



Badger Report

The Newsletter of Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.

February 2007

Southwest Badger RC&D 2006 Annual Report

Introduction

The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program was established under the Federal Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. The program is designed to help rural people help themselves. Local citizens who are aware of the problems or opportunities first hand provide leadership and work together to set program priorities. The RC&D program assists local people by providing the tools and technical support needed to stabilize and grow their communities, while, protecting and developing their natural resources. A variety of individuals, government agencies, organizations, conservation groups, and business institutions provide assistance to these local people in accomplishing their program goals. The RC&D program, with its focus on local direction and control, is one of the most successful rural development programs of the federal government.

The Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc. serves Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk and Vernon counties in Southwest Wisconsin. Southwest Badger RC&D was organized in 1992 and federally authorized on October 10, 1996. The Council is incorporated and is classified as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Southwest Badger is one of six RC&D councils covering 59 Wisconsin counties. Each of these RC&D Councils is committed to improving Wisconsin's economy while conserving its rich resources.

The Southwest Badger RC&D Council is made up of one County Board of Supervisors representative and one citizen representative from each county in the Southwest Badger area. The Natural Resource Conservation Service provides a Coordinator to assist the Council. In addition, the Council employs eight staff - an Assistant Coordinator, Bookkeeper, and six project coordinators.

Our Mission

Implement natural resource conservation, managed growth, and sustainable rural economic development in Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk and Vernon counties.

Our Vision

To be an incubator for innovative, economic and sustainable use of local resources in the Southwest Badger RC&D area.

Our Goals

- 1) Protect, conserve, restore, and where necessary, improve land, water, and related resources to assure the quality of the natural resource base for future generations.
- 2) Support the development and enhancement of the environment to provide area citizens with an attractive, healthful, and satisfying place to live, work, and play.
- 3) Support and promote social, economic, and natural resource development to improve the standard of living and provide adequate incomes for all area residents.

Southwest Badger RC&D works to promote resource conservation and wise development in rural and urban areas in Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk, and Vernon counties through planned economic growth using county, private, and public agencies.

SOUTHWEST BADGER RC&D STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION For the Year Ended December 31, 2006*

ASSETS	
Cash	\$79,241.11
Current Receivables	\$62,545.24
Investments	\$10,967.19
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$152,753.54
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$8,317.00
Accrued Liabilities	<u>\$3,254.27</u>
Total Current Liabilities	\$11,571.27
Equity	
Retained Earnings	\$70,932.30
Net Income	<u>\$70,249.97</u>
Total Equity	\$141,182.27
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$152,753.54

*Unaudited

SOUTHWEST BADGER RC&D PROFIT & LOSS January Through December 2006*

INCOME	
Grants	\$301,467.84
Sales	\$19,942.38
Dues	\$900.00
Interest Income	\$1,594.81
Program Revenue	\$9,299.46
Other Income	<u>\$10,501.77</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$343,440.50
COST OF GOODS SOLD (Inventory)	\$9,265.76
GROSS PROFIT	\$333,735.79
EXPENSE	
Other Expenses	\$22,002.60
Travel & Meeting	\$12,355.55
Facility & Equipment	\$1,566.62
Non-Personnel/General Office	\$1,251.73
Contract Service	\$54,903.21
Salaries & Related	<u>\$172,110.82</u>
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$264,190.53
NET INCOME	\$70,249.97

*Unaudited



Southwest Badger RC&D
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Lancaster, WI 53813

Making Things Happen!

FROM THE PRESIDENT:



On behalf of the Southwest Badger RC&D Council and the Executive Board, I take great pride in presenting our 2006 Annual Report. The Annual Report provides an overview of Council activities and accomplishments throughout the year.

While 2006 started with the uncomfortable threat of reduced federal funding for the entire RC&D program, it was a rewarding and successful opportunity for me to attend the RC&D National Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. After the forum, I teamed up with Ed Weber, president of River Country RC&D, to meet with six federal legislators. We informed them of the value and impact of the RC&D program, as well as shared all of the accomplishments of Wisconsin's six RC&D councils. Along with grassroots efforts from Wisconsin RC&D council members and numerous state and national partners, we were able to avoid any cuts to the RC&D budget.

