

## Contact Your Legislators Regarding Cuts to RC&D Program

The RC&D Program is cut in half to \$26 million in the President's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2007. This cut is accomplished by eliminating more than 225 coordinator positions and requiring the remaining 150 coordinators to serve multiple RC&D areas. To restore funding to the program, every council member and supporter of RC&D nationwide needs to help. **Contact your legislators today** and ask them to restore the RC&D budget to \$56 million. It is best to fax your letters as they will be most effective if they arrive by March 3rd. Please feel free to use the following talking points when contacting the legislators about the RC&D program or contact the Southwest Badger office for a sample letter.

A few the many National RC&D accomplishments in FY05:

- More than 550 new businesses were created with RC&D Council assistance.
- More than 3,700 businesses were expanded by RC&D Councils.
- At least 4,100 businesses were financially assisted.
- Approximately 5,940 jobs were created.
- Councils helped improve 550,750 acres of lakes and 9,835 miles of streams.
- More than 8,960 workshops and training sessions were held.
- Close to 5,341,400 economic or socially disadvantaged people assisted nationwide.

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](mailto:angie.wright@rcdnet.net).



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



# Badger Report

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

February 2006

## A Year in Review ~ 2005

Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council had a very busy and exciting year in 2005. The Council secured \$166,580 in new grant funding. Three new staff members joined our team - Southwest Badger/Kickapoo Woods Forester, Patrick Dayton; Driftless Area Initiative Coordinator, David Wilson; and Driftless Area Initiative Communication and Education Specialist, Jackie Blackburn. Exciting new projects began, ongoing projects continued to shine, and existing relationships with landowners and conservationists strengthened.

### Highlights of 2005

#### Legislative Action

- Mark Shepard attended the RC&D Leadership Forum in Washington D.C. and urged legislators to appropriate funds for the Driftless Area Initiative (DAI).
- RC&D program funding was restored to previous level.
- Don Bina worked hard to get Senator Kohl to submit an Agriculture Appropriation for the DAI.

#### Financial Security

- Council set aside \$12,000 in three CDs in 2005.
- Tree shelter sales reached an all-time record profit of more than \$12,263.
- Finance Committee developed strategies to ensure long-term funding for Southwest Badger administrative positions.

#### New & Exciting Projects in 2005

- Viola Urban Forestry Project - \$4,500 for tree removal
- Driftless Area Initiative kicked into high gear with - \$263,000 in Appropriation, and a \$106,000 grant from NRCS
- Co-Sponsor of the North American Agroforestry Conference
- 3rd Annual Light on the Land Forestry Field Day
- Portable Stream Crossing for Logging Operations
- Contract with Lafayette County LCD to continue work in the Yellowstone Lake Watershed
- Formed Agroforestry Work Group and submitted project grants

#### Inside:

Project Updates .....	2
Rain Gardens - A New Solution for Stormwater Management .....	4
DNR Launches Landowner Incentives Program .....	5
Welcome Jackie! .....	6
Bina Attends Leadership Forum in Washington, DC .....	6
Diverse Agriculture Options Workshop .....	6
Council Receives Contract for Portable Stream Crossing ..	6
Council Member Training Offered .....	7
Building Economic Strength Together Conference .....	7
National RC&D Conference .....	7
RC&D Federal Budget Approved for Fiscal Year 2006 ...	7
Upcoming Events .....	7
Contact Your Legislators Regarding Cuts to RC&D ...	Back

# Making Things Happen!

*The mission of Southwest Badger RC&D Council is to implement natural resource conservation, managed growth, and sustainable rural economic development in Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk, and Vernon Counties.*

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

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

Lafayette County—Dean Thoreson,  
**Lance McNaughton (Treasurer)**

Richland County—Bill Seep,  
**Mark Shepard (Vice President)**,  
Lawrence Sowle

Sauk County—Lester Wiese, Pamela Karg  
Vernon County—George Nettum,  
Roald Gunderson

#### Staff

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

Jackie Blackburn, Communication and  
Education Specialist  
jaclyn.blackburn@wi.usda.gov

Patrick Dayton, Stewardship Forester  
pdayton@vernoncounty.org

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

Barb Thompson, Bookkeeper  
swbadger@mhtc.net

Kristin Westad, Military Ridge Prairie  
Heritage Area Coordinator  
kristin.westad@rcdnet.net

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

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

## Project Updates

### Driftless Area Initiative

David Wilson, DAI Coordinator

The fall and winter have gone by quickly here in the Driftless Area! It seems like the leaves were falling just yesterday, but the snow we have will be melting soon to make way for new growth on the land. As the weather begins to warm, we at the Driftless Area Initiative are continuing with projects and initiatives to help lessen the effects of sediment and nutrient runoff being carried to our streams and rivers with the snow-melt and spring rains. We are also gearing up for landowner workshops with the local woods co-ops and forestry associations.

