

CONSERVATION CHRONICLE



Newsletter of the Land Resources and Environment Department

To conserve natural, cultural, and community resources by promoting, planning, and implementing efficient and effective programs.

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White Mound Prescribed Burn

On March 24 this spring, you might have noticed smoke coming from White Mound County Park as the prairie and oak savanna were consumed by fire while Quercus Land Stewardship conducted a prescribed burn for the park.

Prescribed burns are important tools for land management. These planned burns use fire as a tool to promote ecological health for different landscapes. Fire is an important component of some ecosystems such as the oak savanna and prairie found at White Mound County Park. oak savanna and prairie ecosystems depend on fire to function and maintain themselves as many of the native plants are adapted to fire. Some even need to fire in order to produce seed. Fire can also help to control or reduce the spread of invasive species in these ecosystems. These prescribed burns are an important component of restoring and preserving the oak savanna at White Mound. The new Prairie Smoke Terrace, aptly named, was even designed with the burns in mind. The materials and landscaping around the building all exemplify fire-wise principles to ensure the safety of the buildings while allowing for a the prescribed burns every couple of years.

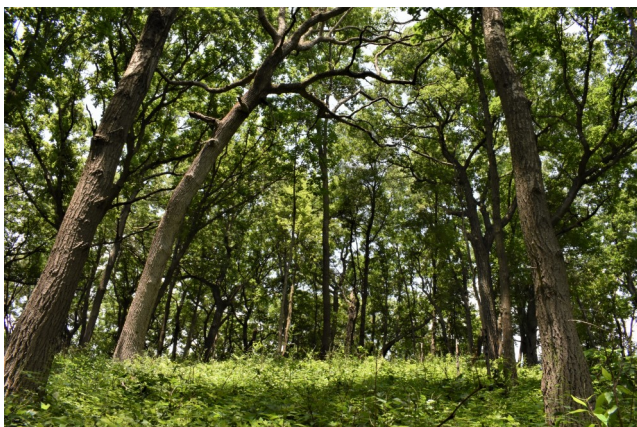
If you have been out to White Mound County Park you probably would not be able to tell that the prairie and oak savanna went through a burn, as the lush grasses and understory grew back with strength. As you can tell in the picture taken in July following the burn, there is little evidence of a fire as the undergrowth of the forest returned, blanketing the forest floor in green.

South and Central Wisconsin used to be covered, like much of the Midwest, by oak savanna. Today, these plant communities are rare, going from an estimated 5.5 million acres historically to less than 500 acres in Wisconsin, according the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. During the early 1900s, much of the oak savanna was lost as land was cleared for fields or overgrazed. Today there are a number of groups working to restore oak savannas across the area. Oak savannas are not only endangered themselves but they are home to a number of

endangered or rare plants and animals, such as the Karner Blue Butterfly. Stop out to White Mound County Park for a unique opportunity to explore the oak savanna and tall grass prairie communities.



Prairie Smoke Terrace (below) and prairie (above) during the prescribed burn.



A section of the oak savanna being restored in July following the burn.

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Sauk County Watershed Signs

Earlier this summer, this watershed sign received a much needed facelift! The Plain-Honey Creek watershed project was planned and developed in 1965 under the authority of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (Public Law 566). This project included upland treatment for watershed protection, structural measures for flood prevention (32 small earth dams & 3 large earth dams), and a recreational development (White Mound County Park). The project was developed in response to frequent and serious flood damage to agricultural lands and roads and the need for a public water-based recreational development.



From the watershed work plan, “Proper land use and conservation treatment are basic elements in watershed protection and flood prevention. Land treatment measures consist of strip cropping, conservation cropping systems, diversions, waterways, pasture improvement, tree planting, sustained yield management, and the construction of ponds and gully control structures. Such measures will reduce upland sheet erosion, increase the infiltration of runoff into the soil and better the economic status of community and individuals.”

