



Message from the project coordinator

Autumn is my favorite season; I savor the cool air, the changing colors, and the fall produce. September marks my first full year in this position, and I have met many great landowners, colleagues, and experts. I hope to bring some of the new things I have learned to you through visits, workshops, and these newsletters. In this issue, find out what all those weird flags and pipes are doing off of County Road K. There are tips about using herbicide safely and preparing for next year's prescribed burning. Also, there is important information for those leaving the Conservation Reserve Program or looking to get into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or the Landowner Incentives Program (LIP). And, as always, the list of upcoming events is on page three. I hope you are able to take time to enjoy what nature has to offer this season.



Sincerely, Katie Abbott

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UW stream research

Have you noticed the pipes and flags at two sites along County Road K near Barneveld? These are both properties owned by The Nature Conservancy, and UW-Madison students and faculty are conducting some interesting research there. It all has to do with the large amounts of sediment that eroded off of fields in the late 1800s and early 1900s, before soil-conserving farming practices became common. This sediment ended up in the floodplains along local streams, accumulating in some areas up to fifteen feet! This excess sediment changed how the valleys look and function as wildlife habitat.

In August 2006, The Nature Conservancy, in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, removed deposition and restored the pre-settlement surface from a floodplain just south of Prairie Grove Road. Researchers are now investigating the changes associated with this type of restoration at this site and another near Botham Vineyards that will be restored in late 2008. The researchers expect to find a decrease in the depth to the water table and an increase in the amount of water taken up by plants in a process called evapotranspiration. The white PVC pipes sticking out of the ground are used

to monitor the depth to the water table. When combined with data from on-site weather stations, evapotranspiration can be estimated. Over the next several years researchers will examine potential benefits of this project, including reduced downstream flooding and improved water quality.

They also want to know how deep the old floodplain surface is buried at the future restoration site. Soil cores at each of the flags seen across the site will be taken to find these depths and generate a map of what the surface may have looked like before settlement. This map will help to guide construction crews to remove the appropriate amount of sediment during the restoration. Historical information about the plants, animals, and wetlands in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area's river valleys will also be collected to better describe this ecosystem before settlement. Any historical information you would like to share would be most welcome!

The UW-Madison researchers on this project are Eric Booth and Julia Ferguson. Please contact them at egbooth@wisc.edu and jkferguson@wisc.edu if you have any comments or questions about their work.

Herbicide safety

If mowing, hand-pulling, or burning aren't effective or feasible for controlling invasive species, herbicide may be necessary. However, it can be a hazard to humans and the environment if not used properly. Here are some tips for using herbicide as safely as possible.

- Choose an appropriate herbicide. Many are selective to a certain type of plant. Glyphosate (Round-up) will kill just about anything, including non-target species. Avoid pellets and pre-emergent herbicides, as they are more persistent in the environment. Special herbicides and procedures are required near open water. There is also a difference between ester and amine formulations. Esters tend to be more volatile and should be used with caution only in cool weather. 2,4-D especially can volatilize and drift up to two miles onto neighboring properties, injuring grapevines, tomatoes, and other sensitive plants.
- Always wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when mixing, applying, and handling herbicide. This may include long-sleeved shirts, long pants, rubber boots, chemical-resistant gloves, and goggles.
- Apply herbicide properly. Use a method appropriate for the target species, work away from areas already treated, and do not over-apply such that the herbicide runs or drips off the plant. Apply herbicide only to the target species and avoid using near rare species.
- Use herbicides during appropriate weather conditions and at the time of year when plants are most susceptible. Stressful conditions such as drought will cause herbicides to be less effective because plants will shut down. Wind will cause the chemical to drift onto nearby plants, and some herbicides are more or less effective in a certain temperature range.
- More is not more. It is legal to use herbicides at a lower rate than specified, but not higher. With many herbicides, including glyphosate, too high a concentration will actually kill the leaves too quickly, before the chemical can be transported to the roots to kill the entire plant.
- Carefully store, transport, mix, and dispose of herbicide. Do not store near food or clothing and do not mix within 100 feet of a well, storm drain, or surface water. Avoid touching herbicide with bare skin, and measure carefully. Transport herbicide and equipment in a sealed, leak-proof container. Triple-rinse empty containers, puncture, and dispose of in trash. Re-use rinse water to mix herbicide or dispose of in a weed patch. Any remaining herbicide that will not be used is a hazardous waste that must be disposed of properly.
- Thoroughly wash gear, clothing, and yourself after using herbicide. Wash clothes separately.
- Always read and follow label directions. It will tell you everything you need to know about target species, mixing, protective gear, proper use, disposal, and environmental hazards. It is illegal to use herbicide in a way contrary to label directions.



