



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

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Environmental Forums Scheduled for the Spring

A new series of monthly educational programs about the Rock River Basin kicks off April 14 highlighting research and special projects under way to reduce polluted runoff.

The forums, sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Extension and the Rock River Coalition, are open to anyone.

April 14 Forum
Working with farmers to reduce runoff.

They are being organized to help the large group of stakeholders working on the Rock River Recovery Plan to become familiar with projects aimed at reducing polluted runoff, says Suzanne Wade, UW-Extension Rock River Basin educator.

"People want clean water and healthy waterways, but often we don't know how to get there," she says.

"The speakers have developed thoughtful ideas on how to engage farmers, city folks and agencies to make our Rock River better than it has been in generations, thus showing us how we can improve water quality for ourselves and our children."

Jim Congdon, DNR Upper Rock River Basin supervisor, says the series of educational forums is intended to start the discussion "about how we, as members of the Rock River Basin community, can work together to restore water quality in the basin."

The three forums will be held at the UW-Extension Jefferson County office at 864 Collins Road in Jefferson.

Each will begin at 8 a.m. with registration and presentations running from 8:30-11:15 a.m., followed by a facilitated discussion during which forum participants will discuss how the basin community can use the information to move toward cleaner, healthier lakes, streams and rivers in the Rock River Basin.

In addition to the April 14 session, forums will be held May 19 targeting water quality improvements and June 9 with a focus on how climate changes could impact basin residents.

For more about the Rock River Recovery Educational Forums or to view a fact sheet on the recovery effort, visit www.rockrivercoalition.org.



Not all streams in the Rock River Basin run as clear and cool as the stream shown here. The forums are one way to explore methods for a cleaner, healthier Rock River, its lakes and tributaries. Photo by Suzanne Wade

April 14 forum topic: Working with farmers to reduce runoff

Two highlighted projects look at how a better understanding and engagement of farmers could result in better water quality. The first will be on understanding farmer perceptions and management choices for reducing runoff, presented by Dr. Ken Genskow, director of the UW-Extension Basin Education Program and assistant professor of Urban and Regional Planning at UW-Madison.

UW graduate students Noelle Harden and Loka Ashwood will talk about their work to engage local watershed residents in controlling runoff pollution. Tom Bernthal, DNR wetland ecologist, will talk about how a study of potential wetland restoration sites could help focus limited funding and staff resources on the best sites for improving water quality and for flood control.

The Rock River and many of its tributaries have water quality impairments caused by excess amounts of phosphorus and too much soil, which washes off farm fields, city streets and construction sites.

The DNR is working with citizens, city stormwater and wastewater utility staff, consultants, farmers and members of other groups to develop a plan on how to achieve better river health by reducing these two pollutants.

The target for reducing the amount of sediment and phosphorus entering the river is derived from a recent report: *Total Maximum Daily Loads for Total Phosphorus and Total Suspended Solids in the Rock River Basin*.

For more information about the Rock River Recovery Educational Forums or to view a fact sheet on the recovery effort, visit www.rockrivercoalition.org.

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More information about the May and June forums, go to page 3

Rock River Coalition President's Message

The songs of blackbirds and robins signal the start of my spring season as a field ecologist. Time to swap snowshoes for rubber boots, and be pleasantly reminded of all the life that has been dormant beneath the snow and ice.

Spring is a time of anticipation for the Rock River Coalition as well as for nature. By April, our working board is immersed in planning for our two biggest events: the Annual Membership Meeting – to be held May 10th at Carp's Landing, Lake Mills – and Send Your Legislator Down the River (SYLDR).

However, events at the capitol have compelled us to postpone SYLDR until fall. Given the recent acrimony among legislators over Governor Walker's budget bill, we just don't think we can pull off an event based on bipartisan collegiality. We have held SYLDR for nine consecutive years. Numerous Republican and Democratic lawmakers have come to hear their constituents and share their views on protecting the Rock River and its tributaries. In just the past two years, Senator Scott Fitzgerald & Representative Jeff Fitzgerald attended our 2009 Horicon excursion, and Senator Mark Miller joined us in the Cherokee Marsh in 2010.

I sincerely expect we will celebrate our 10th Send Your Legislator Event this fall.

Note: The RRC President's message represents views of the president and have been approved by the board of directors. This does not necessarily represent the views of the other partners of this newsletter.

The Coalition has traditionally focused on the substance of improving water quality more than the politics. Our on-the-ground efforts, like rain gardens, volunteer monitoring, and watershed forums, attract involvement from a wide range of Basin residents. Not as attention-grabbing as land-use conflicts around cities or policy debates in the Statehouse, our work quietly builds environmental citizenship – a necessary ingredient to sound, enduring environmental policy.

Such statewide policy was formed at least three times in the last 10 years. In 2002, rules for polluted runoff were enacted following work by the multi-stakeholder Clean Water Coalition; in 2010, the state shoreland zoning rules were revised after robust input from builders, Realtors and environmentalists; also in 2010, new phosphorus standards were reached for farmland after review by farmers and clean water advocates.