Today, the watershed is split in half-Upper Honey Creek and Middle Honey Creek. Land use within the watershed is still primarily agriculture although the number of farms has undoubtedly decreased and the number of rural nonfarm residents has increased. Excessive soil erosion, low crop productivity, and flooding continue to be issues within the watershed. Staff work with farmers to install conservation practices that protect our natural resources and improve farm productivity and profitability.

New Employee: Mitch McCarthy

Greetings, I am very excited to be a part of the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment team as the new Watershed Coordinator! Before migrating to Sauk County, I worked for Lincoln County for four years as the Conservation Program Manager. Prior to that, I worked for Door County for three years as a Conservationist. I started my natural resources career in Iowa, where I finished my B.S. in Conservation Management with a minor in Earth Science at Upper Iowa University in Fayette, Iowa. I was born and raised in Northeast Iowa, near Dubuque. The Driftless landscape of Northeast Iowa has allowed me to apply similar conservation tactics to correct the issue at hand. Outside of work, I enjoy travel, backpacking, hiking, fishing, and live music. Contact me for consultation on holistic conservation approaches for agriculture, shorelines and streambanks, and more!
Phone: (608) 355-4836 Email: mitchell.mccarthy@saukcountywi.gov



Volunteers, Dorothy Harms (right) and Brenda Statz (left) presenting goodie bags to a farmer at Lime Ridge event.

Farmer Angel Network

The tradition of farm families gathering at dairy breakfasts and county fairs has been put on pause for this summer. The Farmer Angel Network wanted to share their appreciation of the essential work farmers have continued to perform through these challenging times, thanking area farmers with drive-thru ice cream socials earlier this summer.

“It was great to see farm families taking a moment to enjoy ice-cold treats and goodie bags on the warm days,” says Amanda Coorough, after an event at the River Valley Vet Clinic in Plain. Various agribusinesses participated, including Lime Ridge Ag Supply, Compeer in Prairie du Sac, and Scenic Bluff Equipment in Baraboo. Dorothy Harms, an event coordinator and volunteer said, “Participants expressed gratitude for Farmer Angel Network doing this.”

The Farmer Angel Network was organized 2019 as a support group for area farmers coping with the suicide of their farm neighbor and friend. Farmer Angel Network is organized by farmers to support farmers. The group’s goal is to bring mental health awareness and support to those going through tough times. It is a collaboration of farmers, Extension Sauk County, Sauk County Public Health Department, Land Resources and Environment Department, Project Recovery, and local churches.

While ice cream socials provided a social outlet and refreshments, bags containing resources on how to reach out

for help were also distributed. Stress management and mental health are more important than ever, as farmers who have already been dealing with difficult trends in the farming industry must now learn to cope with the impact of a global pandemic. Social distancing, isolation, and quarantine have brought even more risk to the mental health of the farming community. It's estimated that nearly a third of farmers suffer from depression.

Farmer Angel Network wants you to know that there is help even when you feel there are no options. One resource the group has helped promote recently is the Farmer Wellness Hotline. The hotline, 1-888-901-2558, is open 24/7. Licensed mental health professionals provide immediate, in-the-moment care and counseling. They are someone to call when you need help and don't know where to start.

The Farmer Angel Network continues to develop education and outreach efforts. The network relies on the support of the community to reach out and help farmers and their families in times of great need. If you or someone you know are having difficulties, we are here for you. If you would like to learn more, get involved, or contribute, follow the Farmer Angel Network on Facebook or contact Alana Voss at alana.voss@wisc.edu or (608) 477-3945.



Your Gateway to the Cranes of the World

The International Crane Foundation will be hosting a grand opening celebration for their newly renovated site, *Cranes of the World*, in 2021. Nearly two years have passed since the foundation broke ground on their \$10 million site renovation.

The transformation is truly extraordinary. At the new George Archibald Welcome Center, you'll be introduced to the cranes of the world and learn about the International Crane Foundation's work to save them. The spectacular indoor Sandhill Crane viewing window and exhibit showcases cranes in a natural wetland and tells the amazing comeback story of this resilient bird. The natural materials used to construct the new George Archibald Welcome Center will evoke a sense of place and history. Wood ceiling and beams from Wisconsin forests and stone walls are harmonious with the surroundings.

