," he says.

Town and Country RC&D strives to connect consumers and farmers through partnerships, including the Farm Fresh Atlas with University of Wisconsin Extension and Slow Food Wisconsin, and grazing workshops and pasture walks with funding from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Please see our calendar of grazing events in the side bar for more details.

Hunters Make A Difference - Prevent the Spread of Invasives!

Hunters, as you go out into the field this fall, remember there are a number of things you can do to prevent the spread of invasives. First spread the word to others through your local clubs. Always buy firewood locally. Before leaving an area, do a good brush down of clothes, boots, your dogs and your vehicles. Keep motorized vehicles on authorized roads and trails.

Remember:

- Invasive plants can grow quickly and thickly, blocking trails and limiting access to hunting areas.
- Invasive plants degrade natural habitat by reducing the food and cover important to wildlife species. Poor habitat means less wildlife. For example, invasive honeysuckle shades out oak seedlings resulting in fewer acorn-producing trees for deer, grouse and turkeys.



Wisconsin DNR file photo

Rock River Stormwater Group Stencils Area Storm Drains

The Rock River Stormwater Group, one of our *Rock River Reflections* partners, is actively pursuing storm drain stenciling as a way to help educate and prevent water pollution.

Not only do the stencils remind people not to dump paint or oil down the drain, but as autumn leaves fall from the trees, they are a cue to keep the storm drains on your street clear of leaves and other debris to protect your local creeks, rivers and lakes.



Volunteers stencil "Dump no waste, drains to stream" on storm drains in Watertown.
Photo by John Hart



Protect Our Water
We painted local storm drains as reminders that everything that enters drains goes directly into local creeks, rivers and lakes without being treated or filtered. Here's how you can help:

- » Use non-phosphorus fertilizer and pesticides sparingly.
- » Collect leaves and grass clippings so they don't clog storm drains. Compost clippings or use as natural mulch.
- » Sweep—don't hose—your sidewalks and driveways.
- » Flush pet waste down the toilet, bury it in the yard, or dispose in garbage if permitted in your community.
- » Redirect downspouts from your roof into vegetated areas or a rain barrel then use collected rainwater to water your lawn and flowers.
- » Dispose of hazardous household wastes like motor oil, paint and pesticides properly. Never dump them down storm drains.

Clean water. Bright future.
 Rock River Coalition

By preventing pollution from washing down storm drains, we can keep our water clean and the future bright.
www.cleanwaterbrightfuture.org

The Rock River Stormwater Group produced this door hanger, posted when storm drains are stenciled, which provides homeowners with simple steps to cleaner water.

Clean Water. Bright Future.

The Rock River Basin is the collection of cities, towns and countryside connected by our rivers, streams and lakes. Rainwater that runs off our yards and streets into stormdrains will carry pollutants to our waterways where we swim, fish, and boat. By respecting what goes down storm drains we can keep our water clean and our future bright.

Clean water. Bright future.
 Rock River Coalition

RRC Chapter Update: The Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed

by Scott Taylor, Taylor Conservation LLC & RRC Board & FBCW

The Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed (FBCW) welcomes the cool winds of fall after a sultry summer of battling exotic Japanese knotweed on the banks of the Badfish. We are humbled by the resilience of this riparian invader. Nonetheless, we made progress and emerged better prepared to resume cutting, spraying and stem-injecting Japanese knotweed next spring.

To draw attention to our efforts, and inform the public of the threats posed by invasive exotic plants, we are holding an informational program and slide show on Wednesday, November 4th, 7-9 pm at the Stoughton Senior Center Annex.

We are pleased to have Laura MacFarland, of the River Alliance of Wisconsin (RAW), as our guest speaker. Laura will discuss RAW's invasive species initiative and the specific threats that Japanese knotweed poses to streams. FBCW will describe the techniques we are using to control knotweed on Badfish Creek. There will be time for questions and refreshments will be served.

Please visit FBCW's new website to keep abreast of our activities: www.rockrivercoalition.org/badfish/.



