

when management activities stop at a fence-line dividing a timber stand. Planning harvests with neighbors can help to reduce fragmentation, and increase the total value of the timber sale, making it more attractive to a buyer coming to collect the lumber.

Another critical topic discussed at the workshop was invasive species management. Invasive species are aggressive plants that tend to out-compete native vegetation, including tree seedlings that are needed to regenerate the forest as older trees die, or are harvested. Plants like garlic mustard, buckthorn, and honeysuckle change the forest by dominating the under story and limiting the growth of plant and insect communities forming the base of the food-chain for the forest ecosystem. Following best management practices, like making sure your loggers use clean equipment, and doing follow-up control of any infestations found before, and after the harvest can help to keep invasive species out of your woods. Once your woods have become infested, many years of repeat treatment are often needed to control the problem.

Timing harvests for winter, when the ground is frozen, and seeds are less likely to be transported can also help limit the spread of these nuisance plants. Winter-time harvests provide the added benefits of reducing erosion, and limiting the damage (bark scars, disease transmission, etc.) that can happen during the harvesting process.

Additional workshops are being scheduled for northeast Iowa and southeast Minnesota later in the year. These workshops will provide woodland owners with information about the practices and assistance they can use to improve forest resources in the Driftless Area.



Don Bina attended the National Association of RC&Ds National Leadership Conference in Washington, DC in January. While there he visited Senator Herb Kohl. Pictured are Ed Weber (River County RC&D), Senator Herb Kohl, Heather Flashinski (River Country RC&D), and Don Bina.

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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Badger Report

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

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Driftless Area Initiative Hosts Forestry for Birds Workshops

The Driftless Area Initiative is busily gearing up for another season of conservation work. We have already held two workshops for woodland owners, bringing them information about forestry management practices and assistance that can be used to improve habitat for songbirds dependent on large tracts of interior forest.

Neotropical migratory songbirds spend the winter in the southern latitudes of Central and South America, and return to the northern forests to nest and raise their young. These birds are especially vulnerable to habitat fragmentation resulting from increased urbanization, and intensive, industrialized agricultural practices.

Some birds can benefit from the increase in edge habitat. However, most of these species are already very common and do not add to the diversity of life making the Driftless Area so special. As the outer fringe of shrubs and trees on the forest edge are removed, interior forests lose protection from wind and weather. Even more damaging to songbirds adapted to life in the interior of the forest, is that this critical core of interior habitat becomes exposed to edge loving nest predators and brood parasites.

Species like the Cerulean warbler and the Scarlet tanager are not adapted to the threats presented by raccoons, opossum, cats, and brown-headed cowbirds. Mammalian predators, like the raccoon, tend to follow woods edges and roadways, preying on the nests of birds making their homes there. Cowbirds find the nest of a bird unaccustomed to their parasitism, and lay their own eggs right in the nest of the host bird. Cowbird babies hatch sooner and grow faster than the young of the host bird. The host's offspring are often pushed out of the nest, and are out competed by the larger cowbirds.

Our April 29th workshop, north of Blue River, WI, was co-sponsored by the Kickapoo Woods Co-op, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association – Bad Axe Chapter, and the Wisconsin DNR. Woodland owners learned how best management practices, like creating a “feathered” edge on



Southwest Badger RC&D Forester Patrick Dayton describes the forestry management plan he wrote for the Jones-Linton Farm.

your woodlots, and minimizing fragmentation resulting from harvests can increase the quality of habitat for interior forest birds.

Nest predation can be disrupted by planting shrubs and trees, like aspen, in an irregular pattern along the forest/field edge to create a feathered effect. This approach also provides some protection to woodland plants needing a more sheltered interior environment, and can be used to create the early successional habitat needed by Ruffed grouse and Bobwhite quail.

Harvesting stands that are similar in age, structure, and species composition as a unit can reduce fragmentation by providing consistent management within the stand. This approach reduces the blockiness and sharp edges created

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Making Things Happen!

Southwest Badger RC&D works to promote resource conservation and wise development in rural and urban areas in Crawford, Grant, Green, Iowa, LaCrosse, Lafayette, Richland, Sauk, and Vernon counties through planned economic growth using county, private, and public agencies.

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Project Updates

Forest Stewardship Initiative

Patrick Dayton, Stewardship Forester

Spring has sprung and trees are growing once more, including many that were just planted this year. On April 29th, the Village of Viola took on the monumental mission of planting over 300 trees. The new trees replace those lost or damaged by the tornadoes that ravaged the village in August 2005. Current and former residents of Viola formed the Trees for Viola Committee. The Committee is working to plan and coordinate the efforts to revive the urban forest that once existed. Patrick assisted the committee with deciding where to plant trees, educating and coordinating volunteer help, and planting the trees. Southwest Badger RC&D, the Wisconsin DNR, area schools, church groups, and surrounding communities and counties all supported the effort. Patrick will continue to assist the village with this project. In addition, Patrick assisted Vernon County in developing their tree planting plan as their county conservationist has taken a different position and their new county forester, Adam Zirbel (former Southwest Badger RC&D forester), just started and is finding his roots in the county.

