



Badger Report

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

November 2007

Council Secures \$100,000 Biomass Grant

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) recently awarded Southwest Badger RC&D Council a \$100,000 grant for a project titled “True Costs of Harvesting Woody Biomass in the Driftless Area of the Midwest”. The goal of this project is to determine whether low grade, under-utilized woody biomass is a viable and cost competitive feedstock for energy production. The project will implement a minimum of ten biomass harvesting demonstrations covering more than 100 acres. The majority of the demonstrations will be conducted in the Southwest Badger area, but we will also be working with the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI) to implement demonstration sites in Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota. The data collected from this project will allow us to quantify the harvesting cost and volume of available woody biomass on a per acre basis. Assigning real numbers to these costs will allow businesses harvesting, aggregating, and using woody biomass to make sound financial decisions. The outcome of this project could lead to the improvement of thousands of acres of woodland by creating markets for low grade timber that needs to be removed in order to increase the vigor and health of the forest. On October 9th, the council hired Aaron Wright as the Biomass Forester to organize harvesting demonstrations, assist landowners with setting up

biomass sales, tally data from the harvests, and develop the final report (see related article page 3).

River Country RC&D recieved a second USFS grant for a joint project between Southwest Badger RC&D and River Country. This project was submitted by the Councils on behalf of the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI). The project will conduct three cable yarding demonstrations in Wisconsin and Iowa. Cable yarding is a method of logging used in the mountainous area of the Pacific Northwest. Cable yarding may be the solution to sustainably harvesting woody biomass on the steep slopes of the Driftless Area in western and southwestern Wisconsin. River Country RC&D will use the \$100,000 grant to hire a logging firm to conduct the cable yarding demonstrations in fall 2008. A minimum of one cable yarding demonstration will be held in the Southwest Badger area. We are planning to hold that demonstration in conjunction with the 2008 Light on the Land Forestry Field day.

Southwest Badger RC&D Council, Inc.
Annual Meeting
December 14, 2007
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Ramada (White House)
1450 Veterans Drive, Richland Center

Inside:

Staff Reports

Driftless Area Initiative	2
Forest Stewardship Initiative	4
Forest Invasives Species Project	4
Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative	5
Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.....	6
Friends of the Platte River	7
Welcome, Aaron!	3
Council Awarded “Outstanding” Council.....	3
Upcoming Events.....	3
Get to Know Your Council Member	Back Cover

Southwest Badger RC&D

150 W Alona Lane
Lancaster, WI 53813

Phone: (608)723-6377 ext. 4

Fax: (608)723-4286

Email: swbadger@mhtc.net

Website: www.swbadger.com

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

La Crosse 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
katie.abbott@rcdnet.net

Steven Bertjens, NRCS Coordinator
steve.bertjens@wi.usda.gov

Dan Bohlin, Forestry Invasive Species Specialist
endoway1@tds.net

Patrick Dayton, Stewardship Forester
pdayton@vernoncounty.org

Tammy Enz, Friends of the Platte River Coordinator
platteriverwisconsin@yahoo.com

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

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

Aaron Wright, Biomass Forester
awright@vernoncounty.org

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

Staff Reports

Driftless Area Initiative Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Regional Partners

David C. Wilson DAI Coordinator

The Driftless Area Initiative (DAI) is pleased to announce that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been agreed on with several major partners. Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Natural Resource Conservation Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have recently added their signatures to this agreement. The MOU outlines shared resource priorities and collaborative strategies for addressing them.

In short, signatories to the MOU agree to establish a framework for cooperation and collaboration in the Driftless Area of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. This framework relates to the protection, management, and restoration of the region's resources. Priorities include: surface and ground water quality; aquatic biodiversity; forest, savanna, and grassland habitat; the sustainability of the area's rural agricultural landscape and economy; and the protection of sensitive, threatened and endangered plants, animals and communities in this unique multi-state region.

Although the Driftless Area Initiative has engaged with regional partners for collaborative planning on projects from the start, this MOU formalizes the commitment to work together through shared strategies to solve soil, water, wildlife habitat, and rural economic challenges. This MOU strengthens regional partnerships fostered by the DAI by articulating a shared focus on the natural resources of the Driftless Area. The sharpened focus created by this partnership will help stakeholders throughout the four-state area to engage in collaborative projects and planning to address the full range of concerns facing our watersheds, and communities.