Few considered these policies perfect, but no one can deny that science and reason were at the table when they were made. This cannot be said for a recent proposal contained in Governor Walker's budget to roll back the new phosphorus limits. It stretches credibility to argue this roll-back is needed to create jobs or balance budgets. If Governor Walker and his allies succeed, they

will have done more than harm the River, they will have shredded the reasoned, cooperative approach to environmental policy that has distinguished Wisconsin for decades.

What's more, most assumed that at least some new, targeted runoff controls would be necessary to meet the phosphorus loading reductions outlined in the recently-released TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Loads) report – an analysis of pollution to the Rock River required by the EPA to comply with the Clean Water Act. How will we meet these reductions if we can't even count on already existing rules?

Now, as spring takes hold, it is more important than ever to get out and enjoy our waters. Go paddle streams and wade through wetlands. Know that our waters' state of protection is the fruit of environmental citizenship and democracy. Perhaps you will be reminded why we sit at the table with opposing views and forge solutions.

Sincerely,

Scott Taylor

President

Rock River Coalition, Inc.



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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Next deadline is July 5, 2011. A letter-sized color version of this newsletter is available at www.rockrivercoalition.org.

Photo credits: Patricia Cicero, Rebecca Dill, Graham-Martin Foundation, Marcia Hartwig, Linda Reid, Jeffrey Strobel, and Suzanne Wade.

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

TTY: 711 for Wisconsin Relay

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

RRC Annual Meeting & Awards Ceremony 5 - 8 p.m. May 10, 2011 Carp's Landing, 103 S. Main St., Lake Mills



5:00 Meet and Greet

5:30 Annual Meeting and Election of Board Members

If you are interested in being nominated for the Board of Directors, please contact President Scott Taylor at sotaylor@taylorconservation.com. Board openings include one two-year term and one three-year term.

6:00 Pasta Buffet Chicken Florentine, Hearty Spaghetti with meat sauce and Broccoli and Portabella Alfredo. \$16.00. Price includes non-alcoholic beverages, tax and tip.

6:30 Announce 2010 Officers

6:45 Awards Presentation of Protector and Friend Awards.

7:15 - 8:00 Rock River Trail Initiative (RRTI) Presentation: Frank Schier, RRTI founder and editor and publisher Rock River Times, Rockford. 28 years ago Frank began paddling from the headwaters of the Rock to its confluence with the Mississippi. This began another journey leading him to propose a new national scenic, recreational, and historic trail along the Rock River's 285 miles, with the goal of improve the Rock River ecosystem, promote eco-tourism, and market recreational opportunities along the river corridor's 11 counties in Wisconsin and Illinois.

All RRC members are encouraged to attend, enjoy and meet with others involved in RRC activities and thank our award winners. Winners of the Rock River Basin Protector Awards receive a hand-painted turkey feather by Marsha Vomastic on a brass plate, and winners of the Rock River Coalition Friends Awards receive a framed photo by Jeffrey Strobel such as the Black Crowned Night Heron pictured above.

The public is also welcome to attend! The event is free; however, meals are the responsibility of the participant.

Please RSVP to Jennifer Hanneman by May 6 at info@rockrivercoalition.org or 920-674-9380. Hope to see you there!

State Funds Rock River Flood Recovery Strategy

Jefferson County is to be the recipient of \$1.4 million in Community Development Block Grant – Emergency Assistance Program (CDBG-EAP), according to an announcement from Governor Walker on March 22, 2011. \$700,000 of the County's award will be directed toward the preparation of a flood recovery economic strategy for the Upper Rock River watershed.

The proposal to prepare the Flood Recovery Economic Strategy for the Rock River Watershed, led by Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium (JCEDC), was developed in the context of significant challenges facing the watershed:

- Southern Wisconsin is projected to have more frequent rain and flood events. These events cause businesses to cease or modify operations, create loss time, and clearly hamper the region's economic competitiveness.
- Future flood events are likely to result in road and bridge / interstate highway closures, including lost time and transportation barriers that will hamper commerce within the watershed and the State as a whole.
- Low-lying agricultural lands are prone to flooding; destroying crops and creating environmental problems downstream, disrupting the agricultural economy that drives the region.
- Communities throughout the region face the challenge of recovery and stabilization.

This funding will start the process to develop, test, and begin to implement

an economic strategy for Upper Rock River agribusinesses and communities in flood-prone areas. This project sets out to connect and leverage several key regional economic development and innovation assets to grow the emerging bioeconomy while developing solutions to recover from flood impacts - a significant regional economic and environmental challenge.

The Rock River watershed has the research facilities and intellectual capacity, processing and manufacturing horsepower, and landscape to address the challenge and to create a new economic model that embraces a watershed scale approach:

- Reduce flood, environmental, and economic impacts on farms and in downstream communities and businesses and improves water quality and health of the entire ecosystem.
- Business and bioeconomy supply chain partner development - from innovation to production - from seed production to specialized harvesting equipment, to manufacturing and installation of on-farm energy generation systems.
- Link the advancement of several of the region's existing and emerging economic clusters to help protect communities, businesses, and agricultural operations; diversify the economy and increase the range of skilled, high-wage jobs.
- Move region toward significantly greater energy independence.

