



CONSERVATION CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Land Conservation Department

To promote the awareness of Sauk County's natural resources and to provide technical assistance for their productive use, enhancement, and preservation.

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Sustainable or Sustainability?

Sustainable and sustainability are words we are hearing a lot lately. Originally used in natural resource management, today the concept is being applied to many disciplines, including economic development, environment, food production, energy, and community development.

Some common definitions include:
Sustainable: A state or process that can be maintained indefinitely.

Sustainability: The concept of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

One common application of the term is "sustainable agriculture." It means an integrated system of plant and animal production practices that over the long term will:

- * satisfy human food and fiber needs
- * enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base
- * make the most efficient use of non-renewable resources and on-farm resources

- * integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls
- * sustain the economic viability of farm operations
- * enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.



The foundation for agriculture is soil, so a basic building block of sustainable agriculture is conserving soil. "Conserving" starts with limiting erosion to tolerable levels. Sauk County farmers have long been committed to this goal - cropping hillsides with contour strips, using no-till equipment, and rotating crops. These practices ensure topsoil will remain for the next generation of landowners. Conserving soils also means maintaining good proportions of organic material to hold water in sandy soils or help infiltrate water in clayey soils. Organic matter in the soil is managed with crop rotations and harvesting methods, as well as through manure applications.

Another component to sustainable agriculture is a diversity of crops. This makes the local agrisystem "resilient" or able to withstand disturbances such as disease, weather anomalies, or market fluctuations. If most of an area is planted to corn, individuals and businesses that rely on a successful harvest are

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vulnerable if the crop fails or the market price bottoms out. Sauk County has a growing diversity of agribusinesses, from dairies to cash grain farms to beef operations to small-scale vegetable farms. This diversity helps keep our local agricultural economy strong and sustainable.

The Sauk County Land Conservation Department has elements of sustainability in its mission statement: To promote the awareness of natural resources and to provide technical assistance for their productive use, enhancement, and preservation. We help landowners manage their land and maintain a healthy soil. In doing so, we also work toward healthy water, wildlife, plants, and air. In the recently adopted Land and Water Resource Management Plan, we set out goals to work toward comprehensive sustainability practices that go beyond our traditional assistance to include energy conservation, recycling, low-impact building options, supporting locally produced food, and improving our sustainability within county operations as well.

We recognize that it may take time for Sauk County to move toward a more sustainable way of life. Change is incremental - small adjustments can be made as more products become available and affordable. Using compact florescent light bulbs, recycling more waste, buying items with less packaging and purchasing more energy efficient appliances are all small changes in a person's life, but if many people adopted these changes, it could greatly reduce energy consumption and waste generation. As the Department expands its role into some of these areas, we will provide information in future newsletters that you can apply at home or on the farm to move Sauk County toward a more sustainable way of life.

Resolving Wildlife Conflicts in Wisconsin

Sauk County has contracted with the USDA Wildlife Services (WS) to provide service to farmers suffering from crop damage for over 15 years. Phil Peterson, WS staff, has provided this service locally, working closely with the participants in the Wisconsin Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program to assess damages, issue shooting permits, manage hunting requirements, and pay out the final damage claims; however, some of you may also have met Phil when you call about starling problems, beaver activity, or other wildlife issues on your land.

Every day Wisconsin residents, industries, organizations, municipalities, and agencies call on Wildlife Services personnel for expertise in protecting crops and livestock, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts. The WS program in Wisconsin manages a variety of

wildlife damage programs touching large numbers of citizens.

WS specialists provide assistance to farmers who experience wildlife damage to their crops. They help the public find ways to resolve nuisance

wildlife problems; protect people, pets, and livestock from zoonotic diseases; and protect natural resources from wildlife depredation. Their specialists work to reduce conflicts with white-tail deer, wild turkeys, black bears, Canada geese, European starlings, gray wolves, beaver, sandhill cranes, gulls, and double crested

cormorants. Staff offer information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own through technical assistance. WS also provides on-site expertise or direct assistance to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts scientific research across the nation to develop



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answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

If you are experiencing problems in any of these areas contact: USDA-Wildlife Services at 1-800-433-0663.