MOU Partners will work together to achieve the following common goals:

1. Maintain an economically viable rural and agricultural landscape by encouraging conservation management on private lands.
2. Provide and encourage traditional recreational opportunities which are compatible with the conservation goals of the DAI.
3. Integrate best applied science within the Driftless Area through continued monitoring and adaptive management.
4. Provide and maintain viable forest, grassland, and aquatic habitat for the many plants and animals that depend on this landscape for their survival, including area-dependent birds,

(Staff Reports continued on page 3)

Welcome Aaron!



Aaron Wright joined the Southwest Badger RC&D staff on October 9, 2007 as a Forester for the Biomass project. Aaron was born and raised in central Illinois. He received his Associate of Applied Science degree in Forest Technology from Southeastern Illinois College in 2001 then received his Bachelor of Science degree in Forest Management from Southern Illinois University.

While in school he worked for the Shawnee National Forest as a Forestry Aid and a Survey Technician. After graduating from Southern Illinois University Aaron worked for the NRCS as a Soil Conservation Technician in Monroe County, Illinois. He transferred from the NRCS to the Huron-Manistee National Forest in northern Michigan where he was a Forestry Technician doing timber sale preparation work.

As the Biomass Forester for Southwest Badger he will be gathering information on what the true costs are of harvesting under-utilized, commercially marginal timber in the Driftless Area of the Upper Midwest. He will be responsible for setting up harvest demonstration sites, cruising timber, and collecting information on volume of material after harvest. He is already underway setting up demonstration sites and cruising timber.

Aaron works at the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation office at 220 Airport Road in Viroqua, Wisconsin. He can be reached at (608) 434-7519, (608) 637-5479, or awright@vernoncounty.org.

Southwest Badger RC&D Named “Outstanding” Council

Southwest Badger RC&D Council was presented the 2007 Outstanding Performance by a Council award at the 2007 Wisconsin Association of R&D Councils Annual Conference in Tomah in September. Congratulations to all Southwest Badger Council Members for receiving this much overdue award. This award is recognition for all the time and effort you put into the Council. In addition, Steven Bertjens received the 2007 Outstanding Performance by a Coordinator Award. Congratulations Steve!



John Schindler, Patrick Dayton, Roger Reynolds, Don Bina, and Steven Bertjens after receiving the “Outstanding Performance by a Council” and “Outstanding Performance by a Coordinator” awards.

Upcoming Events

December 1, 2007 - 9:00 a.m.

Friends of the Platte River Quarterly Meeting
Dickeyville Community Center
Dickeyville, Wisconsin

December 5-7, 2007

Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Association
Annual Conference
Madison, Wisconsin

December 14, 2007 - 10:00 a.m.

Southwest Badger RC&D Council Annual Meeting
Richland Center, Wisconsin

February 25-27, 2008

National Association of RC&Ds Leadership Forum
Washington, DC

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

1. native mussels, trout, and other cold and warm water fish species.
2. Work cooperatively with local communities and stakeholder groups to build awareness and support for protection and restoration of the Driftless Area and engage them in stewardship.

The DAI expects the list of participating agencies, organizations, and local partners to grow as the Driftless Area Partnership defines itself and builds momentum through collaborative planning and action.

Forest Stewardship Initiative

Patrick Dayton, Forester

Over the past three months I have written management plans for 165 acres and marked timber on 63 acres, mainly for the biomass project. I welcomed Aaron Wright, the new Southwest Badger forester to our staff - Aaron's desk is next to mine in Viroqua. I attended the Army Corps of Engineers bottomland hardwood regeneration seminar, the Wisconsin Association of RC&Ds Annual Conference in Tomah, and the National Tree Farmer Convention near Sun Prairie. I also conferred with the Viroqua Tree Board and presented at a Forestry Field Day for middle school kids at Norskedalen.

The Forestry Field Day impacted me enough that I would like to talk about it for a moment. In a time when children are being drawn away from the woodlands and the outdoors to television and computers it is important that we make efforts to educate young ones about natural resource stewardship. When I was writing the management plan for Norskedalen I had a few opportunities to discuss the situation with Diane Gunvalson, Norskedalen's Executive Director. One of her priorities is to use Norskedalen's woodlands to reconnect with children. To make sure the next generation knows that conservation is just as important on our lands in our backyards here in Wisconsin as it is in the tropical rainforests far away. In working with kids I have found that they have the typical fears of spiders, snakes, poison ivy, ticks, and bears you might expect. However, walking through the woods and learning about the benefits humans receive from forests, how trees grow, what trees need to survive, and safety precautions people should take when working or recreating outdoors does impact

their views. The kids at the Field Day had some very good questions and were glad to be outside.

