



Badger Report

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

May 2009

Cycle Southwest Wisconsin Launches Website



Bicyclists in Southwest Wisconsin now have another resource for planning some top-notch rides. Cycle Southwest Wisconsin has produced a map with 28 loops on lightly traveled paved roads in Grant, Iowa and Lafayette counties. The first printing of this free map “sold out” quickly. A second edition

is now completed thanks to a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. The map is still free and available by calling (608) 723-2125 or by visiting the recently launched website: www.cyclesouthwestwisconsin.com.

Southwest Badger RC&D is part of an energetic team of community development professionals and cycling enthusiasts in the three southwestern-most counties of Wisconsin that started the Cycle Southwest Wisconsin project. The team was recently honored with the Regional Tourism Impact Award at the BEST (Building Economic Strength Together) Conference. The map, designed with no county lines, has become a model for regional cooperation in tourism development.

Bicyclists are encouraged to spend time exploring local culture and enjoying nature with shopping, dining, lodging, historic sites, well-known attractions, fabulous vistas, and some of the best bicycling in the world. From the 130-mile route that follows the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers to a mostly flat 18 miler, the map offers a variety of trips to accommodate diverse interests and bicycling abilities. Lodging specials are available for midweek bicyclers. Details are available on the “Bed & Bike” link on cyclesouthwestwisconsin.com. The Cycle Southwest Wisconsin planning team encourages riders to share their biking adventures by contributing photos taken along the loops to the new website. Watch for a new blog in development too. Cycle Southwest Wisconsin – a great way to go green and stay fit.

Opportunities in Agroforestry Workshop Provides Ideas for Diversification of Agriculture

On March 27th and 28th the Southwest Badger RC&D Council sponsored “Opportunities in Agroforestry” workshops in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Friday program was targeted at conservation staff. More than 35 individuals from NRCS, DNR, Land Conservation Departments and private consultants attended. The program targeted towards landowners on Saturday drew more than 40 people. Mark Shepard, Vice President of the Southwest Badger RC&D Council gave presentations on “Hazelnut Production” and “Perennial Polycultures.” Steve Bertjens, RC&D Coordinator, presented on Silvopasture Systems for Livestock Production and Oak Savanna Restoration.” Other presentations at the workshops included: Christmas Tree Production, Carbon Credits, Woodlot Alternatives through Integrated Agroforestry, The Science of Agroforestry and The Role of Woody Biomass for Energy Production.

**Please note our new email address:
swbadger@tds.net**

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Green County—Cathy Cryor Burgweger,

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Iowa County—Dave Ladd

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Lafayette County—Leon Wolfe,

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Biomass - True Costs of Harvesting Woody Biomass Project

Aaron Wright, Biomass Forester

The True Costs of Harvesting Woody Biomass project is going well. To date six sites have been harvested with volumes and harvesting costs reported, this is two-thirds of the original project goal of nine demonstration sites. The total acreage completed is 163 acres, which easily surpass the original goal of 90 acres. The average cost of harvesting is around \$45 a cord. Two additional sites have been harvested, but the volumes and costs have not yet been reported. Since December three new biomass sites, totaling 118 acres, have been marked and inventoried. One site is in La Crosse County and the other two are in Vernon County. Two of the sites will go out for bid this summer and the other one will probably be advertised in the fall.

In early March Patrick Dayton and I presented an update on the Woody Biomass project in Richland Center. About 70 people from a variety of backgrounds – Wisconsin DNR, representatives from energy companies, timber producers, and private landowners – attended. People were very interested in the project and asked many very good questions.

We are working with the Driftless Land Stewardship to quantify another potential woody biomass supply. For the project we are collecting and quantifying wood chip samples after a forestry mower has cleared an area. The forestry mower is typically used for clearing brushy areas such as sites infested with invasive species like buckthorn or honeysuckle. So far, we have collected samples from two sites.

In addition to working on the woody biomass project I have been involved with a few other activities. I marked 30 acres of non-biomass timber for Wisconsin DNR and two private landowners.

In November I took a two day class to become a certified plan writer which would enable me to write Managed Forest Law (MFL) management plans. In addition to taking the class I had to write two practice MFL plans that were reviewed by the DNR. I recently received a letter that said I completed all requirements necessary to be certified. I have also completed training to assist landowners who want to enroll their forests and tree plantations in a carbon credit trading program that is managed by the Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX).