**KEY PROGRAMS OF THE USDA
WILDLIFE SERVICES**



1. Protecting and assessing crop damage through Wisconsin's Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program (WDACP).
2. Resolving crop and property damage and human health and safety problems regarding black bears and gray wolves.
3. Protecting livestock from European starling damage.
4. Protecting coldwater ecosystems, forest resources, roads and bridges, and farmland from beaver damage.
5. Protecting public safety and air operations from wildlife hazards at civil and military airports.
6. Surveillance and monitoring for avian influenza, Chronic Wasting Disease, West Nile Virus and diseases that threaten the health of humans, domestic animals, wildlife, and the environment.
7. Resolving human health and safety and nuisance issues regarding urban populations of Canada geese and gulls.
8. Resolving crop damage issues regarding sandhill cranes.

Wisconsin DNR Offers Well Abandonment Grants

Effective October 26, 2007, private well owners with a prior year family income of \$65,000 or less can receive grants to help pay for properly filling and sealing an unused well by a licensed well driller. The well abandonment work may not start until the private well owner has submitted the application and received a DNR Approval Document.

The program can pay up to 75 percent of the eligible cost, but the payment rate is prorated when income levels are between \$45,000 and \$65,000. Most well abandonments range in cost from \$500 - \$2,000, depending on the specifications to abandon.

Grant information, contacts, and application forms may be found on the following website: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cfa/Grants/wellabnd.html>. For a hard copy of instructions and application forms, contact Barbara Ingram, Grant Manager, at barbara.ingram@wisconsin.gov or (608) 267-7152 .



Livingston Named Forester of the Year!

By Ben Bromley, NewsRepublic

When he received an unexpected call from his boss, DNR Forester Rick Livingston feared it was bad news. "I guess that's what I was wondering: What did I do wrong?" Livingston said. As it turned out, the news could not have been better: Livingston had been named Wisconsin's Forester of the Year. "I guess I was shocked," said Livingston, who didn't even know he had been nominated.

Livingston is celebrating his tenth year in Sauk County after stops in Chippewa, Green, and Richland counties. He was drawn to Sauk County by the area's lush scenery and the people's passion for conservation. "There's a pretty deep conservation ethic, so it's not a new concept to a lot of people around here," Livingston said. The county is a haven for a forester, from the evergreens of Lake Delton to the bottomland hardwoods along the Wisconsin River in Spring Green. "There's just a wide variety of timber types that are a lot of fun to work with," Livingston said.

Livingston was recognized for running an active forestry public awareness program that includes working with The Nature Conservancy to develop guidelines for management in the Baraboo Hills. He serves as a program coordinator for the Woodland School sponsored through the Aldo Leopold Foundation and coordinated field day events for the 2007 Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association's statewide meeting in Sauk County. Livingston works closely with partners including Land Conservation, Planning and Zoning, and Parks departments, as well as the Baraboo Range Protection Association.

Livingston said it's rewarding to educate landowners and ensure their trees are harvested properly. Of course he likes to drive past the sites of previous years' plantings and see a tree stand taking root. "You start to see trees that have gone into the ground that have had success and are starting to amount to something," he said.



State Forester Paul DeLong, at left, and Department of Natural Resources Deputy Forestry Administrator Tim Mulhern, right, congratulate Sauk County's Rick Livingston on being named forester of the year

Watch for One of Our Newest Invasives



A team of investigators spent time in Sauk County this winter looking for evidence of the newest invasive species to threaten Wisconsin, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Responsible for killing an estimated 30 million ash trees in six states and Ontario, Canada, the Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) has been receiving a lot of attention as it spreads its range slowly westward across the United States. It is believed the Emerald Ash Borer first arrived in North America hidden in wooden pallets made of ash used in shipping consumer goods from China. The good news is that they did not find any evidence of the borers in Wisconsin in any of the sampled trees.