Next, you'll step outside and begin your journey around the world on the wings of cranes as you explore over ten acres! The new exhibits are large, inviting spaces with ponds for wetland-dependent cranes. Since the dawn of time, cranes have touched the human spirit, and this connection is captured at their new Cranes and Culture plaza. Visitors will enjoy an oasis highlighting the spiritual and artistic expressions of the many cultures that co-exist with cranes.

You'll encounter a Zen rock garden, crane fountain, wonderful interactive displays, hand-painted murals, and naturalistic new homes for the cranes. Copper prayer wheels have been installed and were made by fifth generation Nepali artisans. Family members expertly crafted each metal sheet with flying, dancing, and calling cranes. Spin the wheels and lift your prayers. Before you end your tour, step into George Archibald's original shack where he lived while working with Tex, a genetically rare and valuable Whooping Crane.

"We are so grateful to everyone involved in making this project happen, said Kim Smith, Chief Operating Officer. "We can't wait for you to take flight with us! Please share in our joy by visiting us anytime during the inaugural year in 2021. And although we can't be together now, we look forward to the day when we, and the cranes, can welcome you back."

"The crane's ancient call is one of resiliency and survival, and it is guiding us during this unprecedented challenge. All of us at the International Crane Foundation hope that wherever you are, you are safe and healthy."



New interactive exhibits share our history with iconic species and our commitment to protecting them well into the future
Photo by: [International Crane Foundation](https://www.internationalcrane.org/)

Read Your Newsletter Online

Would you prefer to read the *Conservation Chronicle* online? Please e-mail conservation@saukcountywi.gov if you would like to receive an email notifying you when the newsletter is available for viewing at <https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/landconservation>. This will help us reduce postage costs as well as paper. If you know of someone who would enjoy receiving this newsletter, please let us know!

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Search @sauk.lre then "like"

White Mound County Park Visioning Survey

White Mound County Park is launching its master planning process for the future management, enhancement, and property priorities over the next twenty years. A property master plan lays the foundation for building updates, environmental stewardship, expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities, and much more. The master planning process is designed for community involvement and feedback. In order to gain public input from a variety of sources, citizens will be able to provide feedback in person at two separate public input events, an assortment of survey methods, as well as online throughout the



process. The county is launching an initial Park Visioning Survey which may be accessed by the following link, <https://forms.gle/SFRpB296B2XGAdVE8>, via the White Mound County Park Facebook page, or by utilizing the QR code below. Please take a few minutes to give us feedback on current use and how the park may better serve the community. We want to hear from you!

Assistance is Only a Phone Call Away!

Contact the LRE office at (608) 355-3245 if you are interested in any of the services listed:

- **Soil Health Assessment:** LRE staff are available to complete free soil health assessments on farms. Staff will determine how well your soil can absorb water, using compaction and infiltration tests. A slake test will also be completed to determine your soil's vulnerability to runoff and erosion.
- **Soil Sampling:** Soil samples will help you identify where lime applications should occur and is the basis for your nutrient management plan. Soil augers and soil sample bags are available at the LRE office.
- **Nutrient Management Plan Writing Assistance:** Our staff can help you write or update your nutrient management plan. If you have taken the NMFE class in the past, LRE staff can assist you with updating your nutrient management plan.
- **Manure Spreader Calibration:** If you spread manure and don't know your rate, staff from the LRE office can calibrate your spreader so you know what you're spreading.

USDA FSA News

The Sauk County Farm Service Agency (FSA) has the following deadlines approaching;



Farm Service Agency

- **September 11, 2020;** 2020 Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). The majority of the applications processed in Sauk County are for corn, soybeans, dairy (milk), and cattle. There have also been applications for hogs, lambs, and some specialty crops. A full list of eligible crops and livestock can be found on farmers.gov/cfap.
- **September 30, 2020;** Price Loss Coverage (PLC) yield updates. Based on 90 percent of the farm's 2013 through 2017 simple average yield per planted acre then multiplied by the National ratio of 90%.
- **Fall of 2020;** election and enrollment for the 2021 Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage (ARCPLC) program will begin.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the Sauk County FSA office at (608) 355-4420, ext. 2.