On the banks of Badfish Creek, Sharon Beall attacks Japanese knotweed with a stem-injection tool.
Photo by Lynne Diebel

Daphne Holterman named World Dairy Expo Woman of the Year!

Daphne was honored at the 2009 World Dairy Expo as their Woman of the Year. The RRC has long known Daphne as a strong champion of agriculture in the Basin and as a friend who has helped us better understand the role of all sizes of farms and the issues that farmers face.

Daphne is a member of the RRC's Planning the Rock Issue Team and has been a long-time supporter of our interests in preserving agricultural land.

Daphne is a co-owner of Rosy Lane Holsteins, an 850-cow Watertown dairy farm. While she has full-time responsibilities on the farm, she also lends her time and talents to several boards and organizations in the Rock River Basin.

RRC board members recently toured Rosy Lane Holsteins and were truly amazed by the complexity of the operation and the caring that the Holtermans have for their calves and cows.



Daphne Holterman gives Lisa Conley, along with other RRC board members, a private tour of Rosy Lane Holsteins.
Photo by Suzanne Wade

Join the RRC's New Social Network

The Rock River Coalition has entered the social network scene. Be one of the first to join the RRC's social network to stay up-to-date with Coalition news, events and blogs.

<http://rockrivercoalition.ning.com/>

Easy And Effective Tips For Leaf Clean Up To Help Lakes, Rivers and Streams

Dane County and area municipalities have started their annual media campaign to keep leaves out of the gutter and thus out of the storm drain and out of area lakes and rivers. This message is a great one for everyone in the Rock River Basin.

"As the leaves turn glorious colors and fall onto the yards and lawns of Dane County residents, it's time to "Love Your Lakes, Don't Leaf Them." Says County Executive Kathleen Falk as she kicked off the campaign.

How You Can Help

The Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership shares the following easy tips.

- Keep leaves out of the street: Leaves in the street get washed directly to lakes and streams when it rains. Even if the leaves never move, rainwater running over and through them makes and carries a nutrient-rich tea directly to the storm drains and lakes and streams.
- Mulch: Probably the simplest and easiest thing to do is to use your lawn mower to mulch leaves directly on your lawn. If you prefer to bag your grass clippings and shredded leaves, you can empty them on your vegetable and flower beds or around your trees and shrubs to help suppress weeds.
- Compost: Save time, money and water and improve your gardens and the environment by turning leaves into "black gold". Go to <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/wm/publications/recycle/publsw072.pdf> to learn more about composting. If you don't have the room in your yard, you can take your leaves to one of the three County compost sites. Go to www.countyofdane.com/pwht/recycle/compost_sites.aspx for more information.
- Rake: If you rake, pile leaves on the terrace*, not in the street. Covering the piles with a tarp helps to prevent them from blowing around and reduces nutrients that can leach from them when it rains. But remove tarp prior to scheduled leaf pick-up. **Some communities require bagging or placing leaves in street.*

Check with your local municipality about compost sites and leaf pick-up schedules.

Go to <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/home.managlt.pdf> for great ideas on turning leaves and other yard "wastes" into valuable, useful amendments for your yard and gardens.

All Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership communities have yard signs and brochures to go along with their "Love Your Lakes Don't Leaf Them" Campaign.



Rock River Basin's Groundwater-Flow Model Completed!

By Joleen Stinson, RRB Natural Resources Project Assistant

The Rock River Coalition, with generous financial support from communities, businesses, individuals, organizations and agencies, announces the completion of a Rock River Basin groundwater-flow model. The model was developed by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), in cooperation with the Rock River Coalition. The model was designed to help communities, businesses and land use planners understand and better manage their groundwater resources.

A groundwater-flow model is a computer program that simulates the movement of groundwater through geologic materials such as limestone, sandstone and glacial sediments. Groundwater scientists and planners commonly use models to study and evaluate problems such as groundwater recharge, the movement of water to wells, wellhead protection and the exchange of groundwater with surface water features such as springs, lakes, streams, and wetlands.

A computer program called GFLOW was used to simulate groundwater movement through the Rock River Basin because of its ability to simulate the interaction between groundwater and surface water, and because it is well suited for simulating groundwater flow at a range of scales from regional (the entire Rock River Basin) to local (the area around a community), when appropriately refined.