The personal visits to the legislators also allowed Ed and me to meet face-to-face with them about the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI). The DAI is a cooperative effort between six RC&D councils in four states. The goal of the DAI is to improve water quality in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. In response, Senator Kohl secured a \$263,000 appropriation to get the project on tract. I'm proud that Southwest Badger RC&D took the lead and is administering the project. I'm equally proud to serve as treasurer of the DAI. And I'm very pleased with the progress the DAI has made in 2006, especially the partnerships we have secured which will shape the organization well into the future.

I would like to thank all of the RC&D Council members and partners for your hard work and dedication in making 2006 such a success. You are all a testament to the fact that the RC&D partnership is making great things happen in Southwest Wisconsin.

Don Bina
Council President

FROM THE COORDINATOR



For those who are involved with the Resource Conservation & Development program, it is evident that "Seeing is Believing." It is also no surprise to those of us involved with the program to see why it has been so successful. It stems from a unique and rewarding relationship between the federal government and locally managed nonprofit organizations.

Together we're making great things happen!

The RC&D program provides the mechanism for federal, state, and local governments to work "outside the box" to assist local citizens in developing meaningful solutions to resource issues. Doing this requires strong leaders. The Southwest Badger Council is fortunate to have had many great leaders. In its early years, the Southwest Badger RC&D Council benefited from the guidance of Gene Hausner. Gene was the first NRCS Coordinator for the Council. After serving the NRCS for more than 40 years, he retired in December 2006. Gene saw the big picture of how the RC&D program could benefit the land and the people of southwest Wisconsin. Our sincere appreciation is extended to Gene for all his efforts in establishing the Council and serving as a strong leader.

Equally important to our success are the selfless and tireless efforts of the committed volunteers. The volunteer members of the Southwest Badger RC&D council have accomplished great things in 2006. I also extend my congratulations to all of our 2006 award winners. I'm grateful for the many ways you assist me and the Council.

To ensure the continued success of the Southwest Badger Council, we need new volunteers and leaders to step up and get involved, to learn from our experienced council members, and to share in the accomplishments of working as a team. I encourage all of you to look to your communities and encourage those around you to get involved. Because together, we will continue "Making Things Happen!"

Steve Bertjens
NRCS Coordinator

Shepard Presented With Outstanding Council Member Award

The Wisconsin Association of RC&D Councils presented Mark Shepard with the 2006 Outstanding Performance by a Council Member Award at the December 1st Annual Meeting in Stevens Point.

Mark joined the Southwest Badger RC&D Council in 1999 as the first at-large member. Mark has served as the Vice-President of the Council since 2001. He has also chaired the Forestry Committee for five years and served on the Finance Committee for four years. Mark has personally brought ten new projects to the Council, all of which have been highly successful. He is also responsible for initiating the Council's long-term investment strategy to ensure that the Council will be financially sound well into the future. Because of Mark's foresight, the Council now has more than \$23,000 invested in long-term investments.

Mark was voted the Southwest Badger RC&D Outstanding Council member in 2005. Mark has been a tireless public advocate for Southwest Badger RC&D and has volunteered hundreds of hours working on Council projects and programs. Congratulations Mark!

CONGRATULATIONS! 2006 COUNCIL AWARD WINNERS

Legacy Award
Mike Lieurance

Outstanding Council Member
Lance McNaughton

Outstanding RC&D Employee
Gene Schriefer

Outstanding RC&D Supporter
Senator Herb Kohl

New, Improved Website

The Southwest Badger RC&D Council redesigned their website in 2006. Log on to www.swbadger.com to see our new look and learn more about RC&D and Southwest Badger projects.

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Council Members

Crawford County—Virgil Butteris,
Peter Flesch

Grant County—George Booth,
John Schindler, Donald Splinter

Green County—**Robert Hoesly (Secretary)**

Iowa County—Phil Roberts, Roger Reynolds

LaCrosse County—**Don Bina (President)**,
Marc Schultz

Lafayette County—Dean Thoreson,
Lance McNaughton (Treasurer)

Richland County—Marilyn Marshall,
Mark Shepard (Vice President), Virginia
Wiedenfeld