2021 NACD Poster Contest

Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department is excited to participate in the 2021 NACD Poster Contest! This contest is open to any Sauk County students in grades K-12. Prizes will be awarded to the top three posters at each grade level for the county competition. The first place poster from each grade level will move onto the regional competition for a chance to win more prizes and move onto the state and national competitions. The 2021 NACD theme is, "Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities." Additional information and registration forms for this program are available on our website. If you have any questions please contact Justine Bula at (608) 355-4842 or justine.bula@saukcountywi.gov.



Sauk County Clean Sweep

Saturday, September 26, 2020 from 7:30 am - 1:30 pm
Old Sauk County Landfill
E8795 Evergreen Lane, Baraboo



Dispose of household hazardous waste safely.

Items accepted for **no charge** include: pesticides, cleaners, oil-based paint, batteries, light bulbs, and a wide variety of electronics.

For more information call 608-355-3245 or email conservation@saukcountywi.gov



If you are or recently were ill, please stay home.

Stay in your vehicle at all times while at Clean Sweep. Event staff will unload items at each station.



In an effort to minimize close contact, items located in the cab or passenger seats of vehicles will not be accepted. Please make sure ALL items are loaded in the rear of vehicle, trunk, truck bed, or trailer to be unloaded by the event staff.

ALL electronic items need to be cleaned/wiped down before they are brought to the event, electronic items that are not cleaned/wiped down may not be accepted.

Latex paint will no longer be accepted at Sauk County Clean Sweep events.

Fees for Tires

Car and light truck tires	\$6
Car and light truck w/rims	\$8
Ag and Semi tires	\$13
Ag and Semi tires w/ rims	\$25
<13" tires	\$2
<13" w/rims	\$4

Payment for tires can be made in CASH or CHECK payable to Sauk County Treasurer.

What is NOT ACCEPTED:

- Latex Paint
- Pharmaceuticals, IVs, needles
- Explosives, detonators, blasting caps
- Radioactive materials including smoke alarms
- Infectious and biological waste
- Compressed gas cylinders
- Recyclables, yard and household waste
- Asbestos
- Demolition Materials
- Mattresses

Small businesses **MUST pre-register for Paint & Chemicals with Veolia at least 1 week prior** please contact Chris Bahlow at (715) 298-2623.

Agricultural producers should contact Sauk County directly at (608) 355-4842.

No late registration will be accepted.

Resource Solutions will accept the following items at Clean Sweep:

No Charge: CPUs, Computer Printers, Speakers, Scanners, Fax Machines, Vacuum Cleaners, Phones, Laptops, Record Players, Tape Players, CD Players, iPods, VCRs, DVD Players, Beta Tape Players, Electric Saws, Drills, Calculators, Paper Shredders, Coffee Machines, Heaters, Game Systems, Sewing Machines, Electronic Toys, Most Household electrical items.

\$10 - Hard Drive Removal and Destruction

\$15 - Microwaves & Large Copy Machines

\$20 - Small AC Units, mini fridges, dehumidifiers

\$25 - Stoves, washers, dryers, dishwashers, treadmills, lawn mowers (oil/gas drained, tires removed)

\$35 - Refrigerators & Large Freezers

\$20 - All monitors, CRT & Flat Screen

\$20 - CRT/Flat Screen TVs 29" and under

\$40 - CRT/Flat Screen TVs 30"-49"

\$60 - CRT/Flat Screen TVs 50" and up, projection, wooden console

Payment for electronics can be made in CASH, CREDIT, or CHECK payable to Resource Solutions at the event.

Contact Resource Solutions at (608) 244-5451 regarding electronic items not included on the list above.