For more information, check out www.ipaw.org or www.dnr.wi.gov/invasives/plants.htm.

It's not too early to plan for spring burns



Although the weather is cooling and the months ahead will bring snow, it is not too early to start thinking about spring. If you intend to burn your fields next spring, whether for your own objectives or because it is part of the required management for your Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) field, now is a good time to start planning. Fall is the best time to mow fire breaks, which are areas of low flammability surrounding the area to be burned. Good breaks are crucial for the burn crew to safely contain and control the fire. Mowing in the fall will allow vegetation to decompose, allow breaks to green up earlier in the spring, and save you time in the spring when the burn window is short.

Burning contractors can get booked up early, so it is not too soon to start calling. Visit the Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council's website at www.prescribedfire.org/contractors.html. For landowners with some burning experience, there are two classes coming up in January focusing on ignitions and fire behavior. Both are offered by The Woodland School. See their website for more information: www.aldoleopold.org/woodlandschool/courses.htm

If you are hiring a contractor they should create a burn plan for you. It lays out the burn process, appropriate weather conditions and emergency procedures, and is required to be submitted to and approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service before burning a CRP field. If you need to write a plan yourself, there is a template online at <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/WI/jobsheets/js-338.pdf>.

Planning early will help your spring burn be efficient and safe. Contact Katie (katie.abbott@rcdnet.net or (608)935-2791 ext 143) with any questions, to get a list of contractors, or to get help with your burn plan.

LIP pre-proposals due soon

The Department of Natural Resources will be taking pre-proposals for the Landowner Incentives Program (LIP) from October 1 to November 15. LIP is a competitive grant program that helps private landowners manage and restore habitat for at-risk species. This includes plants and animals that are endangered, threatened, special concern, or species of greatest conservation need. A list of at-risk species can be found at www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/WLIP/prair_sav.htm.

This program provides up to 75% of the costs for eligible projects and provides technical assistance. Private landowners, individuals or groups proposing projects that will take place on privately owned (non-government) land and benefit at-risk species may apply. Eligible projects under LIP include, but are not limited to, conducting prescribed burns, restoring native vegetation, and removing invasive and woody species. 85% of land in Wisconsin is privately owned and 90% of at-risk species are found on private land. Therefore efforts of landowners are crucial; this program can help! For more information contact Heidi Nelson at (608) 267-0797 or Heidi.Nelson@Wisconsin.gov. Also visit the website at: www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/wlip/index.htm.

EQIP sign-up has started

This year's sign-up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) started September 4 and continues through November 16. EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that provides financial and technical assistance with conservation practices on agricultural land. EQIP may also provide incentive payments to encourage a farmer to adopt land management practices, such as nutrient management. Some eligible practices include grade stabilization, grassed waterways, prescribed grazing, and stream crossings. If you are interested in waste storage, there are a few steps that need to be done right away. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office for more information or to apply. In Iowa County, call (608) 935-2791 x3. In Dane County call (608) 224-3750.

Coming out of CRP?

If your fields are coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program to be cropped, contact your county Land Conservation Department to get a conservation plan in place before you break ground.