Southwest Badger Biomass Forester
Aaron Wright planting a tree.

Biomass - Switchgrass Establishment and Harvesting Demonstration Project

Research Continues on Production Practices for Switchgrass

Steve Bertjens, NRCS Coordinator

The Southwest Badger RC&D Council is entering the second year of the “Switchgrass Establishment and Harvesting Demonstrations in Southwest Wisconsin” Project. Work is underway to implement fertility and second year management research trials on the 62 acres of switchgrass demonstrations established in 2008. The fertility trials will consist of the application of 0, 50 and 100 pounds of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0-24) per acre. The second year management trials will consist of the following: 1) application of 22 ounces of Glyphosate per acre; 2) application of 11 ounces of Journey per acre; 3) controlled burning; and 4) do nothing as a control. All of the second year management trials will be conducted by May 15th. The fertility trials will be conducted by June 1st. Harvesting of the research plots will occur in the fall, a minimum of two weeks after the first killing frost. We anticipate that the results of the 2nd year research will be available by January 1, 2010.

Driftless Area Initiative

David C. Wilson DAI Coordinator

Since the last newsletter, several noteworthy events related to the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI) have taken place. For starters, the DAI Board decided to pursue establishment as a private not-for-profit organization which will simplify fundraising efforts, while clarifying the relationship between DAI and the six Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils providing leadership to this multi-state effort. The DAI Board is in the process of modifying our by-laws to define these relationships, as well as to encourage more direct involvement of regional partners in setting the direction and priorities for the organization. DAI anticipates filing to incorporate in Wisconsin later this year, and will file with the IRS for 501c(3) status during the year following incorporation.

We are also pleased to announce that DAI was recently awarded a federal agricultural appropriation totaling \$291,000 for delivery of conservation technical assistance (CTA). These funds have been earmarked for the purpose of coordinating and promoting stewardship and sustainable land use in the rugged Driftless Area of Minnesota and Wisconsin. Allocated funds will be divided among a variety



Northeast Iowa RC&D President Marilyn Rubner joins with NRCS Chief David White, Iowa State Conservationist Richard Simms, and National Volunteer Coordinator Michele Eginore to present an award recognizing the efforts of Dolores Fishback to bring the Guttenberg, IA Riverfront Restoration project to fruition. Photo Courtesy of Julie MacSwain, NRCS – Minnesota.

of conservation projects to be conducted by Hiawatha Valley, River Country, and Southwest Badger RC&D Councils. To date, DAI has brought more than \$1.5 million in additional conservation funding into the four-state Driftless Area through appropriation requests. These funds have provided targeted conservation technical assistance to watersheds and priority projects in the region. DAI has also facilitated the allocation of an additional \$1.8 million to projects and practices meeting the stewardship needs of the rugged Driftless Area.

On Friday, April 24th, 2009 DAI celebrated Earth Day at the Trout Run Fish Hatchery near Decorah, Iowa. Many regional partners joined in celebrating this symbolic day, and the weather cooperated spectacularly with mostly sunny skies and temperatures in the mid 80's. State Conservationists Bill Hunt (MN), Pat Leavenworth (WI), Richard Simms (IA), and USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief David White joined with DAI to recognize the incredible cooperative effort being undertaken by conservation groups in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois. We were joined by representatives from several additional partner organizations including: Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Raptor Resource Project, and many more. These organizations have joined together with DAI to help achieve our mission 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.”

DAI will host a Bird Friendly Forestry Workshop at the Kickapoo Reserve and on private forest land near La Farge, Wisconsin on Saturday, June 6th, 2009. The workshop is being held in cooperation with the Kickapoo Woods Coop, Wisconsin DNR Forestry, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative, Audubon Society, and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. Funding for the project has been provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation through the Upper Mississippi River Basin Fund in cooperation with USDA-Forest Service and the Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership. Presentations and in-the-woods discussions will focus on improving habitat for migratory songbirds through sustainable forestry management. The workshop will include presentations on forest sustainability certification, birds and their habitat, and landscape-scale habitat considerations. Following a brief morning classroom session, participants will have the opportunity to walk with foresters and wildlife biologists as they discuss forest management issues and answer questions about management being done on a demonstration property a few miles north of La Farge. An optional birding hike will start from the Kickapoo Reserve Visitor's Center at 7:00 a.m. Please bring a picnic lunch, and contact DAI Coordinator David Wilson (608-723-6377 ext. 135 or David.Wilson@rcdnet.net) for more information and to RSVP for the event.