Led by JCEDC, a broad network

of partners will include Rock River Coalition, Vandewalle & Associates, UW Madison, and the nationally-regarded Great Lakes BioEnergy Research Center. Various other strategic partners include the City of Madison, BioAg Gateway, Valero Renewables, and the future Jefferson Renewable Energy Park will be engaged in this effort.

Dennis Heling, executive director for the Jefferson County Economic Development Consortium stated that, "Jefferson County and the Rock River region's economy have been substantially impacted by several recent major flooding events. We need to set an immediate and long-range strategy and develop a new economic model and acquire the tools that can help reduce future impacts to our regions businesses and communities. I think this can be a national model on ways to reduce flood impacts, grow new businesses, improve water quality and help our farmers compete. We see this as a potential win, win, win."

This award significantly advances this project; however, additional funding is sought to advance and fund the project in its entirety. This groundbreaking project will serve as a prototype for regional approaches to watershed-scale responses with the intent of minimizing the economic and physical impacts associated with catastrophic flood events.

The other half of the state-allocated funding will be used for business relocation assistance for the acquisition and relocation of River's Edge Market, a meat market and catering service.

Environmental Forum continued from page 1

May 19: Targeting Water Quality Improvements

Yahara CLEAN and the Yahara Lakes Legacy Partnership by Sue Josheff, WDNR

The challenges of mitigating impacts of development on water resources by Steve Gaffield, Montgomery Associates: Resource Solutions

A land trust's journey using the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative to target improvements in the Lake Delavan Watershed by Maggie Zoellner, Kettle Moraine Land Trust

June 9: Whether Weather Changes will Impact the Rock.

Understanding the effect of changing weather systems and how to protect our cities and farms from these impacts by Tim Asplund, WDNR

All sessions at UWEX Jefferson County 864 Collins Rd, Jefferson County 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. registration, 8:30 - 11:15 a.m. Presentations followed by discussion on use in the Rock River Recovery Plan.

More information about the forum at rockrivercoalition.org.

New RRC "Loose Groups"

RRC would like to invite all to experience the Rock and its wonderful secret places.

Loose Canoe Group

Bring your own canoe, or rent one locally; these Friday afternoon excursions are free and very loosely organized. Dates: July 22, Aug. 26.

Loose Retirees Group

No powerpoints, no agendas, no minutes, just a loose gathering of retirees or others with a free half-day. Starting at a local coffee shop at 9:00 with a free-flowing discussion of local basin events, followed by a hike, bird-watching, boating or other fun activity. We'll plan the first couple, then it's up to those who come to decide future locations and activities. Held on 2nd Mondays: June 13, July 11, Aug. 8.

More information will be posted on our Facebook page and included in the Rock River Basin monthly updates or contact Suzanne Wade at suzanne.wade@ces.uwex.edu.

A River Gathering: There's No Place Like Home - June 16-19, 2011, Rockford IL

Experience the amazing high quality and culturally significant rivers in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The event is chock full of field trips including a night bass fishing experience, many of which are family friendly. Don't miss this opportunity to canoe, hike, bird-watch, explore and enjoy this amazing area.

Event registration is only \$25 and is required to register for field trips. Deadline for registration is May 27. Friday evening events are free and open to the public: Speaker, Kathleen Dean Moore, professor of Philosophy and University Writer Laureate at Oregon State University 6:00 - 6:30. With an opening reception and art exhibit of local artists river-related works, 6:30 Keynote and 7:30 Performance by Starlite Radio. Some highlights include: Saturday featured presentation: Rivers of America by Tim Palmer, photographer and author. Saturday evening Pride of Oregon paddle wheel riverboat dinner cruise with live music by Carter and Connelley afterwards. Cost \$50.

Don't miss out on this amazing conference: Registration packet with full list of presentations and field trips at: <http://www.fourriver.org/assets/pdf/rgrregistration.pdf>. Questions email tdawson@boonecountyconservationdistrict.org.

Rock River Trail Conference April 28, 2011

The main goal of the Rock River Trail Initiative, whose parent organization is the 501 (c)(3) Friends of the Rock, is to found a National Scenic, Recreational and Historic Trail along the 285 miles of the Rock River, from its source above the Horicon Marsh in Wisconsin to its mouth at the Quad Cities in Illinois. Eco-tourism and the resulting economic development and jobs will reinforce the goals of protecting and improving water quality and the general river environment.

Citizens, tourism-oriented businesses, elected officials and naturalists of your area are invited to "Meet the Neighbors, Re-Discovering the Rock River: an exploration, inventory, assessment and declaration of the Rock River Trail" April 28 at the Clock Tower Resort and Conference Center in Rockford, Illinois. Yes, the Rock River Trail is being built, and many will be surprised how much of it already exists! Please join your river neighbors for a discussion of marketing and improving our environment! For more information, and to learn about our "10,000 Free Oak Trees" program, go to www.rockrivertrail.com, or call Frank Schier at 815-964-9767.

Rain Gardens

By Steve Fix, Graham-Martin Foundation

Rain gardens are an easy way to create an attractive natural landscape feature that both adds a more natural aesthetic look to your yard while helping to protect surface water and replenish local groundwater.

Rain gardens protect surface waters by reducing runoff to nearby streams and lakes. Rain gardens allow runoff from roofs or driveways to soak into the ground, replenishing groundwater needed to support local stream baseflow.

