



Badger Report

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

May 2007

Yellowstone Watershed Improvement Project Comes to a Close

The final report for the Yellowstone Lake Watershed Improvement Project has been submitted to the Wisconsin DNR signaling the completion of the project that began in 1998. This project originated from a request by Lafayette County District Conservationist Dan Cotter to help provide technical assistance with implementation of the Yellowstone River Priority EQIP project. Dan was successful in securing \$1.35 million in cost-sharing for conservation practices in the Yellowstone Watershed, but the funding did not provide for engineering assistance. Byron Berg was president of the Council at that time and the Yellowstone Watershed was one of his passions. Byron asked Southwest Badger to adopt the project and the Council put their new RC&D coordinator to work on securing a grant to fund a technician for the project. In May of 1998 at a dedication ceremony held at Yellowstone Lake, Stan Druckenmiller from Wisconsin DNR, presented Byron with a \$200,000 grant for the “Yellowstone Lake Watershed Improvement Project”.

This project was a collaborative effort between the Southwest Badger RC&D, the Natural Resources



Byron Berg, 1998 Southwest Badger RC&D Council President, Stan Druckenmiller, Wisconsin DNR, and Steve Bertjens, Southwest Badger NRCS Coordinator at the dedication ceremony.

Conservation Service, and the Land and Water Conservation Departments of Lafayette and Iowa Counties. This partnership implemented an impressive list of conservation practices over the life of the project including 67 grade stabilization structures (dams), 73 riprap sites, 22 well abandonments, 55 grassed waterways, and many other practices. As a result of these conservation efforts the sediment entering Yellowstone Lake was reduced by 3,647 tons per year and the phosphorous delivery to the Lake was reduced by 4,023 pounds per year. The partnership exceeded its sediment reduction goal by 9.6% and the phosphorus reduction goal by 32%. One of the most impressive results of this project is the dramatically improved fishery in the Lake. An intensive carp removal program and fish stocking efforts by the WI DNR deserve much of the credit for the improved fishery, but undoubtedly the sediment and nutrient reductions also played a role in turning around the fishery.

In 2004, Byron Berg was posthumously awarded the Friends of Yellowstone Lake Award. His work to improve Yellowstone Lake is just one of many contributions that comprise his legacy. As we close the books on this project we look to all our partners to help us identify resource issues and projects that should be addressed. A special thanks to Dan Cotter for bringing this project to the Council and providing a leadership role through the entire project. We appreciate all the efforts of the Lafayette County Land Conservation Department and the wonderful job they did on the final report.

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Staff Reports

Driftless Area Initiative Surges Ahead

David C. Wilson DAI Coordinator

The Driftless Area Initiative (DAI) works to unite organizations and individuals within the Driftless Area of the Upper Mississippi River Basin for collaborative action to enhance and restore this region's ecology, economy, and cultural resources in a balanced, integrated fashion. We have made great strides towards accomplishing our mission in recent months.

In January, the DAI Committee, composed of council members from each of the six RC&D Councils in the Driftless Area, gathered in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin for a two day planning and strategy session. Through this intensive effort, the group of local conservationists was able to finalize a strategic plan for our organization that will direct our actions towards getting conservation on the ground. The strategic plan clarifies the scope of the DAI mission, identifies goals critical to achieving that mission, and outlines strategies for achieving specific objectives. Input from hundreds of people and organizations, interacting at various levels with the DAI, was critical to the development of this plan.

The four primary strategies of the DAI are:

- To speak with a unified voice on multi-state resource issues;
- To identify multi-state priorities and build coalitions to address them;
- To serve as a clearinghouse and catalyst for regional resource information; and
- To promote regional and national recognition of the Driftless Area and its resources.

The group also began to outline some basic components of the comprehensive and integrated approach to conservation that we strive to promote in this unique region. Major topics included project planning, approaches to information and education efforts, forestry management, watershed and water body planning, as well as land use and agriculture practices suited to the fragile soils, steep slopes, and diverse ecosystems of the Driftless Area.

More recently, the DAI met with State Conservationists and their representatives from each of the four states (Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) contributing land to the Driftless Area. The State Conservationists expressed a high degree of support for the Driftless Area Initiative.

This support is evident in the recent announcement by Minnesota State Conservationist Bill Hunt, and Wisconsin State Conservationist

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US Senator Tim Walz (D-MN), Christina Muedeking, Regional Assistant Chief for the Central Region of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Brad Pfaff, Aide for Agricultural Programs to US Congressman Ron Kind (D-WI) dedicate additional EQIP funding to the Driftless Area.