Adult Ash Borers emerge from June through August. They are metallic green in color, and their slender bullet shaped body measures 1/2 inch in length and 1/8 inch in width. The adults live for approximately 20 days feeding on the edges of ash leaves. Mating occurs from May through

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July. During this time the females will lay around 75 eggs. The eggs hatch in seven to ten days into worm-like larvae. The hungry larvae bore through the bark of the ash tree where they will spend the next one to two years feeding on the trees' vascular tissue (cambium) forming S-shaped tunnels or galleries that are flat and wide. By consuming so much of the living portion of the tree, water and nutrients are unable to be transported up or down within the tree and the tree is effectively strangled to death. When warmer weather arrives, usually around April, the larvae enter the pupal stage. As soon as their development is complete, adults emerge from the tree leaving D-shaped exit holes. For more information or to report an ash tree showing these symptoms, contact the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture reporting line at 1-800-462-2803.

The adult EAB are considered good flyers and can fly at least 1/2 mile from the tree they emerged from; however, many new infestations are started when people move infested nursery stock, logs, pallets, or firewood into uninfested areas. Firewood can carry many harmful pests and diseases, so one important tool to prevent movement of this pest is **TO NOT MOVE FIREWOOD**. In fact, it is illegal to bring any type of firewood into Wisconsin's State Parks and Forests unless the firewood originates from within 50 miles of the park or forest.



*S-shaped tunnels (galleries)
made by larvae*

Gypsy Moth on Your Land?



Gypsy moth is hairy with 5 pairs of blue spots and 6 pairs of red spots

Forests in Sauk County may have hotspots of defoliation from gypsy moth caterpillars this summer. By mid-May gypsy moth caterpillars will begin feeding and growing. Defoliation caused by these invasive insects

will be noticeable in May to early July.

Do you have gypsy moth on your land? In early May be on the lookout for caterpillars that are 1-3 inches long, hairy, and have five pairs of blue spots followed by six pairs of red spots down the length of their back. They feed on oaks, crabapple, linden, willow, birch, aspen, and more than 250 other species of trees. During an outbreak they can strip trees, seemingly overnight. Gypsy moth caterpillars do not build tents which is a simple way to differentiate them from the Eastern tent caterpillars active at this same time.

If you discover gypsy moth activity in your woods, report your findings to Sauk County Land

Conservation (conservation@co.sauk.wi.us or 355-3245). These hotspot locations can assist in establishing areas that may be eligible as 2009 spring spray blocks. High egg mass numbers found in Devil's Lake, Rocky Arbor and Mirror Lake state parks last fall will result in aerial spraying of Btk (a naturally occurring bacterium) insecticide to suppress gypsy moth caterpillars this May.

County staff or DNR forester's visits will be made in fall to confirm reports and the extent of infestations. Information about how you can survey and tally egg mass occurrences on your land can also be obtained by contacting the Sauk County Land Conservation office, DNR Forestry office, or visiting the gypsy moth website <http://gypsymoth.wi.gov/>

The best offense is a good defense when preparing your forest for gypsy moth attacks. Maintaining a healthy forest in terms of tree vigor, stocking, and composition will lessen mortality and favor resilience. Work with a professional forester to determine the present condition for your forest and steps that can be taken to improve its health. Prescribed thinning should be done two years prior to an attack. A forest that is thinned immediately before or after an attack may be more susceptible to mortality.

Where Is This?



If you recognize where this is located, send us your answer along with your name, address, and phone number by June 20 to the following address: Sauk County LCD, 505 Broadway, Baraboo, WI 53913. One winner will be drawn from the correct answers and will receive a Farm & Fleet gift certificate.

Sauk County Tourism “Going Green” While Staying Green

The last issue of the Conservation Chronicle featured an aerial photo of the Kilbourn Dam in the Wisconsin Dells in our “Where Is It?” contest. The photo was taken in the 1950s and the dam and large white power generation building are clearly identifiable and have hardly changed since the photo was taken. However, nothing else in the surrounding area looks like it did then. This same photo today would capture the bridge between Wisconsin Dells and Lake Delton and much of the surrounding development, arguably the hub of the Sauk County tourism industry. Congratulations to Jim LaMar for correctly identifying the location. He received a Farm & Fleet gift certificate.