A rain garden is a shallow depression between four to eight inches deep with gradual sloped sides that can be built in your yard. A rain garden's size is typically about one third the size of the impervious area draining to it. Actual sizing and depth of the rain garden depends on soil type and distance from source and slope. In reality a rain garden can be 50% smaller than the optimum design and still control 80% of the runoff.



Rain Garden photo by Graham-Martin Foundation

The native plants used in rain gardens grow long roots that promote water infiltration into the ground.

Well-designed and maintained rain gardens do not form



Dane County and Waukesha County are two locations in the basin where the Graham-Martin Foundation is active. The Dane County workshop was held on April 9, for more information on Plant Dane! Cost-Share Program, go to myfairlakes.com. For Waukesha County cost share program, do a web search for Waukesha County Rain Gardens.

Photo by Marcia Hartwig

ponds. The water collected in them will soak in within a few hours after a rain event.

They are not a breeding ground for mosquitoes either as that pesky critter needs 7 to 12 days to lay and hatch eggs.

Rain gardens, like all gardens, require maintenance, but maintenance time often decreases as the plants become established.

The UW-Extension's booklet "Rain Gardens: A How-To Manual for Homeowners" provides excellent information on how to build a rain garden for the do-it-yourselfer.

If your watershed association, lake association or lake district would like to start a rain garden program or expand its existing program, the Graham-Martin Foundation can help by making plants available to your organization at about half the cost of retail plants.

Check out the Graham-Martin Foundation website for more information at <http://www.grahammartin.org/index.html>, or contact Steve Fix at steve.fix@grahammartin.org.

Aquatic Plant and Algae Seminar Set for April 16

The Rock Lake Improvement Association, with assistance from the Joint Rock Lake Committee, and the Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD), invites all area residents who have an interest in aquatic plants and algae to a free seminar on Saturday, April 16, 2011, in the Community Room of the Municipal Building in Lake Mills. The agenda includes scientists from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) who will speak about how lakes work, types and benefits of algae and aquatic plants, and laws governing aquatic plant management including control of invasive species. The DNR will present results of their research and survey projects conducted on Rock Lake, which will be of special interest to lakeshore property owners and area lake users. However, the majority of the information on algae, plants, and laws is applicable to all the lakes in the Rock River Basin.

Agenda: A question and answer period will follow each presentation.

- 8:30 Doors Open (coffee and breakfast items available)
- 9:00 Welcome
- 9:05 How Our Lake Works – Patricia Cicero, LWCD
- 10:00 Algae – Gina LaLiberte, DNR
- 10:30 Break (drinks and snack items available)
- 10:45 Aquatic Plants – Michelle Nault & Paul Garrison, DNR
- 11:45 Rock Lake Designations – Susan Graham, DNR
- 12:05 Aquatic Plant Management and Laws – Susan Graham, DNR
- 12:45 Take Home Messages – Susan Graham, DNR
- 1:00 Thank You & Adjourn



Although there is no charge for the seminar, for seating, food and handout planning purposes, please RSVP by April 13 via e-mail to the RLIA address, mail@rocklake.org, or to P.O. Box 255, Lake Mills, WI 53551, with the number of people planning to attend. The Lake Mills Municipal Building is located at 200 Water Street in Lake Mills.



Plant sampling on Rock Lake in 2002. Learn the results of previous surveys at the April 16 workshop in Lake Mills.

Photo by Patricia Cicero

Help Protect Your Local Waters from Invasive Species!

Project RED Training Offered May 14

The River Alliance of Wisconsin manages Project RED (riverine early detectors), a monitoring program that trains citizens to identify and report invasive species within river corridors statewide. They will be offering a free training in Dane County on Saturday, May 14. Location TBD.

To register contact Laura MacFarland at 608-257-2424, ext 110 or at lueders@wisconsinrivers.org. To learn more about riverine invasive species in our river corridors and how you can help in the fight against invasives, visit the River Alliance's website: <http://wisconsinrivers.org>.

Invasive Species: An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure

Tuesday April 26, 2011, 7:00 p.m. in the Mukwonago Village Hall Community Room, 440 River Crest Court. Presented by Audrey Greene, Walworth County Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator will provide information about invasive species and ways to help protect your favorite place. The class is free, but pre-registration is appreciated by calling Waukesha County at 262-896-8305 or e-mail jjens@waukeshacounty.gov.

Rock River Stormwater Group 2010 Accomplishments

Throughout the course of 2010, the Rock River Stormwater Group, composed of nine municipalities, the DNR, RRC, UWEX and others, made some great advances toward reaching our goals. Here is an overview of the 2010 Rock River Stormwater Group goals and achievements.

Goal 1: Homeowners will know their municipality's leaf collection policy and follow that policy. They will also not put grass clippings into the street.

1. Seasonal media blitz customized for each municipality, media outreach activities included:
 - Newspaper articles and press releases
 - Church bulletin announcements with ads
2. Developed new webpage with specific leaf removal procedures for each municipality.
3. Targeted street sign project: Two areas in Fort Atkinson were selected for posting of leaf collection procedure signs. Compared to the street without signs, we saw a 26% increase in compliance with leaf removal rules.