Patricia Leavenworth that \$1.4 million in additional Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds will be made available to producers in the Driftless Area. This commitment adds to the more than \$9 million already invested in the region, and will help get more critical conservation practices on the ground to protect our soil and water resources

As we look ahead, many additional opportunities to develop the regional and national focus that is needed to promote additional investment into the environment of the Driftless Area are developing. Collaborations with organizations like Trout Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, The Nature Conservancy, individual counties, and the full suite of state and federal agencies continue to mature, producing additional opportunities to implement conservation at the local level and across the four state region.

Forest Stewardship Initiative

Patrick Dayton, Forester

During my tenure with Southwest Badger RC&D I have been fortunate to work with the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative (KWC). The KWC began in 1999 when a group of neighbors in Vernon County met in a local farmer's barn and decided to join together to better manage their forests. They looked at models used by other wood cooperatives that focused on harvesting timber from members' properties and processing the wood into value-added products. In most cases, this structure was not successful. It required too

much capital and inventory and did not account for the members that had no interest in cutting trees. Instead, the KWC targeted their efforts on forest management and education. A grant from the Kickapoo Valley Reforestation Fund, established by a generous bequest from Ralph Nuzum, allowed the Co-op to contract with management and education coordinators. Using word of mouth, direct contact, educational field days and seminars, the Co-op began to grow. It now has over 200 members owning more than 20,000 acres in seven counties all in the Kickapoo and neighboring watersheds.

The KWC works with Southwest Badger RC&D, DNR, county agencies, sawmills, loggers, secondary wood manufacturers, other natural resource professionals, and especially the KWC member landowners to create a positive long-term impact on the local forest resources and community. The Co-op is devoted to principles of sustainable forest management that provide for the regeneration of trees; perpetual wood products; maintenance of soil, water, and air resources; continual wildlife habitat; and enjoyment of the natural world. Sustainable forestry uses scientific principles to manage land to allow for continuous deviations while keeping all ecosystem functions in place. It recognizes human values along with the intrinsic value of land and nature.

Applying a pay-as-you-go model, the KWC has been slowly developing its services to make sure that its business is as sustainable as the forests it manages. New features to the Co-op this year include an expanded forestry store, bird surveys, and a new website (www.kickapoooods.org). Both the management services and educational field days continue to be popular with members and other landowners. The KWC board of directors is a group of dedicated Wisconsin landowners and the membership is active and eager to learn. The Co-op is pleased with its accomplishments so far but wants to expand and grow its ranks so it can be more effective and efficient in the future. A major goal of the Co-op is to manage for future generations.

Forest Invasive Species Project

Dan Bohlin, Invasive Species Specialist

While the first few months of the year were relatively slow, invasive species work in gearing up as the weather warms. In April, I conducted site visits on two privately owned woodland properties. In March, I staffed an informational

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booth at the Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference at the Sinsinawa Mound Center in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. I also participated in an invasive species seminar aimed at private landowners in Sauk County. I have several site visits scheduled in May, and I will be presenting to school groups at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife sponsored RiverFest on May 14th and 15th at Effigy Mounds National Monument in Harpers Ferry, Iowa. RiverFest is a multi-agency outreach event for middle school and high-school students that provides information and education about river issues. June is Invasive Species Awareness Month. On June 2nd I will present at the Wisconsin Walnut Council's Spring Field Day in Iowa County. The "Discover Wisconsin" episode on invasive species that I participated in will air on June 23rd and 24th.

Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

Katie Abbott, Project Coordinator

Spring is an exciting time on the landscape. The weather is warming and many plants and animals are returning, including pasque flowers - one of the earliest flowers to bloom



Blooming Pasque flower.

- and Eastern meadowlarks. Soon it will be time to survey for prairie and birdsfoot violets, which are required food plants for the caterpillars of the regal fritillary butterfly, a state endangered insect.

April was prime time for prescribed burning. I was able to help partners and landowners with several burns. Burning removes dead vegetation and creates a black surface, both of which allow more sunlight to hit the ground so plants can start growing early. This extended growing season can result in taller prairie plants that produce more seeds. Fire also stimulates prairie plants (as they have adaptations to fire), while discouraging weeds and woody growth that threaten prairie ecosystems.



Spring burn in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) re-enrollments, and my role in talking to landowners about their mid-management requirements, is wrapping up. Now it is time to promote Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) enrollment before the program expires in December of this year. I am first targeting landowners who did not re-enroll in CRP to see if they have interest in CREP, which provides better incentives.

I continue to meet many landowners in the project area, focusing contact efforts on those with stream frontage. I will be working with partners to secure stream easements, plan restorations, and aid the University of Wisconsin with important research.