The modeled area is the length of the Rock River and its surface water drainage from the river's origin in southern Fond du Lac County to where the river exits the state at Beloit. The model includes rivers that flow into the Rock River such as the Yahara, Crawfish and Bark as well as the Horicon Marsh.

The Rock River Basin groundwater model describes regional characteristics of the groundwater-flow system without including the hydrogeologic detail or data density that would be necessary for answering site-specific questions. The model can be used to evaluate the effects of potential regional changes, such as long-term climatic shifts or large-scale land use changes, on regional water levels and stream flows. Because the GFLOW model is complex, municipal staff or board members are encouraged to work with an experienced groundwater-flow modeler to make informed management decisions guided by model results.

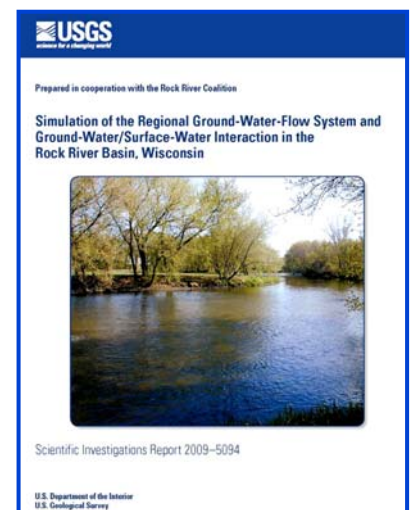
The groundwater-flow model also could be used as a starting point for smaller-scale (county, city or township) groundwater evaluations. That is, this regional model can be refined and recalibrated with new data to produce a better designed local-scale model for less cost than would be possible without the regional model.

"The ability of this model to be used as the basis for site specific models will save planners and the

business community time and money in evaluating the impacts of a new groundwater pumping well on nearby streams and the water table," said Joe Dorava, GFLOW Coordinator for the Rock River Coalition. "It is a valuable tool that can be used to make sure there aren't unintended consequences from pumping groundwater to the local area."

When local information is added and the model refined, it can be used to evaluate questions such as: How would a new large-quantity groundwater withdrawal, such as a well used for public drinking water, irrigation, ethanol production or factory cooling, affect the existing water table? Would a new withdrawal interfere with existing wells? How much would groundwater discharge to nearby springs or wetlands be reduced? Would it reduce flow or water levels in a stream, lake, spring or wetland? What is the contributing area that supplies water to this well?

The Rock River Basin GFLOW model, or a locally refined version, can help answer groundwater questions prior to implementing decisions that may be costly, controversial or involve alterations to the landscape and water resources (both surface water and groundwater) that would be difficult to undo.



The complete USGS report is available online at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2009/5094/>.

The GFLOW release meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28, 2009 from 6:00-7:30 pm and is only open to those municipalities (and their consultants), lake groups, non-profits, consultants and individuals who helped fund the GFLOW Model. A meeting for the general public was held in March 2009.

Land Trusts A Tool for Clean Water

By Scott Taylor: Taylor Conservation LLC & Rock River Coalition Board Member

Land trusts are private, non-profit organizations that protect land by purchasing, or accepting donations of, development rights and placing restrictions on land management. A conservation easement is the legal agreement through which a land trust takes ownership of development rights and spells out acceptable land management practices for a property. Although well-planned urban growth and agriculture are cornerstones of the Rock River Basin's future prosperity, reasonable limitations on new development, farming and forestry are keys to maintaining the integrity of our waters and our ecosystems.

According to Gathering Waters, a Madison-based non-profit that assists land trusts, there are more than 50 land trusts in Wisconsin. And with over 200,000 acres under easement or owned in Wisconsin (for comparison, that's more than 50% of Jefferson County), they are becoming big players in land protection. Based on a web survey, there are at least 7 land trusts active in the Rock River Basin. While we know land trusts can protect critical pieces of land, can they be important partners in improving water quality of the Rock River and its tributaries?