Regional bird habitat priorities have been identified over the past several months through a cooperative DAI effort involving ecologists and foresters from throughout the Driftless Area. The first of several workshops presenting this information is tentatively set for April 29th near Soldier's Grove, Wisconsin. Plans are being made, with the Northern Illinois Forestry Association, for a May 16th field day at Schurmeier Forest south of Elizabeth, Illinois. Other workshops are also in the works.

The April 29th workshop will provide forestry and songbird habitat information to Kickapoo Woods Co-op and Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WVOA) Bad Axe Chapter members. Other interested people are also welcome to attend. The workshop will be led by Wisconsin DNR foresters and wildlife biologists, with a summary of information about regional bird habitat priorities provided by David Wilson. Major goals of the workshops will be: provide an overview of forestry and bird habitat related issues, explain the relationship/interdependence between forests and birds, illustrate ways in which landowners can make decisions to benefit birds, and identify assistance available to help landowners manage for economic and wildlife benefits.

David has also been working to facilitate discussions of multi-state and multi-organizational projects to address regional resource priorities. Initial agreement to pursue a cooperative, four-state effort to develop continuing education workshops for private and agency foresters, wildlife biologists, educators, students, and interested landowners was made. Initial commitments of cooperation from state DNRs have been given. These workshops will lead to a greater sharing of information and methodology between foresters and wildlife biologists, facilitating effective forest habitat management. (cont. pg. 3)

## Council Member Training Offered

The Wisconsin Association of RC&D Councils will be offering a council member training on May 19 and 20, 2006, at the Lions Camp near Rosholt, Wisconsin. The training will consist of concurrent break-out sessions that will be applicable to both new and experienced council members. Thanks to a grant from NRCS, there will be no cost to attend the training. Contact Steve Bertjens if you are interested in registering for this training.

### *Building Economic Strength Together*

#### Southwest Wisconsin's BEST conference

The 6th annual Southwest Wisconsin Regional Economic Development Coalition Conference, slated for Tuesday, April 4, 2006, from 12:00 to 8:30 p.m., brings together business owners, entrepreneurs, educators, community leaders, lenders, economic development professionals, and government leaders to learn about the latest economic development news for the tri-state region, and network with others who share a regional economic development perspective. This year's conference focuses on identifying resources and assets for building regional success.

Featured speaker, David Beurle hails from the land "down-under" - Australia. He is the Founder and Principal of Innovative Leadership Australia. David splits his time between Australia and the United States, as he pursues his passion for community revitalization and creating vibrant and prosperous regions. David holds a firm conviction that the future of rural areas lies in the hands of the local people.

The keynote presentation will be followed by short breakout sessions. A social hour will precede dinner and the evening program. The dinner program will feature presentation of regional awards and a wrap-up by Beurle.

Cost is \$45 per participant, which includes conference materials, refreshments, and dinner. Discounts are available for students and groups of three or more. For more information, contact the UW-Platteville Office of Continuing Education by phone at 1-888-281-9472 or visit [www.uwplatt.edu/cont\\_ed](http://www.uwplatt.edu/cont_ed).

## RC&D National Conference

The National Association of Resource Conservation and Development Council's National Conference will be held in Savannah, Georgia, on June 18-21, 2006. The national conference is only held once every three years. The Wisconsin Association of RC&Ds will provide up to \$500 to each RC&D to help defray expenses. If you are interested in attending please call the Southwest Badger RC&D office for an agenda and registration information. The registration deadline is May 19. Additional information can also be found at [www.rcdnet.org](http://www.rcdnet.org).