Outreach efforts continue to move forward. I publish a newsletter each quarter, and began a monthly article for the Mount Horeb Mail, where I discuss natural history and land management topics. I am also working on the final edits of a stream management brochure, and have had interest from a few local teachers in having one of the partners give a guest lecture on natural history topics. Numerous workshops and field trips have been planned in the project area this spring and summer. I have organized or will be speaking in seven workshops focused on grassland birds, streams, grazing, invasive species, prairies, and game bird habitat. June is Invasive Species Awareness month, and my newsletter, newspaper article, and several area workshops will focus on that topic.

Platte River Citizen's Group

Tammy Enz, Project Coordinator

The Friends of the Platte River, Inc. is off to a great start in 2007. In January potential board members completed a formal Board Training seminar with Allison Werner from Wisconsin River Alliance. In March, the Friends

group held their first annual meeting and membership drive. Bob Hansis from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource presented a program on the Platte River watershed. The group elected its first board of directors:

- President - Daniel Enz
- Vice President - Bob Donald
- Secretary - Bill Brewer
- Co-Treasurers - Patrick Schaal and Everett Malott
- Executive Director - Tammy Enz

In addition, Brian Rogers, from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville will serve as the student ambassador. The student ambassador will help coordinate and facilitate a relationship with university students on future projects in the Platte River Watershed.

The Friends of the Platte River currently has 23 members. The members are a diverse group of people from many walks of life with backgrounds in farming and conservation practices, fishing, canoeing, community organizations, and civil engineering. They possess the legal, administrative, and technical abilities to make a non-profit watershed group successful. Much of the preliminary work has been done to establish the framework for a successful river protection organization, however the next year or two will be a critical time for capacity building to ensure the sustainability of the group. The Friends of the Platte River, Inc., along with SW Badger RC&D, has again applied for a Wisconsin DNR River Planning Grant to continue funding the coordinator position, engage in long-term watershed planning, and to implement projects.

The main goal for the coming year is to solidify and expand the Friends of the Platte River group by focusing on addressing the issues (recreation, conservation, restoration and education) defined by citizens and stakeholders in surveys and discussions. The primary objective of the group in the next phase is to plan and administer projects in these focus areas. The group will do this by continuing to define stakeholder support, implementing educational programs, and building membership. Activities which will work toward these goals will include: subsidizing a watershed-scale ground water/well-testing program, working with UW-Platteville faculty and students to develop one or more student design projects in the watershed, continuing to work on developing and promoting a Platte River Canoe trail, and applying for funding for future projects.



Volunteers, Tim Donovan, Brian Rogers, and Dan Bier launching their boats for the River cleanup day.

In addition, the group will continue gathering and sharing information through various formats including a newsletter, brochures, print media, and the website. The watershed group will gather existing data and professional opinions from those who have studied water quality issues in the area or have a stake in the livelihood of the river.

On April 14, 2007 the Friends of the Platte River held "Paddle on the Platte," a river clean-up and canoe assessment work day. Students from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and local citizens canoed the entire navigable section of the Platte River, from Ellenboro to the Mississippi River, noting impassable areas in the river for future workdays. Volunteers also collected trash at the canoe access points. Use of equipment and canoes was donated by St. John's Mine and Canoe Rental and by the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. The canoe trail project is supported by funds received in conjunction with UW-Extension staff. Another exciting upcoming event is a Platte River watershed tour planned for May 19, 2007. The Friends of the Platte River, Inc. is working with staff from Southwest Badger and Wisconsin DNR to conduct an informative tour of the watershed. The tour will leave the Dickeyville Community Center at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 19th to visit various sites to observe practices on the land and in the water which help improve and maintain water quality. The tour will also include a fish-shocking demonstration on Blockhouse Creek. Please join us for the tour. For more information call Tammy Enz at (608) 354-8539.

Coordinator's Corner



Now is the time for renewable energy

Apparently gasoline prices exceeding \$3.00 a gallon for the second straight summer is finally having the impact that many of us hoped it would as renewable energy is now the buzz. Governor Doyle testified in front of the Senate Agriculture Committee on May 1st calling on Congress to direct the Department of Agriculture to promote biomass for fuel. Representative Ron Kind has introduced legislation - the Healthy Farms, Foods, and Fuels Act of 2007 - that would increase funding for renewable energy and conservation. So with all the buzz where does the Southwest Badger fit in? RC&Ds across the nation are in a unique position as respected, non-profit, conservation organizations to promote renewable energy sources that are sustainable, minimize impacts to water quality, reduce green house gas emissions, and do not threaten the nation's food supply. That is a big job and undoubtedly not everyone will agree with our direction but now is the time. The Council was just awarded a grant for a biomass study, to learn more, see the article on page.

Think about what other projects the Council could implement to accelerate renewable energy projects in your community and the entire Southwest Badger Area. Now is the time!