Kilbourn Dam in Wisconsin Dells in the 1950s

Tourism in Sauk County is nothing new. Visitors have come to enjoy the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities this area offers since the mid-1800s. Early visitors traveled the railroads to Wisconsin Dells (then Kilbourn) to view the beautiful scenery featured in the H. H. Bennett photographs of the time. Other visitors disembarked at Devil’s Lake to experience some of the early lodging facilities located around the lake before it became the third state park in 1911.

Tourism has always been an integral part of our county economy and has provided a reliable source

of employment for county residents. The industry has continuously evolved to offer the newest and best, latest and greatest, in tourist attractions. Today Sauk County’s tourist attractions include both highly developed attractions like waterparks, go-cart tracks, and casinos as well as those nature-based attractions like the four state parks in the county, the boat and duck tours through the Dells on the Wisconsin

River, and the scenic hiking and bird-watching habitat of the Baraboo Bluffs. Each of these attractions are an important component of our county economy and what makes Sauk County special. Tourism in Sauk County generates just over \$1 billion dollars in revenue each year. The sales tax alone is an important part of our

economy but the jobs, wages, and spending of our tourist industry employees creates an even greater impact.

One initiative being undertaken by the Sauk County Economic Development Council is the encouragement and promotion of the state “Travel Green” program. Participating tourist-related businesses go through an evaluation of their operations to determine their impact on the environment. The worksheets score these enterprises based on initiatives they have in place to reduce their impact.

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When a business scores enough points they can be certified as a Travel Green destination. This certification can be used in promotional materials, advertising, and publicity. The state also does promotional efforts to encourage visitors to use these Travel Green operations. With the increased awareness of our human impact on our environment, the hope is that people will choose to use these certified facilities to lessen their environmental impact while they travel. Because our tourism industry is based so strongly upon the natural features of the county, the program is a perfect fit for Sauk County. Their vision would be to see Sauk County as a center of the Travel Green Wisconsin initiative.

Tourism is just one of the important components of our economy. Agriculture and manufacturing also provide a significant boost to our prosperity. The county has always exhibited a good balance of these three factors and needs to take measures to assure this balance continues. Visitors to the county are regularly enthralled with the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities offered in the area, and a growing number want to have access to these amenities on a regular basis. That may be through a timeshare condominium to use for vacations each

year, the purchase of a cottage along one of the lakes or rivers in the county, or by building a retirement home in the Bluffs. This growth is part of what results in Sauk County being one of the ten fastest growing counties in the state.

There are many benefits to this growth - jobs for our young people, a vibrant economy, and a stable tax base for schools and governments. However, there is also the threat that this growth can damage the scenic beauty and rural character that we all enjoy. As more land is developed, there can be damage to natural habitats and conflicts with agriculture.

Most of the towns, villages, and cities in Sauk County have recently adopted a land use plan to manage growth and comply with the state Smart Growth laws. Sauk County is now beginning the process of development of a County Comprehensive Plan that will encompass these plans into a countywide plan. As a part of this process, the county will be looking at policies and programs that can encourage growth and development, while protecting the important agricultural lands and natural habitats that are so important to our county's character. To learn more about this process, contact the Sauk County Planning and Zoning Department at 355-3285.

Farmland Preservation Agreement Deadline

The deadline to submit an application for a Farmland Preservation Agreement to be eligible for the 2008 tax relief credit is Monday, June 30, 2008. For farmers in the towns of Baraboo, Bear Creek, Dellona, Delton, Fairfield, Freedom, Greenfield, LaValle, Merrimac, Spring Green, Washington, Winfield, or Woodland, this is the only way to participate in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP).

Landowners must own a minimum of 35 contiguous acres and produce agricultural products of at least \$6,000 per year or an average of \$18,000 over three years on that property. Agreements can be signed for a minimum of 10 years up to 25 years. The land entered into an agreement must remain in agricultural land uses, maintain a soil conservation plan, and be in compliance with NR 151, Wisconsin's Runoff Rules. In turn the state provides these farmer owners with a tax credit.

Sauk County landowners claimed credits totaling \$470,000 in 2005 with the average tax credit of \$839. Applications must be received by the Sauk County Clerk's Office no later than June 30, 2008. Contact Mike Stanek at the Sauk County Land Conservation Department at 355-3245 for an application.



NEWSLETTER IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE!

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