### RC&D Federal Budget Approved for Fiscal Year 2006

On Wednesday, October 26, 2005, House and Senate Conferees filed the report on H. R. 2744 that makes fiscal year 2006 appropriations for the programs and activities of the Agriculture Department, for rural development, for the Food and Drug Administration, and related agencies. The House and Senate Conferees agreed to appropriate the RC&D Program at \$51,300,000.

## Upcoming Events

#### March 9, 2006

Diverse Agriculture Options Workshop  
Southwest Wisconsin Technical College  
Fennimore, Wisconsin

#### March 10, 2006

Southwest Badger Council Meeting  
Richland Center, Wisconsin

#### April 4, 2006

Building Economic Strength Together - 6th Annual  
SW WI Regional Econ. Dev. Coalition Conference  
Platteville, Wisconsin

#### May 19-20, 2006

Wisconsin Assoc. of RC&Ds Council Training  
Rosholt, Wisconsin

#### June 18- 21, 2006

National Association of RC&Ds Annual Conference  
Savannah, GA

## Welcome Jackie!



Hi! My name is Jackie Blackburn, I'm the newest addition to the Southwest Badger RC&D staff. Prior to joining the Southwest Badger team, I spent almost three years with NRCS as a student employee while attending UW-Platteville.

Other agricultural experience includes research with Pioneer Hi-Bred and private agronomists, work on dairy farms, and soils judging. I graduated from UW-Platteville in December of 2005 with a Bachelor of Science in Communications, specializing in Broadcast Production, and minors in Soil and Crop Science and Public Relations. So far, my time with Southwest Badger has been spent on communications and outreach activities and assisting NRCS with the Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up in the Grant - Little Maquoketa watershed.

## Bina Attends Leadership Forum in Washington, DC

Southwest Badger RC&D president, Don Bina attended the National RC&D Leadership Forum in Washington, D.C. on February 6-9. The Leadership Forum provides vital training to council members on how to work with legislators to ensure that they are well versed on the RC&D program. Don along with RC&D Council members and staff from River Country RC&D had breakfast with Senator Herb Kohl and met with his staff to discuss restoring RC&D Program funding to the 2007 budget (see article on back page) and to request a \$1.6 million appropriation for the Driftless Area Initiative. The group also met with staff from Senator Russ Feingold's, Representative Ron Kind's, and Representative Dave Obey's offices to discuss the same issues.

## Diverse Agriculture Options Workshop

The Southwest Badger RC&D Council in cooperation with the Grant County Economic Development Corporation and the Grant County UW-Extension Office will be holding a Diverse Agriculture Options Workshop on March 9th. The workshop will be held at Southwest Wisconsin Technical College in Fennimore and will run from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Workshop topics include: Organic Certification, Goat Dairy and Goat Meat Production, Contract Raising of Livestock, and Renewable Energy for the Farm.

## Council Receives Contract for Portable Stream Crossing

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recently awarded Southwest Badger RC&D a \$5,000 contract to construct a portable stream crossing for logging operations. The crossing is based on a design from the U.S. Forest Service where four-inch diameter PVC pipes are bundled together using a steel cable. The pipe bundles, when inserted in a stream, allow water to flow through pipes while forming a plastic road for logging equipment to safely cross the stream. Three-inch thick wood planks are laid across the top of the PVC pipes to create a level surface and protect the pipes. The flexibility of the PVC bundles allows them to conform to any stream shape thus no excavation is needed to install the crossing. When used correctly, the portable bridge allows log skidding equipment to cross streams throughout the operation with minimal impact on the stream bed and banks. The crossing can be used on streams up to twelve feet in width.

### You've Got Mail!

Please let us know if you would prefer to receive the Southwest Badger RC&D Council newsletter via email rather than in the mail.

Email your request to [swbadger@mhtc.net](mailto:swbadger@mhtc.net)

If you are currently receiving the newsletter via email and would prefer a hard copy. Please let us know.

(cont. from pg. 2)

The Lake Pepin Watershed Project involving River Country RC&D, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Wisconsin DNR, Minnesota DNR, NRCS, Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as county planners, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and other stakeholders is also gaining momentum. An initial investment of startup funds from a Wisconsin NRCS Special Projects grant awarded to the Driftless Area RC&Ds in Wisconsin will get things moving this spring. A December meeting addressed watershed issues including resource assessment, community outreach, and project implementation strategies. An upcoming meeting will begin developing a grant proposal requesting additional funds for this critical project.