Goal 2: Erosion control laws will be followed in all construction.

1. An erosion control packet was created for use by city departments who process building permits. This packet can be customized with appropriate information for each individual project including fact sheets, erosion control guides, contact information and copies of permits.
2. Two new erosion control fact sheets were created.

Goal 3: Residents and business owners will recognize and report illicit discharges.

1. New illicit discharge page on website: www.cleanwaterbrightfuture.org.
2. Restaurant outreach project: RRSG sent a cover letter and laminated poster to more than 180 locally-owned restaurants on best practices for water quality protection.
3. Concrete companies outreach: packets of information were either delivered by a RRSG member or mailed to 12 concrete suppliers in the basin. This included a letter for the facility manager, brochures for drivers and magnets to be placed on trucks, pictured here.



Goal 4: Municipal staff will have an understanding of construction site BMPs and common stormwater problems.

1. Two workshops were held with 59 municipal staff participating, focused on identifying illicit discharges and explaining the best management practices used in municipal operations. Presentations were given by a local environmental engineer and WDNR staff. The RRSG created a pocket guide of the best management practices for municipal offices or vehicles.
2. Hosted a meeting of RRSG for elected officials and administrators to discuss the work of the RRSG, the requirements for municipalities, upcoming changes in rules and policies and Water Star Program. Attended by 25 elected officials and staff and 11 guests.

Goal 5: Establish public participation activities in all MS4 communities & Goal 6: Provide information on stormwater issues

1. Website kept current with events, new programs and monitoring opportunities.
2. Quarterly *Rock River Reflections* articles with issues distributed by municipalities to elected officials and citizens.

3. Municipalities maintain RRSG stormwater materials in public locations.
4. Collaborative work with University of Wisconsin-Whitewater: RRSG Education Coordinator taught two classes on stormwater, the RRSG and actions students can take. For "Make a Difference Day" the RRSG worked with UWW and City of Whitewater to build a rain garden; outreach included press releases and articles in local papers. Five teams of students participated in painting area storm drains.
5. Promote stormdrain stenciling by hosting sets of equipment in three locations in basin.

Goal 7: Maintain website with information for residents and professionals

1. Professionals page expanded to include fact sheets and other materials created by RRSG educational coordinator.
2. External resources added to website for more detailed information.

Goal 8: Provide workshops, presentations and other training opportunities (also see Goal 4)

1. Sustainable backyard workshop held in spring 2010 with guest speaker from Healthy Communities Project.
2. Rain garden workshop held during the summer of 2010 with requests for future sessions.



Rain Garden photo by Graham-Martin Foundation

For more information about the Rock River Stormwater Group go to <http://www.cleanwaterbrightfuture.org>.

New for Rock River Stormwater Group in 2011

In addition to continuing 2010 actions, the RRSG new actions include:

Goal 1

Focus on grass clippings: "Chop it Up, Leave it Lie" campaign.

Goal 3

Industrial carpet cleaners and other businesses will receive DNR/UW-Extension small business evaluation tool to help reduce runoff pollution into stormdrains.

Restaurant Outreach Project will be evaluated.

Goal 4

Municipalities will hold internal, field-based training sessions for staff who are frequently driving around the municipality to recognize problems and know whom to contact.

Goals 5 & 6

Explore video competition in collaboration with other groups.

Conduct feasibility study for rain barrel and rain garden plant subsidy programs.

Develop customizable "courtesy ticket". When municipal staff see a resident or business not following stormwater or other municipal rules, a courtesy ticket will be given explaining the rule and why it is important to follow. Records will be kept, and formal citations can be given if proper practice isn't followed.

Stickers developed for municipal and commercial lawn maintenance companies that direct them to keep clippings on lawns and not in streets.

RRSG Assists with UW-W Event

An example of a RRSG assisted event was the Whitewater "Make a Difference Day" and UW-Whitewater Freshmen for Freshwater rain garden project, Spring 2010. Before (left), during construction (middle) and after (right).

Photos by Rebecca Dill and Linda Reid



Algae Could Serve Multiple Purposes in Region

By Town and Country RC&D's Sustainable Issue Team

Anyone paying attention to breakthroughs in alternative energy may be getting used to seeing the word algae. These organisms are attracting attention from researchers for their potential as a biomass crop in the making of liquid transportation fuels. The Sustainable Issues Team of Town and Country RC&D is intrigued by this potential, too, as well as algae's extensive water treatment capacity. Under the project leadership of Jun Yoshitani of the biotech firm, AlgaXperts, the Sustainable Issue Team, led by Greg David, is attempting to bring this cutting edge research to southeastern Wisconsin.

The U.S. Department of Energy recently awarded \$88 million in research and development (R&D) funding to develop technologies for producing biofuel from algae, and a sizable R&D/supply contract was awarded to Solazyme to deliver algae-derived jet fuel. In 2009, Exxon-Mobil announced a \$600 million program to develop their own technology to produce algal biofuel, and other companies such as Chevron, Dow and hundreds of start-up companies worldwide are engaged in the race to develop algal biofuel production technologies. Cumulatively, these efforts represent billions in investment, and are intended to yield huge quantities of biofuels.