Forest Stewardship

Patrick Dayton, Forester

Old trees and young seedlings - two of people's favorite periods of a tree's life. The satisfaction of standing beneath a tall, century old tree or kneeling by a newly planted seedling has inspired more than a few people. The soils and temperate conditions of Southwest Wisconsin support the growth of high-quality oak, walnuts, cherries, maples, and other trees.

The stable growing forest resource that provides so many environmental benefits make Wisconsin an area that both draws and keeps visitors. Our mission as protectors of natural resources should be to reclaim hillsides and slopes that have been put under the plow for more sustainable uses. Our parallel duty is to further the economics of forestry and other ethically driven conservation land uses to ensure that people who want to live and work on the land are able. One way to do this is by adding value to our resources so we can export products (wood, paper, energy) to parts of our country and world that do not have the resources we do. There is much talk today of changing our economy to one that is more sustainable; responsible forestry is right in line with those discussions.

Friends of the Platte River

Tammy Enz, Project Coordinator

The Friends of the Platte River will hold our 2009 annual meeting on Monday, May 18, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at the Dickeyville Community Center, located two blocks northeast of the Dickeyville Firehouse on East Avenue. The featured speakers at this year's meeting will include:

- Brad Pfaff – (U.S. Congressman Ron Kind's office) to speak about Congressman Kind's ideas for improving river health and river restoration activities in Southwest Wisconsin.
- Hank DeHaan –(U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) to speak about opportunities for local groups to make a difference in river restoration project with Corps assistance.
- Laura MacFarland – (Wisconsin River Alliance) to speak about aquatic invasive species monitoring program in the Platte River watershed.

We will also be reviewing 2008 activities and upcoming plans and voting for the 2009 board of directors.



UW-Madison researchers collect data for the Platte River sediment study.

Results of a study examining the causes and effects of sedimentation in the lower Platte River will be available at the annual meeting. Last fall UW-Madison graduate students visited the site with civil and environmental engineering professor John Hoopes to perform field measurements and to assess the site.

Landowners' involvement in water quality improvement is of crucial importance to the Friends of the Platte River, as the conservation practices which landowners use have a great impact on water quality. Although many factors affect landowners' attitudes and actions toward conservation practices on their land, a major finding revealed by an Iowa State University research project revealed that many

landowners lack a connection to the rivers and streams in the watershed. Therefore, they lack a socio-economic incentive to keep the rivers clean. Efforts to improve conservation behaviors are likely to be hindered by this absence of connection. The Friends of the Platte River focus our efforts on providing venues for landowners in the watershed to develop a connection to local streams and rivers as well as developing awareness and education of water quality issues in the watershed. This connection can be developed in part by increasing river related recreational activities and providing educational opportunities targeted at river health, such as getting people involved in river monitoring programs.

Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area *Katie Abbott, Project Coordinator*

Spring is always a fun time in the MRPHA because the earliest birds and plants start showing up, such as the Eastern meadowlark and pasque flower. Other birds and flowers won't be far behind! This year's burn season has been challenging as usual. Last year we were dealing with very wet conditions, while this year we are experiencing unusually low humidity, which is a dangerous condition that makes it unsafe to burn. There are always a few good days to burn each spring, however, and with flexibility the partners have been able to get some of their scheduled burns completed.

Frogs are another group that starts to emerge in early spring. We held a frog field trip on a restored stream and wetland site owned by The Nature Conservancy. Twenty adults and kids from the community showed up to learn more about these interesting creatures. We were able to hear plenty of chorus frogs, spring peepers, and pickerel frogs, and saw chorus frogs up close. It is amazing how much sound can come out of such a little frog! Everyone learned new information about the lives of frogs and how they are studied. It was a fun trip, led by two UW-Madison students that have conducted research on the site. We hope to make it an annual event.



Participants learn about frogs in the Military Ridge area.