Sauk County—Lester Wiese

Vernon County—Will Beitlich, George
Nettum, Richard Hansen

Staff

Katie Abbott, Military Ridge Prairie Heritage
Area Coordinator
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Steven Bertjens, NRCS Coordinator
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Dan Bohlin, Forestry Invasive Species Specialist
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Patrick Dayton, Stewardship Forester
pdayton@vernoncounty.org

Tammy Enz, Platte River Citizen Group Coordinator

Gene Schriefer, Grazing Specialist
gene.schriefer@rcdnet.net

Barb Thompson, Bookkeeper

David Wilson, Driftless Area Initiative Coordinator
david.wilson@rcdnet.net

Angie Wright, Assistant Coordinator
angie.wright@rcdnet.net

council. The Platte River Citizen Group project is an effort to create a formal watershed group that empowers citizens to implement changes that improve water quality in the Platte River watershed. In 2006, the Council was awarded a \$10,000 River Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the project. In July, the Council hired Tammy Enz as the project coordinator. Tammy owns a home in the watershed and is the citizen who originally brought the project idea to the Council.

In 2006, the group adopted the official name, "Friends of the Platte River, Inc.," wrote bylaws, and registered as a nonstock corporation with the state. The stated mission of the group is to be "A group that exists to serve as a forum to address issues affecting the Platte/Little Platte River watershed and to seek impartial solutions that restore, enhance, and protect this valuable resource." Close to forty people attended a public meeting the group held in November. The group currently has about 40 members. The Friends of the Platte River are also working with UW-Extension and local canoe enthusiasts to improve canoe access to the Platte River.

Yellowstone Lake Watershed Protection Project

The Yellowstone Lake Watershed Protection Project was a joint effort of Southwest Badger RC&D, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Lafayette County to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering Yellowstone Lake. Best Management Practices (BMPs) were installed to reach conservation goals. The project began in 1998 and was completed in 2006. To complete the final stages of the project, Southwest Badger RC&D contracted with Lafayette County Land Conservation Department (LCD) on the Yellowstone Project. Lafayette County LCD surveyed, designed, and installed seven retention dams; surveyed and designed one grassed waterway; collected data from practices previously installed; documented practices on the watershed map; completed data analysis; and drafted the final report.

Workshops

Light on the Land Forestry Field Day

The Fourth Annual Light on the Land Forestry Field Day was again a huge success with over 350 people attending the two day event on September 29th and 30th at Black

Hawk Wildlife Area near Sauk City, Wisconsin. The Field Day featured workshops, hands-on demonstrations, small equipment operation, and exhibits. Workshop topics included: conducting a woodlot inventory, crop tree management, planning a timber sale, small mammal management, forestry herbicides and application, log defects in standing trees, chain saw safety and maintenance, using GPS for forestry and recreation, forestry invasive plants and insects, and directional felling. Attendee reviews of the event were very positive. Southwest Badger RC&D, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, McFarlanes', Three Rivers Forestry Equipment, and Stihl sponsored the event in partnership with the Bad Axe and Blackhawk Chapter of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association.

Tree Shelters

In 2006, the Council sold approximately 6,000 tree shelters for a profit of over \$9,800. The Council also applied for and received a grant from the Small Business Innovation Center to develop a business and marketing plan to increase sales of tree shelters and reforestation aids. Southwest Badger contracted with JDI Enterprises, Inc in Browntown, Wisconsin for the marketing study. The initial pieces of the marketing plan will be implemented in early 2007.

The 2007 Tree Shelter Order Forms are available now. For more information call (608) 723-6377 ext. 136 or go to www.treeprotection.org.

**Mark Your
Calendars Now!**

**2007 Southwest Badger RC&D Council
Meetings**

March 23, 2007

June 8, 2007

September 14, 2007

December 14, 2007

Southwest Badger RC&D Meetings are open to the public, if you would like to be included on our mailing list please email swbadger@mhtc.net or call (608) 723-6377 ext. 4.