## Forest Stewardship Initiative

Patrick Dayton, Stewardship Forester

Patrick Dayton continues to meet with landowners in the Kickapoo Woods Co-op and write forest management plans. He is now a Certified Plan Writer for the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program with the DNR and receives many calls about that program and his availability to write plans. Patrick currently has 12 people who are waiting for him to write management plans.

To date Patrick has written management plans for 822 acres, tree planting plans for 85 acres and marked 87 acres of timber sales for sustainable harvest. This past quarter he attended the Society of American Foresters state meeting, an Invasive Species Educators workshop, a Woody Biomass committee meeting, and the MFL DNR-Cooperating foresters meeting.

Notably in the last couple months, Patrick has begun work on a management plan for the Kickapoo Area School so they can become a registered school forest. He continues to cooperate with the DNR and the Village of Viola to plan and rebuild their urban forest. He is also assisting in a timber sale for Vernon County.

## Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

Kristin Westad, MRPFA Coordinator

Between September 2005 and January 2006, Kristin Westad has met with 36 landowner families to discuss land management and government programs. She wrote letters to landowners with land under Conservation Reserve Program contracts that will expire in 2007, encouraging them to manage their land for wildlife benefits and offering weed control suggestions. She recorded natural area inventories on six farms.

Tree and shrub encroachment into large grassland areas is a major threat to habitat quality for grassland birds in the Military Ridge area. This winter, partner organizations are clearing more than three miles of tree rows that have been dividing grassland blocks. In conjunction with DNR Forester John Nielsen, Kristin has recruited two pulp firms to visit sites where partners are removing trees, and consider them for pulp harvest.

Kristin has worked with representatives of many local government entities to promote the goals of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area. In recent months, that has included DOT's contractors planning to reduce at-grade traffic across Highway 18/151; DNR staff studying the feasibility of a large-scale land protection initiative in the Southwest Grassland Area; local township leaders developing comprehensive plans; and Dane County Park staff considering changes to land protection project boundaries.

Kristin has helped 11 families plan burns for Spring 2006. One of these burns involves the Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program, as well as two adjacent landowners and includes 65 acres of meadow and oak woods along German Valley Creek. This is the first step in establishing a burn regime to maintain open stream banks owned by eight families. In the future, Kristin hopes partners will burn about one-third of the cleared stream frontage each year. She attained Level II Prescribed Fire Job Approval through NRCS.

## Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative

Gene Schriefer, Grazing Specialist

Once all the "official" Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Grazing Plans are written and filed, Gene Schriefer has a bit more time available to respond to requests from producers who aren't involved in any government programs. Most of these producers have adopted grazing practices on their own, and have figured out that even without federal assistance, grazing pays.

Grazing operations tend to vary, some of the operations are unique and some are large-scale. For example, one grazer markets specialty cheese from milk produced by their own grass fed cattle. Another dairy is converting to more grazing, and has built their own manufacturing and bottling plant. These dairy and cheese markets are just two examples of what is developing around Wisconsin and throughout the upper Midwest region. On the unique side, Gene spent an afternoon on a 400 acre elk farm. He has also worked with a person producing and selling alpacas for breeding and fiber production. More so than traditional commodity agriculture, grazing operations tend to be more gender neutral. Gene frequently meets with female dairy, beef, and sheep producers.

Most of Gene's visits are to producers interested in beef production on grass. Some produce stockers for the feedlot and others produce grass fed beef and organic beef. Gene met with one producer who started controlled grazing over 10 years ago and now has developed a 490 acre grazing operation.

Historically, producers trying to raise and sell grass fed beef largely had to market their product on their own. Because of the sparse population in southwest Wisconsin local demand is met quickly with very few animals. An exciting development in the grazing movement is emerging markets for grass fed beef. There is currently a market developing in the Twin Cities area serving 50 stores and another market is developing in the Chicago area. Southwest Wisconsin sits between these two regional markets, providing access to local producers who do not have a local market, or do not have the time or skills to

work directly with consumers. The advantage of these organizations is that they are offering a \$0.30/lb bonus on beef produced from pastures - that's an additional \$180 on a 600 pound steer. Is that enough incentive for producers to adopt the change to managed grazing? Would that add up to extra income in rural communities? Only time will tell.