Patrick continues to create stewardship plans for landowners in the region. To date he's completed over 1000 acres of plans. Patrick completed a multifaceted forest management plan for the Kickapoo Area School so they can become an official school forest. He has also begun inventory work for Norskedalen, a Norwegian heritage farm in LaCrosse and Vernon Counties with over 300 forested acres. In addition, Patrick helped with two field days. The first dealt with salvage work being done after a tornado and the second focused on forest management for neotropical migratory birds.

For Patrick, one of the highlights of his position is being allowed to sit in on board meetings for the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative. The Co-op is becoming a more viable and effective business every month. As part of refining their long-term plans the co-op is developing a statement about what sustainable forestry means to them. Knowing that terms often have various meanings to different people the board recently asked Patrick to define the concept of sustainable forestry. Patrick worked with the board to develop the following statement.

“Sustainable forestry is a method of land management that provides us with regeneration of trees; perpetual wood products; maintenance of soil, water, and air resources; continual wildlife habitat; and constant enjoyment of the natural world. It dictates that as a resource is used, it should be replaced by an equal amount of the resource grown - in a manner that will never come to an end. 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.”

Patrick is looking forward to spending more time out in the woods as the weather becomes nicer but he will still be spending some time in the office call - (608)637-5479 - or email - pdayton@vernoncounty.org - to contact him.

Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative

Gene Schriefer, Grazing Specialist

Spring Pasture After A Drought

Moisture levels across southwest Wisconsin varied greatly in 2005. Fortunately, soil moisture levels have finally improved. However, pasture conditions vary greatly this spring. Pastures stressed from last year's drought have been slow to “wake up” this spring. They are green, but there is little yield. Paddocks that were well managed through the drought, have the normal spring flush and explosive growth, with few signs of stress from the dry season in 2005.

How did management play a role in creating vastly different responses this spring? A combination of factors come into play. One of the goals in managing paddocks is to leave some residual forage (usually about 3 inches). The residual forage serves several purposes. First, maintaining a residual keeps the “factory” of the plant working. The residual leaf area intercepts sunlight which the plant uses for photosynthesis to grow more leaf. The less leaf area, the slower the regrowth and the more the plant needs to rely on reserves stored in the crown. Second, more moisture is conserved and available for the plant. Residual material helps shade the soil surface, keeping soil temperatures cooler thereby reducing evaporative moisture loss and convection losses from warm air movement. In addition, the design of a blade of grass serves to gather and concentrate moisture around the crown. On dewy mornings, moisture accumulates on the leaf and forms droplets that run down the leaf to the crown concentrating the moisture available. Less leaf means less moisture harvested. The value of residual is evident both during and after dry conditions. Managed paddocks continue to produce forage far longer.

The species composition in managed paddocks also shifts over time from low growing to taller growing species. Taller growing forages have deeper roots allowing them to access moisture unavailable to shorter pastures. Managed pastures typically have a strong legume component. Legumes, with their tap roots, also access deeper soil moisture and perform better than cool season grasses under hotter conditions.

Lastly, managed paddocks have better water infiltration allowing the rain that falls on the paddock to stay on the paddock. The taller residual slows the water movement across the soil surface, increasing the infiltration rate and reducing evaporative losses. In addition, taller species with deeper roots break open the soil more. Soil capillaries form as root hairs die and macropores open as earthworms eat the decaying plant roots; as a result, there are more openings for the water to infiltrate the soil.

The key to managing during a drought is to recognize it early and adjust your management accordingly. Removing the residual material during a drought is not a good long-term management strategy. Managed grazing attempts to match growth and consumption - “fast growth, fast rotation, slow growth, slow rotation.” Confining and feeding more stored feed in a drought and maintaining the residual forage will result in more and faster regrowth after the drought, and more growth the following spring.

Good-Bye and Good Luck!

Kristin Westad resigned her position as Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area Coordinator as of April 28, 2006. Kristin has taken a position with Partners for Fish and Wildlife in Newark, Ohio.

In her time with Southwest Badger RC&D Kristin led efforts to control invasive species, remove tree lines that impact habitat for grassland birds, improve and restore native prairie habitat, and educate landowners about the natural resources of the Military Ridge area. Kristin was a great asset to the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area and will be greatly missed. Southwest Badger RC&D would like to thank Kristin for her years of service and wish her well in her new endeavors.

Council To Help Sponsor Mississippi River Tour

Come join us on July 13, 2006!

It is Grant County's turn to host the summer tour for the Southern Area Association of Land & Water Conservation Committees. On July 13th, Grant County LWCD, Southwest Badger RC&D, and Wisconsin Soil and Water Conservation Society - Region 4 are co-sponsoring an educational tour aboard the Spirit of Dubuque paddle wheeler. Leaving the harbor at 10 AM, the paddle wheeler will make its way through the lock and dam system and cruise up the Mississippi River with informational discussions along the way. Cost is \$25 per person. Call Barb Thompson at (608)723-6377 ext. 118 or email (barb.thompson@wi.nacdnet.net) for more information and registration materials. Mark your calendars for July 13, 2006 and be a part of this relaxing day on the Mississippi. Registration deadline is June 23rd.

Up Coming Events

June 9, 2006
Southwest Badger RC&D Council Meeting
Richland Center, Wisconsin

July 13, 2006
Mississippi River Tour - see article above
Dubuque, Iowa

July 15, 2006
Forestry for Bird Habitat
Southeastern Minnesota