Lots of other outreach has been going on, as well. DNR Wildlife Biologist Mike Foy, Farm Bill Biologist Melissa Keenan, and I recorded a radio piece about grasslands for

the Green County radio station, and I gave a presentation about prairies at the Mount Horeb library. The Prairie Enthusiasts, DNR, and a private landowner teamed up for a prescribed burn that was featured on the Channel 3 weekend news. Several partners and I worked with the Dodgeville Chamber of Commerce to apply to host a "Making it Home" environmental film festival through the Wisconsin Humanities Council. Many other outreach materials are being developed, including a new MRPHA brochure, a website, a birding guide, and grassland bird poster, among others. These products will be funded by a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Society and will give us more tools to promote grassland conservation and the MRPHA project.

As always I continued to assist landowners with program sign-ups and land management. I helped eight landowners with their burn plans, eight more with general advice about programs, prairie, or weed control, helped one apply for WHIP, signed one up for SAFE, and worked with several others with their in-progress SAFE applications. I sent out many letters promoting SAFE, WHIP, and EQIP, resulting in several interested landowners, and sent out mid-contract management reminders to CRP and SAFE participants.

It has been an active grant season, as well. The MRPHA partnership received funding from the DNR's State Wildlife Grant, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, and the Fish and Wildlife Service's Fish Habitat Restoration Fund. These grants will help us manage prairie and grassland, improve several stream stretches, and maintain staff. Applications were also submitted for Pheasant and Turkey Stamp Grants, and we should find out those results in May.

Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative *Dennis Rooney, Grazing Specialist*

My first month of work as a RC&D employee has been quite interesting to say the least. I've been working quite a bit in Grant County with farmers that are doing EQIP work in their pastures. Grant County is strongly encouraging all EQIP applicants to meet with the grazing specialist. I think this is a great idea. Having me go out and talk with these farmers about their pastures has opened the door for me to help them understand how they can improve their pastures and be able to graze more livestock on the same acres of land. A couple of practices I have emphasized are: 1) getting legumes into the pastures which will supply nitrogen for the grasses; and 2) rotational grazing which gives the grasses and legumes a chance to regrow. I try to help farmers get the most out of the sun, rain, and soil to produce a salable product (i.e., meat, milk, eggs).

Upcoming Events

May 28, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Southwest Badger Personnel Committee
Lancaster, Wisconsin

June 5, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. - noon

Quarterly Southwest Badger Council Meeting
Richland Center, Wisconsin

June 6, 2009 - 8:30 a.m.

Bird Friendly Forestry Workshop
Kickapoo Reserve, La Farge, Wisconsin

June 14-17, 2009

2009 National RC&D Conference
Albuquerque, New Mexico

September 4, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. - noon

Quarterly Southwest Badger Council Meeting
Richland Center, Wisconsin

December 4, 2009 - 10:00 a.m. - noon

Quarterly Southwest Badger Council Meeting
Richland Center, Wisconsin

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

Welcome Dennis!

Dennis Rooney joined the Southwest Badger RC&D staff on April 1, 2009 as the Grazing Specialist and Coordinator for the Crawford County Grazing Initiative.

Dennis moved to Wisconsin from Iowa with his parents in 1960. After graduating from Seneca High School he worked construction for a couple years, but he wanted to farm. He was able to start farming by going in on thirds on a farm and then moving to a fifty-fifty split on a farm in Preston, Wisconsin.

In 1973 he bought a farm in Eastman Township in Crawford County and began dairy farming with his family (wife, Mary and sons, Tim and Brian). Dennis and his family originally became interested in rotational grazing in 1994. They joined the Great River Grazing group and attended pasture walks, grazing conferences, and seminars. In 1998 they started using rotational grazing for their 80 cows and retrofitted a double 10 swing parlor in their 60 stall barn. In 2004, Tim and his family (wife, Pam and six children) took over the farm. At this time, Dennis started working with Crawford County UW-Extension Agriculture Agent, Vance Haugen consulting with dairy farmers in Wisconsin on retrofitting low cost parlors in their existing barns.

Dennis works out of the USDA Service Center at 37500 U.S. Highway 18 in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. He can be reached at (608) 326-7179 ext. 113, (608) 485-0692 (cell), or dennis.rooney@ces.uwex.edu.



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Making Things Happen!