Year in Review

Highlights from 2006

Driftless Area Initiative and Driftless Area of Wisconsin Special Initiatives Project

The Driftless Area Initiative (DAI) is an effort to encourage multi-state collaboration to improve water quality and natural resources in the Driftless Area of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The DAI strives to unite organizations and individuals within the Driftless Area in collaborative action to enhance and restore the region's ecology, economy, and cultural resources in a balanced, integrated fashion. The partnering agencies include Northeast Iowa RC&D, Limestone Bluffs RC&D, Southwest Badger RC&D, Blackhawk Hills RC&D, Hiawatha Valley RC&D, and River Country RC&D. As part of the Wisconsin Special Initiatives Project the DAI has identified the Lake Pepin and Grant-Little Maquoketa watersheds as priority watersheds within the Wisconsin portion of the Driftless Area. These priority watersheds are targeted for increased conservation efforts by local conservation groups.

In 2006, the DAI worked with regional and national partners to address Driftless Area resource priorities; compiled and analyzed regional resource information for planning and prioritization; coordinated with partners to obtain water quality information where it is lacking; worked with regional GIS specialists to identify and complete relevant datasets; compiled and analyzed regional resource information for planning and prioritization (i.e., Forest habitat for neotropical songbirds and RUSLE Erosion Model); and completed numerous maps and analyses for key projects and partners. Approximately 60 people attended the annual Partners meeting in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

Work related to the DAI project to improve forest habitat for neotropical migratory birds was completed in 2006. As part of the project a set of forest management guidelines were developed and presented to local landowners and forestry professionals. DAI Coordinator, David Wilson, planned and organized Forestry for Birds workshops in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. More than 75 landowners attended the workshops and over 25 resource professionals participated through presentations, discussions, and field tours. In addition, David created the Forestry Management Assistance booklet that details financial and technical assistance available to landowners who wish to enhance their forest land for birds. Over 700



Maggie Jones, landowner hosting the workshop, speaking at the April 29th Forestry for Bird Habitat workshop near Mt. Zion, Wisconsin.

copies of the booklet have been distributed. The DAI Bird Habitat Committee created for the project will continue to work on forest management and bird habitat needs.

The DAI presented at numerous conferences and meetings, including, the Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership Forum, Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference, Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (DARE) Forum, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association Annual Meeting, Celebrate Lake Pepin, Blufflands Alliance Annual Meeting, and the Tri-State Forestry Conference. In addition, several brochures and informational pamphlets were produced, including map packets that detailed, at the township level, areas prone to erosion and run-off based on the RUSLE model.

In addition, Southwest Badger RC&D worked with River Country RC&D, Hiawatha Valley RC&D, and many other partners to provide technical assistance to landowners in an effort to increase water quality and reduce sediment and nutrient runoff in the Lake Pepin watershed. The DAI also assisted Grant County NRCS with the Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign up for the Grant-Little Maquoketa watershed.

Forest Stewardship

The Forest Stewardship project began in May 2000. The goals of the project are to improve forest health and forest management in Southwest Wisconsin by providing one-on-one technical assistance to private woodland owners,

developing forest stewardship and invasive species management plans, assisting with implementation of forest management and invasive species control, and providing educational opportunities to woodland owners. Currently, the project is focused mainly in the Kickapoo Valley.

In 2006, Stewardship Forester Patrick Dayton met with 39 landowners resulting in management plans covering 1305 acres of forest lands. Two noteworthy management plans were for the Kickapoo Area School and Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center. The plan for the Kickapoo Area School helped them become a registered school forest. At Norskedalen, a private, non-profit nature and heritage center that began in 1977 as an outdoor laboratory and arboretum, the plan will shape the management of over 300 acres and will demonstrate to visitors the importance of planning in forest conservation.



Volunteers planting a tree at a work day in Viola.

Patrick also continued working with the Viola Tree Committee to plan and coordinate efforts to revive the urban forest that was damaged by tornadoes in 2005. During three work days in April, over 200 volunteers planted more than 300 trees in the Village of Viola. The Council contributed \$5000 to the Viola project in 2005.

Invasive Species Project

Forest invasive species such as garlic mustard, buckthorn, and honeysuckle are spreading in southern Wisconsin at an alarming rate. Invasive species out-compete native vegetation and shade-out native herbaceous plants and seedlings. Natural forest regeneration is dramatically reduced leading to changes in the native ecosystem that are extremely difficult to reverse.