Although my main job duties entail working with landowners on the management of their lands; I am willing to take time out of my schedule to spend a few hours with youngsters in the forest, possibly mentoring the next generation of foresters.

Forest Invasive Species Project

Dan Bohlin, Invasive Species Specialist

Over the past three months, I have continued visiting private woodland owners' properties. The properties varied in size from 3 to 400 acres in Grant, Crawford, Iowa, Lafayette, and Sauk counties. Several landowners were quite committed to working with their neighbors to spread the word on exotic invasive plants and to engaging contractors to help with controlling their various invasive plants problems.

Several group presentations also enabled me to get the word out on invasive plants. In mid-September, I did three presentations to attendees of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association annual meeting field day in Sauk County. Several landowners who heard me followed up by requesting one-on-one site visits to their properties. In mid-September, I talked with landowners attending the Farm Technology Days in Green County. Some of the discussions were with people from Green County, but none followed up with a visit request. Interestingly, of all the counties in the Southwest Badger area, I've yet to have one site visit to a property in Green County.

At the end of September, I did a field day with the Izaak Walton League Chapter in Lafayette County near Benton. Turnout was low, but the Chapter's board of directors was quite enthusiastic about controlling the invasive plant problem on the property and wants to do another field day in Spring 2008 to focus on garlic mustard. The Chapter is tentatively planning a field day for the end of April when garlic mustard will be quite noticeable. One of the board members procured a skid-steer, so I was able to demonstrate my tree-puller attachment that an operator can use to pull exotic invasive shrubs out of the ground. Pulling is my personal preferred control method. Compared to cutting and using chemicals, pulling is definitive. When using a skid-steer, the hydraulics are doing most of the work; and

unlike chemicals, one doesn't have to wait to see the effectiveness of the effort – results are immediate, quite evident and very gratifying.

Working with a private landowner and one of the DNR foresters in Sauk County, I hosted a field day in the Baraboo Hills at the end of October that focused on identifying and controlling buckthorn. Large pockets of buckthorn are getting established at select sites in the Hills. Private landowners must confront the problem in order to preserve plant and habitat diversity in this ecologically important area. Once again, attendance was low (about six individual landowners) but those that did come were enthusiastic, committed, asked many questions, and left determined to control the problem. I provided several handouts to attendees related to buckthorn and McFarlanes' (an implement dealer in Sauk City) generously provided a skid-steer that enabled me to once again demonstrate the tree-puller attachment. This was a perfect time of the year to focus on buckthorn since it was still green and thus quite visible in the woodland understory.

In addition to these individual landowner and group efforts, I also did some writing. I corresponded via e-mail with the National Wild Turkey Foundation. The latest edition of its publication, *Get in the Game*, had an article that encouraged deer hunters to plant and propagate honeysuckle because deer like it. Unfortunately, the article did not identify the species of honeysuckle (i.e., native vs. exotic invasive), and could unwittingly contribute to the exotic invasive honeysuckle explosion in wooded areas. I called this problem to the attention of the publication's editor, received an acknowledgement and mailed him a copy of the UW-Extension publication, *Invasive Exotic Shrub Honeysuckle, Major Threats to Midwestern Woodlands*.

I also wrote a short article on my personal efforts to battle buckthorn on my property. The article will appear in the Fall edition of *Midwest Woodlands & Prairies*, a quarterly journal "dedicated to the wise management of natural resources." If the article is well-received, I'll likely follow-up with an article on multi-flora rose for the Winter edition. I'm planning a third article on garlic mustard for Spring 2008 when this plant poses the most visible problem to woodland owners.

Finally, the outstanding publication, *Invasive Plants of the Upper Midwest, An Illustrated Guide to Their Identification and Control* by Elizabeth J. Czarapata is still available. The UW-Press publisher highlights it in its catalogue as a current best-seller. Anyone looking for one definitive

source of information on invasive plants should have this publication on the bookshelf. I continually refer to it, especially to confirm an invasive plant's identity during the dormant season and when considering chemical applications for controlling it.

Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative

Gene Schriefer, Grazing Specialist

Cheese From the Pasture Strikes a Chord: Consumers like the distinctive taste of cheese made from the milk of grass-fed cows

By Bob Mitchell

UW-Madison - College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

News and Events, August 8, 2007

Consumers can taste a difference in cheese made from the milk of cows that graze on pasture, and they like what they taste, according to a study by two University of Wisconsin-Madison professors. That's good news for Wisconsin, where many cheesemakers are betting their futures on distinctive artisan cheeses, and where roughly one quarter of the dairy farms use a managed grazing system.

Scott Rankin, an associate professor of food science, and David Combs, a professor of dairy science, recently completed a three-year research project to explore the differences in flavor and other characteristics of cheese from pasture fed cows. They made and analyzed Cheddar from milk produced under three feeding systems—cows fed exclusively on pasture, cows fed on pasture plus grain, and cows fed on a mixed ration of grains, minerals, vitamins and protein supplements, and alfalfa silage. Each cheese was aged two to four months and then sent to North Carolina to be tasted by a panel of expert cheese evaluators, as well as a consumer taste panel.

The consumer panel tended to give the pasture-plus-grain cheese highest marks for flavor, texture, and overall liking. Forced to say which of the three they liked best, 60 percent chose the pasture-plus-grain cheese.

The expert tasters noted a significant "grassy note" in both pasture-based cheeses, especially in the pasture-only cheese. The mixed-ration cheese had a more buttery flavor than the pasture-only cheese, according to the study. There was also

(Staff Reports continued on page 6)

(Staff Reports continued from page 5)

a marked difference in color: The mixed-ration cheese was whitest, while the cheese from cows fed pasture plus grains was the most yellow. Pasture-based cheese was



Color differences between the cheeses were pronounced, with the pasture-plus-grain cheese the darkest and the mixed-ration cheese (labeled TMR) the lightest.

also consistently softer than cheese from the other two treatments.

Rankin says pasture-milk cheese may not be an option for many cheesemakers, because milk from pasture-fed cows isn't available year-round, and it's likely to vary according to differences in weather and growing conditions. "Most cheesemakers are looking for absolute consistency in the milk they use, because they are producing for a market that demands a very consistent product. If you have 30 trucks coming in, and you need to make a consistent product for a national pizza chain, the milk has to be the same today as it will be a year from now," he says. But for specialized cheesemakers, who often produce cheese in smaller scales for epicurean markets, the findings show that using milk from grazing cows can yield a product with added value.

Rankin says the idea of developing distinctive pasture based cheese marries the state's strong interest in managed grazing with its marketing strength—novel, fine tasting cheeses. "Other states may out-produce Wisconsin in terms of mass production of cheese, because it's less expensive to produce milk elsewhere," Rankin says. "We can't win the battle of mass production. We can win the battle on quality."

The study is summarized in Research Brief 73, "How is cheese from pastured cows unique?," available online from the UW-Madison's Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems at www.cias.wisc.edu or by calling CIAS at (608) 265-3020. Funds for the study came from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board and the Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.

Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

Katie Abbott, Project Coordinator

As plants and animals around us prepare for the coming winter, conservationists are wrapping up much of their field work. Fall can be a good time to collect seeds, burn fields, and plant prairie. Many people have started their tree and brush cutting efforts, which will continue through the winter.

In the last few months, much of my time has been devoted to various USDA programs. In late summer, I visited several fields that enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for another 10 years. I listened very carefully in an attempt to find the state threatened Henslow's sparrow. I heard them in a few fields, and was able to exempt those fields from the required mid-contract management practices that could potentially degrade the habitat for this rare bird.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) provides attractive incentives for landowners to buffer surface water with permanent vegetation. While vegetation and pollutant management on the uplands is extremely important to our ground and surface water quality, riparian buffers are another tool to help improve our local streams. In the grassland area of southwest Wisconsin, landowners can enroll land that is up to 1000 feet from surface water. In the last few months, ten landowners in the MRPHA have started or finished the enrollment process, and there is still time for a few more to get in before the program ends on December 31st.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) provides cost-sharing to improve non-game wildlife habitat. In southwestern Wisconsin, much of the pre-settlement landscape was covered by prairie or oak savanna, and WHIP can help landowners restore those ecosystems. I am working with three landowners that have already enrolled in the program to plan their brush management and prairie plantings. There was no WHIP sign up this year, and the future of this program is uncertain. We await the next Farm Bill to see if it will be available next year.