This NRCS file photo shows the value of conservation easements that protect water draining agricultural landscapes and the shorelines while providing habitat for many species.

To learn about the relationship between land trusts and water quality protection in our basin, I spoke with members of Drumlin Area Land Trust (DALT) and Tall Pines Conservancy (TPC). DALT is focused on Jefferson and Dodge Counties, while TPC concentrates on northwestern Waukesha County.

Peter Jacob, a DALT board member and UW-Whitewater professor of geography, indicated that while his organization emphasizes farmland protection, their easements require water quality protection measures, like agricultural "best management practices" and conservation plans, to curb soil erosion and slow nutrient runoff. To date, DALT holds 9 conservation easements – most of them for farmland.

TPC began as a group focused on Pine Lake, near Hartland, according to Executive Director, Susan Buchanan. To this day, 5 of the 12 easements TPC holds surround Pine Lake. Other TPC easements bind lands draining into nearby North Lake. Like DALT, TPC emphasizes farmland protection; however its mission statement also highlights

water resources. Buchanan stated the TPC board is keenly aware of the link between watershed land use and lake conditions. That's why the recent donation of an easement on 325 acres embracing the Little Oconomowoc river, which empties into North Lake, was an exciting development. The property included upland forests and parts of the Murphy Lake-McConville Lake wetland complex – an ecosystem of regional importance. TPC plans to continue targeting lands that impact water quality of their beloved lakes.

Land trusts have the motivation and means to protect water quality on the lands they control. But can they acquire easements on enough land in a typical sub-watershed of 20 to 30 square miles to make a difference for water quality?

Perhaps not. However, according to Elan Lipschitz of Little Forks Conservancy (LFC) of Midland, Michigan, land trusts can fill

a key niche in watershed remediation. LFC protects quality aquatic areas – coldwater streams, un-degraded wetlands, mature riparian forests – using conservation easements, while local conservation districts and Trout Unlimited chapters fix watershed impairments – e.g. collapsing stream banks, eroding cropland and neglected barnyards.

To protect waters in the Rock River Basin, land trusts may do well to target properties with streams in the smallest of sub-watersheds – the headwaters. In some cases, headwater streams are relatively un-degraded and fed by springs. In addition, they are more closely influenced by riparian land use than main-stem rivers, which reflect conditions over large regions.

Land trusts can apply their land protection tools to safeguarding sensitive waters, in addition to protecting farmland and open space. The many groups and agencies working for water quality in the Rock River Basin would surely welcome their contributions. Learn more about land trusts at: <http://www.gatheringwaters.org>.

Become a RRC Member

In addition to supporting RRC work, members receive newsletters, notices of conferences, and special events. To become a member, complete the following:

Name _____
 Title _____
 Affiliation _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____ Phone (____) _____
 E-mail _____
 I am a member of _____ Chapter.

Memberships		
Individual	\$ 25	_____
Family	\$ 35	_____
Student/Senior Citizen	\$ 15	_____
Classroom	\$ 25	_____
Affiliates*	\$ 50	_____
Corporate	\$ 200	_____

*Includes small businesses, organizations, lake districts, and municipal departments

Any donation of \$100 or more will be recognized and linked to your website from our website: www.rockrivercoalition.org

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

Tax deductible donation	
Amount	Purpose
	General Support
	Citizen Monitoring
	Rain Gardens
	Other:

Donations are greatly appreciated and can be targeted towards specific projects.

Please mail this completed form with check to:

Rock River Coalition

823 Lucas Lane

Jefferson, WI 53549 -1182

or register and pay online with PayPal at:

www.rockrivercoalition.org/membership.asp

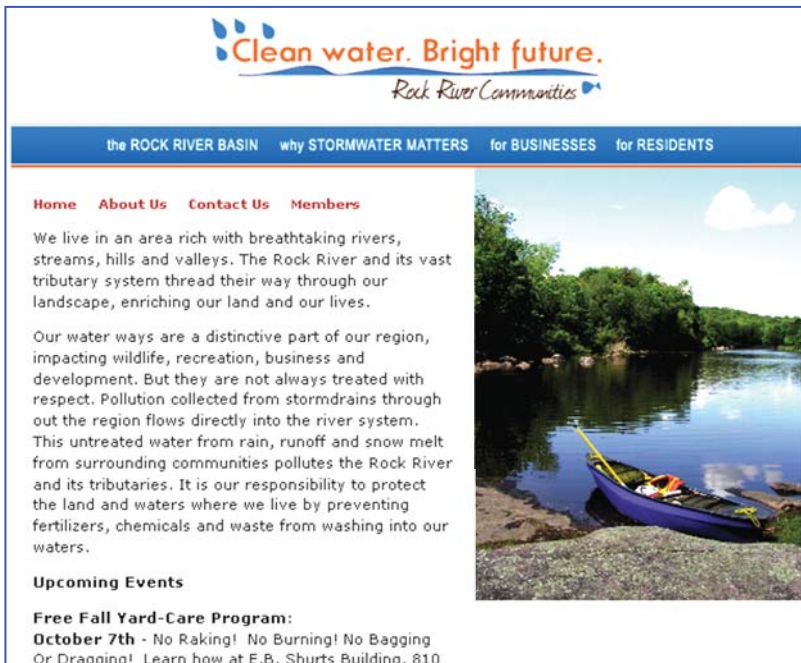


New Rock River Stormwater Group Website

Learn how you can help improve water quality in your community at the new website for Rock River Basin Stormwater issues, www.cleanwaterbrightfuture.org. Visit the website for stormwater information and upcoming events.

As part of our efforts to reduce stormwater pollution in the Rock River Basin, the *Clean water. Bright future.* campaign launched a new website in August: www.cleanwaterbrightfuture.org. This website includes:

- basic information on stormwater pollution and its harmful effects on our community's rivers, streams and lakes.
- a description of the Rock River Stormwater Group and how to join the group.
- links for business owners who wish to make changes in their companies.
- simple actions that homeowners can take in their yards, homes and communities to make a big difference for the Rock River Basin.



2007 SYLDR flotilla
Photo by Ed Grunden

Planning for the 2010 Send Your Legislator Down the River

Every June, the Rock River Coalition hosts the Send Your Legislator Down the River event that involves a town hall meeting with elected officials, a picnic dinner and paddling on a stream or river located in the watershed. We choose a different location to hold the event each year. That way, we experience a new waterway and meet a variety of elected officials.

If you have a favorite stretch of river in the Rock River Basin that you want to nominate for our 2010 paddle, please let us know! We typically paddle between 3 and 6 miles for the event, and prefer to have boat landings at both ends. A shelter building with restrooms is desirable for the meeting and picnic. Please contact Patricia Cicero (patriciac@co.jefferson.wi.us or 920-674-7121) with your suggestions. Also, contact Patricia if you would like to volunteer to help us with the event.

Calendar of Events

- Oct. 28, GFLOW Model Meeting for Funders, 6:00-7:30.
- Nov. 4, FBCW - Invasive Species Informational Program 7:00-9:00pm at the Stoughton Senior Center Annex.
- Nov. 10, Rock River Stormwater Group, 9:00 - Noon, UWEX Jefferson County. Important meeting for all partners - developing the 2010 work plan.
- Nov 11, TCRCD Water Team Meeting, 3:00-5:00pm UW-Madison.
- Nov. 16, RRC Board Meeting, 4:30-6:30 UWEX Jef. Cty.
- Dec. 8, RRSB Meeting, time and location TBD.



RRC President Lisa Conley presents State Senator Mark Miller with the Rock River Basin Legislator of the Year award for his continued support of initiatives that benefit our water resources including lawn phosphorus restrictions and Great Lakes Compact.

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RRC Membership Form	Pg 7

Newsletter Deadline

Deadline for the winter newsletter is January 8, 2010. To submit, e-mail suzanne.wade@ces.uwex.edu.

A letter-sized, full color version of this newsletter is available at www.rockrivercoalition.org.

For more information about these and other area events, meetings, workshops or conferences go to <http://www.rockrivercoalition.org/events/calendar.asp>