While we can extol the virtues of grass and grazing to conservation: better water quality, reduced runoff and sediment, greater biodiversity, increased soil organic matter, and a decrease in greenhouse gases. We can also talk about the quality of life factors: more time for family, reduced stress, and healthier animals. In the end, the practice must generate a profit, otherwise only the hobbyist and the wealthy can afford to do it.

## Rain Gardens - A New Solution for Stormwater Management

Attitudes about stormwater management are currently shifting towards more "natural" approaches and methods. Rain gardens are the first tool in this new "natural" management philosophy. They keep a percentage of the runoff water at the source, reduce the need for larger systems downstream, and reduce surface water pollution. They also reduce the cost of stormwater management - by reducing runoff, they reduce the need for curb and gutter, storm sewer systems, and large detention/retention ponds.

Rain gardens are perennial flower gardens that serve a utilitarian function and purpose. They help reduce residential, commercial, and municipal stormwater runoff and downstream flooding and associated pollution. Typically, a shallow depression is excavated and the extra soil is used to create a berm around the rain garden depression. The rain garden is planted with plants that can tolerate both being wet for a few days and long dry spells. Stormwater runoff from roofs, driveways, and parking lots is routed to the rain gardens. The bermed depression acts as a shallow retention pond. The runoff is captured in the rain garden and infiltrates the soil in 12 to 48 hours, helping to recharge our cool water streams and aquifers.

(cont. pg. 5)



(cont. from pg. 4)

Roger Reynolds, Iowa County RC&D At-Large Council Member, has been leading a cooperative effort to get a large rain garden demonstration system installed in Dodgeville. The project is sponsored by Grassroots Citizens of Wisconsin-Iowa County, Iowa County Master Gardeners, Trout Unlimited, and Uplands Garden Club and will include volunteer help from 4-H, Bethel Horizons, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Dodgeville High School Students. The project will truly be a community effort. Volunteer labor and donated plants will reduce the cost of installing the rain garden from about \$85,000 to \$4,000. The community project will provide extensive public education about rain gardens and their benefits and will be a community showpiece. The unique demonstration rain garden will consist of a series of ten terraced pools cascading down a hillside in a city park. Each pool will be planted in a different rain garden design to appeal to many different gardening styles.

This 5,000 square foot rain garden system will retain approximately 17,000 gallons of water - that is two semi-tankers full or the equivalent of a 30 square foot retention basin 2 1/2 feet deep in water - reducing the annual runoff that reaches a gravel city street by 48% to 79% annually. The reduction in runoff will significantly reduce the time and money the city of Dodgeville spends annually to repair this section of street. At the same time, this rain garden system will reduce stream flooding and pollution, reduce erosion, increase ground water recharge, and provide a beautiful showpiece to encourage citizens and other municipalities to install rain gardens.

## **DNR Launches Landowner Incentive Program**

Two workshops will be held in March to provide private landowners and land managers information about the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). The workshops are being offered in collaboration with the Aldo Leopold Foundation's Woodland School and will provide a more thorough look at the prairie and savanna component of LIP, including the process of applying for this cost-share grant. Participants will learn more about how to read the land to see what species and characteristics identify prairie and savanna habitat, and will discuss some of the management options that are eligible for funding, including prescribed burns, restoring native vegetation, removing invasive and woody species.

The workshops are free, but you must register with the Woodland School to secure a spot. Workshops have a limit of 40 participants. To register, complete and mail the registration form available at <http://www.thewoodlandschool.org/registrationspring2006.pdf> or contact the Woodland School coordinator, Jeannine Richards at the Aldo Leopold Foundation at [jeannine@aldoleopold.org](mailto:jeannine@aldoleopold.org) or (608) 355-0279.

### LaFarge workshop:

Tuesday, March 21, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Kickapoo Valley Reserve Visitor Center  
S3661 State Highway 131  
LaFarge, Wisconsin  
Website: <http://kvr.state.wi.us/home/>  
Phone: 608-625-2960

### Madison workshop:

Wednesday, March 22, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.  
Lussier Family Heritage Center  
3101 Lake Farm Road  
Madison, Wisconsin  
Website:  
<http://www.countyofdane.com/lwrp/parks/heritage/>  
Phone: 608-224-3604