While these large undertakings are necessary, Yoshitani believes that algae also represent an opportunity wherein small municipalities and private entities can self-produce liquid fuels in limited amount to supplement

purchased fuels or displace such operating expenses. Ideally, if conditions and inputs required for algae cultivation -- water, nutrients, CO2 and light -- are available, algal biofuel production may be sufficient to be a source of revenue.

AlgaXperts and the Sustainable Issue Team of Town and Country RC&D believe the technology to enable local algal biomass-to-biofuel production exists today. However, this know-how to date has been demonstrated at laboratory or small pilot scale only. Therefore, what is needed is a demonstration project of sufficient scale to prove the feasibility of the concept. Wastewater treatment plants are believed to be one of several ideal settings to demonstrate the feasibility of algal biomass production for biofuel.

Algae may be utilized to provide another equally valuable and compelling benefit for the Rock River Basin; that is, to remove nitrogen and phosphorus from wastewater. According to the 2000 report "Prediction of Phosphorus Loads in the Rock River Basin, Wisconsin", the annual phosphorus loading to Rock River in the Basin is approximately 1.68 million pounds, of which point sources accounted for 41%, and non-point sources, 59%. If 20% of P loading could be removed and used for growing algae to yield oil, approximately 2.0 million gallons of biodiesel could be hypothetically produced from the algae oil. The monetary value of removing nutrients

represented by "cost avoidance" would be considerable and likely to far exceed the biofuel value.

The vision of a Town and Country RC&D Sustainable Issues Team project, "Formation of the Rock River Basin Algae Initiative Coalition," is to gather together the partnerships and capacity needed to grow algae using waste streams to provide nutrient removal treatment, and to generate value-added algal products including bioenergy and bionutrients from harvested algal biomass.

While large-scale algae will require many years of work and millions in investment, the bioenergy value of algae can be exploited in the near term using existing technologies such as anaerobic digestion and gasification. The practical "low-hanging fruit" approach to utilizing algae for wastewater treatment as the primary goal, and then producing useful algal biomass as the secondary goal, is considered by many in the algal biofuel field to be the most pragmatic and achievable route to commercializing the algal biofuel industry. Communities that initiate algae projects are likely to benefit most from the emerging algae technology industry as they gain experience in cultivating algae as a "new crop."

Community partners are being sought to move this project forward. If you are interested in learning more about this work, or any work of Town and Country RC&D's Sustainable Issues Team, contact us at 920-541-3208 or beth.gehred@tacrcd.com.



Town and Country RC&D Events
URBAN(wood) ENCOUNTER

Town & Country RCD is pleased to present this environmentally-conscious furniture design exhibition at Design Within Reach Milwaukee Studio, 167 N. Broadway in the Third Ward. April 15-16, 2011. Friday, 5-9 Saturday, 10-5. Sponsored by Horigan Urban Forest Products.

Ever wonder what happens to trees removed in your community? We challenged furniture makers and designers to create inspiring furniture from an under-utilized natural resource – Urban Wood. Questions? Contact Dwayne Sperber, 262-442-4654 urbanlumber@wi.rr.com

Terrestrial Invasive Species Workshop

Join Us! Monday, May 9, 2011, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Tall Grass Restorations, 3129 County Road N, Milton WI 53563

Volunteers participating in terrestrial invasive plant management activities throughout southeast Wisconsin are invited to learn from experts, and each other, at a half-day workshop to be held at Tallgrass Restoration in Rock County, WI.

Sessions will include:

- Plant identification and ecology - Kelly Kearns, WDNR
- Species-specific control methods - Mark Renz, UW-Madison
- Volunteer recruitment and retention - Joleen Stinson, Rock County Parks
- Successes and failures of local groups - facilitated discussion

Workshop cost: \$3 per person with costs underwritten in part by a grant from the Alliant Energy Foundation. Space for the workshop donated by Tall Grass Restoration. Many thanks!

Prizes will be given and are made possible by friends of Town and Country RC&D.

Nonprofit Groups wishing to set up a table are welcome. Call Beth at the number below to arrange.

For registration or to arrange carpooling, contact Beth Gehred, Town & Country RC&D at beth.gehred@tacrcd.com or 920-541-3208.

Agri-Culinary Tours – How to's and Why not's

May 17, 2011: 4:00 – 8:30 p.m. at the VDB Organic Farm, Delavan, WI

Interested in exploring an Agri-Culinary tour endeavor? Please join us and ask your local business partners, chefs, market managers, Chamber members, aspiring docents and other local ambassadors who could lead tours to join us, too.

Agri-Culinary Tours – How to's and Why not's Presentation Overview

- An introduction to setting up and marketing culinary tours with farms, chefs and tour guides.
- Economic benefits to local businesses, partnerships with inns and restaurants.
- Six criteria to consider when preparing destinations for visitors.
- Checklists for marketing food tours.
- Practice tours, press packages, and the opportunities for rural groups are described and discussed.
- The "experience of delight" standard.

Guest Speaker: Ann Dougherty, Learn Great Foods (LGF). Ann Dougherty, P.E., is owner/founder of Learn Great Foods (LGF), a food knowledge company, offering culinary farm tours, booklets about specialty foods and consulting to rural communities on culinary tourism. Based in Mt Carroll, IL, LGF offers: agricultural tours combined with cooking classes, using foods grown by specialty growers visited in five Midwest states; custom tours (which include cooking classes) for corporate events and culinary schools; and custom specialty booklets for food and farming/food businesses to enhance their image to their customers.