Iowa County: Dodgeville, (608) 935-2791 x3
Dane County: Madison, (608) 224-3730

Upcoming events

- **TPE workdays:** Help is needed collecting seeds and carrying out brush control work on many of the sites which are managed by The Prairie Enthusiasts. This is an excellent opportunity to see a variety of sites, some of which are not regularly open to the public. Be sure to wear clothing appropriate for the weather, including sturdy footwear and work gloves. Bring drinking water. Herbicides will be used on all brush cutting work. For more information visit www.theprairieenthusiasts.org/chapter/empire/workdays.html.
 - Sept 29 9-12 AM: Schurch-Thomson (Reilly Road off County F) seed collecting, contact Erik Goplin (608-437-4879)
 - Sept 30 1-4 PM: Schurch-Thomson brush cutting, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065)
 - October 6 and 21 1-4 PM: Schurch-Thomson seed collecting, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065)
 - October 7 1-4 PM: Williams Pasture (County F) brush cutting, contact Amy Staffen (608-238-0450)
 - October 28 1-4 PM: Monroe-Romolino (County K) brush cutting, contact: Rich Henderson (608-845-7065)
 - November 3 10 AM-1 PM: Schurch-Thomson seed collecting, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065)
 - November 3 2-5 PM: Shea Prairie (Mounds View Road) brush cutting, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065)
 - November 11 1-4 PM: Shea Prairie brush cutting, contact Amy Staffen (238-0450; 332-0875)
 - December 9 1-4 PM: A to Z Farm (Reilly Road off County F) brush cutting, contact Rich Henderson (608-845-7065)
- **TNC workdays:** Dress appropriately for outdoor, grubby work. Long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy footwear and work gloves are needed. Bring drinking water and at least a snack. Better yet, bring lunch so you can stay and get to know the preserve and your fellow volunteers after the work's all done. For information call Jim Lesniak at (608)238-5187 or visit the website at www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/wisconsin/volunteer/art5819.html.
 - Saturday Oct 13 and Dec 8: Barneveld Prairie: Meet at the Cty Hwy K parking lot, nearly one mile south of the junction of Langberry Rd and Cty Hwy K. The lot is on the west side of the road, just north of Prairie Grove Rd.
 - Saturday November 17: Barneveld Prairie: East of Barneveld on Hwy 18/151, go south on Cty Hwy K for about 1.5 miles to Langberry Rd. Turn right onto Langberry and travel 0.5 miles to junction with Lee Rd. Park on the right.
- **Pasture Walk: October 23, time TBA** (see <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/iowa/ag/index.html>)
Learn about sheep and beef grazing at the farm of Gene Schriefer, 2409 County Road Y. From Dodgeville: Take 191 east to County Rd Y, turn south (right) on Y, go to 2409, turn left and proceed down (long!) driveway to farmstead.
- **Chainsaw Safety: Various dates, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM** Cost: \$60 per session (lunch is provided)
The "Game of Logging" is a four-level series designed to increase safety and efficiency of chainsaw use. Take the Level I course as an introduction to sawing and felling, or take the whole series to move toward mastering your chain saw skills. Hands-on training in each session will give participants the opportunity to fell one or more trees with supervision. Check out www.aldoleopold.org/woodlandschool/courses.htm for more information.



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Newsletter for owners of land within the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area is a cooperative project of the Blue Mounds Area Project, Driftless Area Land Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Dane & Iowa County Land Conservation Divisions, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, The Prairie Enthusiasts, Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development, USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service, and WI Department of Natural Resources. Goals of the partnership include: 1. Provide and maintain viable prairie, savanna, grassland, and aquatic habitat, for the many plants and animals that depend on these habitats for their survival 2. Maintain an economically viable rural and agricultural landscape 3. Provide and encourage traditional recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation goals 4. Integrate best applied science through the use of continued monitoring and adaptive management.

Project Coordinator Katie Abbott helps landowners within the project area (see below) get help from these organizations to manage and protect their land. She strives to educate and empower landowners to be stewards of the natural resources in their community. Absolutely all work involving landowners and the MRPHA project is completely voluntary.

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