To spearhead an effort to reduce the spread of invasive species, the Council hired Dan Bohlin as our Forest Invasive Species Specialist in June 2006. Dan provides one-on-one technical assistance to landowners with controlling

invasive species. This one-on-one technical assistance is the key to this project. Many landowners attend workshops, but never take the next step because they are overwhelmed by the task of eradication and do not know where to start. Dan has extensive personal experience with invasive species eradication and is able to demonstrate to woodland landowners first hand the techniques, herbicides, and equipment that are available to aid them in eradication efforts.

To date Dan has met with eleven private landowners, owning 408 acres total. In addition, he visited Norskedalen, a 400 acre private, non-profit nature and heritage center, and the 8,500 acre Kickapoo Valley Reserve. He provided educational materials to all landowners and discussed treatment and eradication techniques. Dan has also given presentations to several woodland owner groups and filmed an interview with "Discover Wisconsin" which will air in June 2007 for Invasive Species Month.

Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area (MRPHA) is a 40,000 acre grassland landscape in southwestern Dane and southeastern Iowa Counties. The area supports many prairie remnants, pastures, and lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The Military Ridge area includes more than 20 remnants of the original tall grass prairie and 14 rare and declining grassland bird species. Grassland birds are the fastest declining group of species in North America, primarily due to loss of critical habitat. Scientists from the Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy and other agencies have identified this landscape's mix of prairies, pastures,



Prairie burn in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.

farmland, and lands enrolled in conservation programs as the best opportunity for large-scale grassland protection and management in Wisconsin and the Midwest.

In 2006, the MRPHA project removed more than 3-miles of tree rows that were dividing grassland blocks; assisted 11 families with prairie burns; continued to work on CRP re-enrollment and mid-term management; and worked with the project partners on stream restoration and grassland bird research projects.

The Military Ridge Project took on a new focus this year when it was awarded a \$43,600 River Management grant to improve stream corridor management and increase the quantity and quality of grassland cover to reduce runoff, improve infiltration, and provide wildlife habitat. Katie Abbott was hired as the new Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area Coordinator in September. Katie's background in streamside buffers is a perfect fit for the project's new focus on stream corridor management

Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative

The Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative is an effort to encourage more landowners to implement managed intensive grazing to increase profits while protecting soil and water quality. Grazing coordinator, Gene Schriefer, writes grazing plans and provides general technical assistance to landowners.



Gene Schriefer inspecting a pasture of Eastern Gamagrass.

In 2006, Gene met one-on-one with 25 producers grazing more than 2,400 acres; completed 14 new Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grazing plans totaling 1723 acres; updated two EQIP plans totaling 94 acres; and conducted 19 producer group pasture walks. Southwest Badger RC&D secured additional funding for the Grazing Project with a \$55,904 grant from the Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection.

Trail Projects

Crawford County Bike Route

In 2004, Southwest Badger RC&D worked with Crawford and Vernon County stakeholders to complete a feasibility study on developing a non-motorized trail through the Kickapoo Valley from Wauzeka to Milton. The study determined that the best option was to use existing roads to develop a bike route. In 2006, the Crawford County Tourism Committee asked Southwest Badger to assist with the Crawford County Bike Route project. The Bike Route Committee has identified several loops using local roads and hopes to have a brochure completed by spring 2007. Assistant Coordinator, Angie Wright has been participating in the Bike Committee meetings and presented to the Crawford County Tourism Committee in November. Southwest Badger RC&D will continue assisting as needed on the project.

Belmont-Platteville Trail

In 2004, Southwest Badger RC&D worked with Lafayette County and local stakeholders to secure \$1,245,000 in funding from the Department of Transportation - Transportation Enhancements Program and DNR to construct a paved trail between Belmont and Platteville on abandoned rail bed property owned by DNR. In 2006, the Belmont-Platteville Trail working group held four planning meetings. In addition, local landowners and area legislators met with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in July to discuss outstanding issues. Members of the working group met with DNR representatives in April at the trail site. The group toured the trail route from Mineral Street in Platteville to the Lafayette County line to view the proposed route and stream crossing location. The DNR gave tentative approval for the bridge site. Additionally, in June several working group members walked the trail from Belmont to the Mound View Road intersection to view and discuss the route options. Negotiations regarding the final route continue, and it is anticipated that construction will begin in 2007.

Watershed Projects

Platte River Citizen Group

In 2006, a group of concerned citizens who own residences near the confluence of the Platte and Mississippi Rivers asked the Council to help them develop a watershed