For more information about LGFs visit their web page <http://www.learngreatfoods.com/media.html> to read two articles, one about the company and one about tours.

Come ready to apply concepts and assessments to your hometown and determine your unique placement for culinary tourism!

UW-W Earth Week: The Water-Energy Nexus

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater will be celebrating Earth Week from April 18th through the 21st, 2011 with a series of presentations and on-campus events including guest lectures, film showings, an energy-efficient automobile show, and a green business and organization expo.

Earth Week organizers are inviting interested students, faculty and community members to participate in the celebration.

The theme of this year's event is The Water-Energy Nexus. We have traditionally addressed water and energy as two separate issues. However, water and energy are deeply connected, and sustainable management of either resource requires consideration of the other. People across the country are beginning to take a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the management of water and energy: *The Water-Energy Nexus*.

All events are open to the public, and except for meals, are free of charge. We hope you will join us.

To view a full schedule, go to: <http://www.uww.edu/sustainability/earthday/>.

Rock River Basin Panel featured at UW-W Earth Day Event

As the citizens of Wisconsin become increasingly aware of the State's most precious natural resource, freshwater, a panel of experts will discuss "Rock River Basin Issues" at an upcoming public symposium at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Audience questions will be invited at the event, to be held from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 20, in Room 1312 at Timothy J. Hyland Hall. The symposium is free and open to the public.

The event is sponsored by the College of Business and Economics and the UW-Whitewater Water Council. The panel discussion will be moderated by Edward J. Huck, political consultant and former executive director of the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities. Panelists for the symposium include Paul Kent, an attorney with Stafford Rosenbaum; Suzanne Wade, UWEX Rock River Basin educator and Rock River Coalition board member; George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation; and others to be announced.

Business of Water: A Student's Perspective

by Anthony E. Gierczak III

Water. The motifs of water, particularly its scarcity, availability, and necessity, seem to be extremely common nowadays, and when a third of the world's population lives in an area with water shortages, it's easy to see why. Access to clean freshwater is the most basic need on the planet, and water is used for everything from drinking and sanitation to food production and industrial processes. It comes as no surprise, then, that various groups are starting to emerge with the aim of solving or mitigating these problems, among them being the Milwaukee Water Council (MWC). The goal of the Water Council is to make Milwaukee a water industry and research hub. They are calling on the expertise of every institution in the region. Chief among them is UW-Whitewater, which pioneered the first Student Water Council affiliated with MWC. This is by no means a coincidence, either, as the president of Badger Meter and mastermind behind moving Milwaukee to a water industry hub, Rich Meeusen, was also a graduate from UW-Whitewater.

The Student Water Council is an organization that has been charged with spreading awareness of water issues at local, national, and international levels, along with being a group that cultivates the talent of its students and promotes an atmosphere where ideas and solutions to water problems can flourish. Linda Reid, the adviser for the group, is also encouraging students to participate in research projects focused around water, which will be displayed during Earth Week at the end of April. The group is currently working on campaigns to educate fellow students about water usage, planning a trip to the water treatment facilities in Milwaukee to learn how water is reclaimed and put back into the environment, and is getting involved with organizations that are trying to remedy the problems in the Rock River watershed.

Rock River Coalition Offers Civic Group Speakers from June - December

The Rock River is an incredibly important resource to the people in south-central Wisconsin. However, most area residents don't typically think about it unless it's flooding or the walleyes are spawning. But your group has an opportunity to learn more about how critical the Rock is to our economy, our history and our culture in this new, fast-paced educational program.

Current water quality concerns, water quality goals and the impact of regulations on cities, farmers, citizens and businesses will be explored.

"Our Rock River Yesterday and Today" presentation length is 30 minutes but can be adjusted to meet the needs of your group.

This program is being developed specifically for civic and fraternal groups such as Kiwanis, Optimists, Lions/Lionesses, agricultural business groups and other professional groups. It will be offered only from June through December 2011. The minimum fee for the program is a RRC \$50 affiliate membership.

Other programs available at anytime include: Low Impact Lawn Care, Diggin' into Rain Gardens and Groundwater Issues in the Rock River Basin.

For more information or to schedule a presentation, contact Suzanne Wade at speakers@rockrivercoalition.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 Fees

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 our website for more information.

Tax deductible donation

Amount	Purpose
	General Support
	Citizen Monitoring
	Other:

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

Please mail this completed form with check to:

Rock River Coalition

823 Lucas Lane

Jefferson, WI 53549-1182

or register and pay online with PayPal at:
www.rockrivercoalition.org/membership.asp

Keeping Your Favorite Fishing Spots Clean

by Rebecca Dill, Rock River Stormwater Group



Fishing is a great way to get outside and spend time with friends and family. But those hours spent enjoying the calm of the water are also a great time to spot potential problems with our waterways.

Whether in a boat or on shore, fishing can give people a special point-of-view on stormwater pollution. Spotting stormwater problems can help protect your favorite fishing spot. By looking for a few signs, we can all help keep our waterways clean.