Upcoming Events

May 13, 2007

Chain Saw Safety hosted by Kickapoo Woods Cooperative
Kickapoo Valley Reserve, La Farge, Wisconsin

May 23, 2007

Kickapoo School Forestry Field Day/School Forest Dedication
Viola, Wisconsin

May 31, 2007 - 7:00 p.m.

Birding at Thomson Memorial Prairie
Near Blue Mounds, Wisconsin

June 2, 2007

The Nature Conservancy Stream Field Trip
Near Barneveld, Wisconsin

June 7, 2007 - 7:00 p.m.

Grazing Talk/Rotational Grazing Tour
Hollandale, Wisconsin

June 8, 2007 - 10:00 a.m.

Southwest Badger RC&D Council Meeting
Richland Center, Wisconsin

June 24, 2007

Invasive Species with Amy Staffen
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin

July 28, 2007

Stream Management with Bob Hansis, WI DNR and Katie Abbott, Southwest Badger RC&D
Near Barneveld, Wisconsin

For more information on the events above contact Southwest Badger RC&D at (608) 723-6377 ext. 4 or email swbadger@mhtc.net

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Southwest Badger RC&D - Your conservation partner

Council Receives \$73,000 Grant for Biomass Initiative

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has awarded a \$73,000 grant to Southwest Badger for the “Driftless Area Biomass Inventory and Analysis” Project. The project is a collaborative effort between Southwest Badger RC&D, River Country RC&D, and the Driftless Area Initiative. The overall goal of the project is to develop a market-based strategy for renewable energy crops. The objectives of this project are to: 1) Conduct an inventory of existing warm season grass acreages in four counties to determine the feasibility of using warm season grasses as a renewable energy source; and 2) Develop a cost-benefit analysis of harvesting woody biomass on existing woodland for use as a biomass feedstock.

Southwest Badger RC&D and River Country RC&D will both hire an employee or contractor to conduct an evaluation of warm season grass fields in the four county project area. Data to be collected from each field includes stand quality, species composition, management needs, and per acre yields. A residue sample of all high quality fields will be sent to a laboratory for analysis of lignin, cellulose, and ash composition. Information will be collected from landowners on establishment and maintenance techniques to develop Best Management Practices for establishing warm season grass.

The woody biomass portion of this project will determine whether it is feasible to harvest underutilized tree species such as elm, box elder, and other nonmarketable (weed) trees for use as boiler fuel in power plants. The project will conduct a minimum of four harvesting demonstrations to determine the costs associated with harvesting woody biomass and determine the average volume of material available on a per acre basis. Patrick Dayton, Southwest Badger RC&D Forester, will be the project manager on the harvesting demonstrations.

Portable Logging Bridge Ready for Use

In 2005, the Southwest Badger RC&D Council received a \$5,000 contract from the Wisconsin DNR to build a portable logging bridge for use in southwest Wisconsin. Pictured below, the bridge is very easy to install and its design allows it to adapt to any stream size or shape. The main component of the bridge is four-inch PVC pipes connected with 3/16 inch cable for a length of ten feet. The council currently has four bundles of the ten foot PVC pipe. The bridge pictured below required two bundles for proper installation. The decking is oak planking, three inches thick by one foot wide, that is held together with two high tensile chains that are tightened at the ends. When installed, the portable bridge is twelve feet wide and can be up to ten feet long. The portable bridge can easily withstand the weight of the heaviest skidder and prehauler. Since water flows through the PVC pipes the bridge does not hinder fish passage and more importantly, it allows for logging operations to cross a stream with minimal impact on the water resource. The Council has also purchased a trailer for transporting the bridge to logging sites. For information on reserving the portable bridge contact the Southwest Badger RC&D office at (608) 723-6377 ext. 136.



The Southwest Badger RC&D portable logging bridge was demonstrated at a Wisconsin Woodland Owners Field Day on May 05 near Fennimore.

Get to Know Your Council Member

John Schindler is the Southwest Badger RC&D at-large (citizen) council member from Grant County. John joined the Council in 2004. He has been active on the Light on the Land Planning Committee and has volunteered his land and time in developing a demonstration for the Council's Silvopasture Project. John is a life-long resident of Lancaster where he and his wife Cindy raised two children.

John received his bachelor's degree from UW-Platteville in biology and chemistry and earned his Master's degree from UW-Stout in vocational education. John is retired from Southwest Technical College where he was an auto body instructor for 25 years and the coordinator of business industry training services for seven years.



John and Cindy have a 380 acre farm where they have practiced environmental stewardship by enrolling their steepest land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and their riparian areas in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). In 2005, John and Cindy began a new business venture when they started "Scenic Stables" where they currently board twelve horses.

If you have comments, suggestions, contributions, or ideas for the newsletter, please contact Angie Wright at (608)723-6377 ext. 114 or email angie.wright@rcdnet.net.



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Making Things Happen!