An example of an open-grown oak that indicates a past oak savanna.

Another USDA program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), is finishing its enrollment for this year. Several landowners in the project area are taking advantage of these cost-sharing funds to implement agricultural practices that will improve their soil and water resources.

Finally, the MRPHA partnership submitted a proposal for southwest Wisconsin to participate in the State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) program. SAFE is a new CRP program targeted at creating habitat for high priority wildlife species. The SAFE program hopes to enroll 11,000 acres of land in Wisconsin. In southwestern Wisconsin, the priority wildlife species are grassland birds.

The Partnership recently submitted grant proposals to three other funding programs - the Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund, the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, and the Alliant Energy Foundation Community Grant. These grants would help us with both outreach and land management efforts.

Outreach efforts continue to move forward. Both the Mt. Horeb Mail and The Dodgeville Chronicle regularly print my natural resources articles, and the Chronicle recently featured the MRHPA project in their full page "Spotlight" section. We are planning a landowner workshop next year, which will educate up to 50 landowners about various topics, including invasive species, prairie restoration, woodlot management, and surface water. Finally, we have sent a letter to local agriculture and biology teachers asking them about their nature-related curriculum and if they would be willing to participate in presentations or field days offered by the partners. This information will help us in our efforts to assist teachers and educate local children about nature and conservation.

Platte River Citizen's Group

Tammy Enz, Project Coordinator

The Friends of the Platte River are proud to announce that thanks to the tireless effort and hard work on the part of William Brewer, a founding member of the Friends of the Platte River, the group has successfully obtained nonprofit 501(c)3 status. Having this status will greatly increase the effectiveness of the group and our ability to continue securing grants and donations.

We have also been happy to continue working with the University of Wisconsin Platteville to further the group's mission. Please plan to attend our quarterly meeting on Saturday, December 1, 2007 to hear UW-Platteville senior engineering students present their preliminary design for improvements at Banfield boat launch area. These students have put a considerable amount of work into studying the launch site and erosion issues at the park and are putting together a very interesting presentation.

The students are working on the project through the direction of Grant County Parks Commission with assistance from UW-Extension and the Friends of the Platte River. The presentation will be at 9:00 am at the Dickeyville Community Center, located two blocks northeast of the Dickeyville Firehouse on East Avenue. Our quarterly board meeting will be held following the presentation.

Camie Knollenberg from the US Army Corps of Engineers will also be attending this meeting. Camie participated in an October site visit to the Platte River from the Corps of Engineers and will be on hand to field any follow-up questions from the visit.

**Protect your
trees.**



Leave a Legacy

A lot can undermine your tree or shrub planting success. Don't let deer, rodents or severe weather ruin your reforestation efforts.

Use Tree Pro Tree or Shrub Protectors to give your trees a fighting chance.

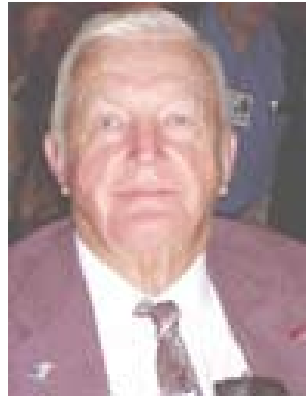
**www.treeprotection.org
608-723-6377 ext. 136**

Southwest Badger RC&D - *Your conservation partner*

Get to Know Your Council Member

Bob Hoesly

Bob Hoesly was one of the founding members of the Southwest Badger RC&D Council and he was one of the four signatories on the Council's bylaws and constitution in 1992. Bob has served as the Council's Secretary for 15 years and he has been active on many committees. Bob served as the council representative on the Wisconsin Association of RC&D Councils (WARCD) for seven years and served as president of the association for two years. Bob was awarded the Southwest Badger RC&D Outstanding Council member in 2003.



Bob was elected to the Green County Board of Supervisors in 1970 and he served as the County Board Chairman for 28 years. He has served as the chair of the Green County Department of Conservation for 33 years. In addition, Bob has served on the Town Board for more than 40 years.

Bob was born and raised on a dairy farm near New Glarus that he and his wife purchased in 1968. Bob and Olga have four children, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Bob is fourth generation Swiss and he is very proud of his heritage.

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.



Southwest Badger RC&D
150 W Alona Ln.
Lancaster, WI 53813

Making Things Happen!