When you are in a boat or canoe, keep an eye out for stormwater discharge pipes. They are usually located along the banks of rivers and streams adjacent to towns, homes and businesses. While most stormwater discharges are legal, occasionally illegal dumping or connections may result in discharging harmful material that can have dire effects on the water and surrounding wildlife.

Rock River Coalition and UWEX Launch New Wetland Monitoring Website: <http://wetlandmonitoring.uwex.edu>

The call of frogs in the spring puts an exclamation mark on the importance of wetlands in Wisconsin. Yet, we often know little about who lives in an individual wetland or how healthy it is.

The Rock River Coalition has just completed an online volunteer wetland monitoring guide to help you consider what you might want to know about a wetland, and to provide guidance on how you can scientifically collect data on the flora and fauna in your wetland.

This series of nine downloadable pdf files is written for volunteer coordinators who want to establish wetland monitoring projects at the site level. These fact sheets can help groups establish monitoring activities that will accomplish one or more of the following three things – 1) allow citizens to learn about and become engaged with local wetlands, 2) characterize the wetland being monitored or 3) contribute to statewide data about wetland species. For the best results, choose monitoring activities that match your goals, resources, volunteer team skill level and wetland type.

This publication introduces monitoring activities in the eight following areas – frogs and toads, invasive plants, dragonflies and damselflies, butterflies, birds, small mammals, macroinvertebrates and water quality. With careful planning, wetland monitoring can provide a gratifying experience and foster a greater appreciation for wetlands.

Here are a few indicators of an illicit discharge:

- Soap bubbles
- Trash build-up
- Sewer or other unpleasant odors
- Water discoloration including rust, oil sheen or gray water.

In addition to illicit discharges, excessive erosion can damage our waterways. Look for signs of erosion, like large wash-out areas and fallen trees. If there is construction going on in your town or neighborhood, make sure a site has silt fencing or hay bales in place to prevent rainwater from eroding the soil and carrying sediment into waterways. Silt fencing should not sag or have missing sections and should be in overall good shape to effectively prevent sediment from entering the stormwater system.

If you see any of these indicators, call your local government or stormwater control agency to report the problem and the location. If we work together as a community and keep our eyes open, we can keep our waters clean.

Read more about the Rock River Stormwater Group's 2010 accomplishments and goals on page 5.



The project was coordinated by the Rock River Coalition and Suzanne Wade, UW-Extension Basin Education Initiative.

It was researched and written by Patrice Kohl with technical assistance from many DNR staff and other professionals.

The project was funded by a DNR Citizen-Based Monitoring Partnership Program Grant with support from University of Wisconsin-Extension.

The website will be hosted by UWEX and the UW Environmental Resources Center:
<http://wetlandmonitoring.uwex.edu> with links from the RRC website <http://www.rockrivercoalition.org>.

RRC Monitoring Dates

New Monitor Training: April 30th, 8-2:30 Lake Mills Community Center: Anyone interested in being trained to become a monitor or interested in refreshing their monitoring skills are welcome.

Snapshot Day: Saturday, May 14th: All monitors are asked to do their monthly testing on this day in order to allow for basin-wide data comparison. 2010 Snapshot Data should be available in March and will be sent to all 2010 participating monitors.

For more information on these two events contact Ed at 920-648-2673 or ed@rockrivercoalition.org.

Monitor Training May 14th at the Waterville Field Station from 8:30 to 2:30. Call Jayne Jenks at 262-896-8305 to register.

Mussel Monitoring in Rock County

Wanted: Mussel Monitor Volunteers.

Rock County Parks is forming a group of volunteer monitors to find and identify the mussels of Turtle Creek. The group will meet



at the newest Rock County park, currently in its naming process. The park is located at 6528 S. Smith Road near Clinton, WI. The highlight of the park is the view of the historic Tiffany five-arch stone railroad bridge. The group will meet monthly for about two hours, during the summer season. Dates and times will be chosen to accommodate the majority of the volunteers.

If you're interested or would like further information, please contact Joleen Stinson, Rock County Parks Community Coordinator, at 608-757-5473 or stinson@co.rock.wi.us.

Plant & Animal Monitors Needed

American Transmission Company (ATC) has generously provided funding for 2011 floristic (plant) and fauna (animal) studies to be conducted at the Zeloski/London Marsh.

Monitors are needed to conduct duck nesting counts in May; frog counts in May, June, July; and monthly bird counts.

For those interested in floristic studies, an exciting new project is being proposed for the London Marsh site. Individuals are needed who would be interested in being part of this new research study in plant identification.

No experience necessary, as volunteers will be trained on-site at each event by experienced monitors. No commitment necessary, volunteering can occur once or multiple times.

For further information or to volunteer to join a monitoring team, please contact Ed Grunden at 920-648-2673 or ed@rockrivercoalition.org.

Note of Caution to Monitors using Stream Critters for Education

New rules to prevent spread of invasive plants and animals and the lethal fish disease, viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) restrict the movement of water, animals, plants and fish eggs from local streams, rivers and lakes. Groups interested in using aquatic materials away from the river site should contact Kris Stepenuck for more information: kris.stepenuck@ces.uwex.edu.