2020 Fermentation Fest Farm/Art DTour

The 2020 Farm/Art DTour is good to go! The Wormfarm Institute invites you to mark your calendars, September 26 through October 4, for the 11th annual [Fermentation Fest—A Live Culture Convergence](#) where farmers, artists, chefs, fermenters, and eaters converge to celebrate live culture in all its forms.

We all seem to be aching for a sense of normalcy since the coronavirus turned the world upside down and, while it won't be possible to hold hands-on fermentation classes, traveling the Farm/Art DTour is! Come take a drive or bike ride through beautiful Sauk County, where you might find an abandoned church full of eggshells, a kite-flying performance, or three giant hands rising out of a field. The DTour allows us an opportunity to gather together outdoors (while keeping "one cow apart") to celebrate the land and those who care for it.



Field Notes (Land)

The 2020 Farm/Art DTour is a free, 50-mile, self-guided excursion through working farmland, hills, and valleys, punctuated by site-responsive artworks, roadside poetry, educational Field Notes, and more. This year's new route has trailheads in Plain and Sauk City.

More than a dozen artists will collaborate with local landowners to install temporary artworks along the route. Some will engage Sauk County residents. Brent Houzenga will merge his New Orleans street-art style with rural roots to paint a monumental portrait of a local farmer. Artist team Sheila Novak, Emilie Bouvier, and Crysten Nesseth will create a series of cyanotype banners (sun prints) along Honey Creek that visually tell stories collected from local residents, while Tory Tepp will collaborate with Tower Rock Bakery to plant 3.5 acres of kernza (a perennial grain) in relation to a new earthwork. In response to current events, returning artist Erika Nelson will adapt Dr. Doolittle's Pushme-Pullyou into a half-donkey, half-elephant printed with a mash-up of fictional political yard signs and carnival posters.

Art can help remind us of the assets that surround us: Soil teeming with life, the possibilities of agriculture's next iterations, and the sensual pleasure of taking it all in. Bread & Puppet Theatre founder Peter Schumann said of his multi-decade rural experiment: "The purpose of the pageants was to look at the sky, to think about the contrast between the green field and the blue sky ... the puppet show was just an excuse, a framework to be able to see the landscape." Likewise, the DTour draws attention to the importance of what farmers do every day in Sauk County (the only rural county in Wisconsin [with an arts funding program](#)) and reminds us of the culture embedded in agriculture.

Each year farmers, landowners, local businesses, and community organizations along the route create Farm Forms, creative contributions that range from straw bale sculpture to tractor collections. This year HEALTH will be organized by Sauk Soil Water Improvement Group (SSWIG), a community of farmers and others that share a goal to improve soil and water quality with regenerative agriculture and conservation practices.

Ahead of the Curve?

Dan S. Wang writes in his essay in [the 32-page DTour Guide](#), "For this particular season of change, the Farm/Art DTour has gone from regional novelty to a model for the emerging world of curbside culture. It took the restrictions of a pandemic to show what DTour visitors have known for many years now: the form has wheels...Viewing art works outdoors is one thing; a DTour through the land and season is an altogether more poignant experience."



Visitors who have traveled past DTours will recognize old favorites with new twists. New *Field Notes*, educational signs that speak to land use, have been added and five will be geo-tagged with audio of farmer interviews in collaboration with [Grassland 2.0](#). Entirely new elements have been added as well. Sound artist Hugh Livingston will create a GPS-based mobile app to play a soundscape that evolves as "DTourists" travel. *The Land Remembers*—inspired by Ben Logan's memoir about life on a small farm in Southwest Wisconsin—will be a series of dialogue balloons featuring voices that have shaped Wisconsin's history, and writers imagining what the land's non-human residents might say.

The 2020 DTour is a multi-sensory, leisurely meander. In this edge environment teeming with diverse life forms, at a time of transformation, you're invited to take time to enjoy this outdoor event. We're still under the influence of fermentation: effervescent, agitated, excited. Come join us!

DNR Foresters offer information and assistance to Sauk County woodland owners that are interested in planting tree seedlings

Have you thought about planting tree seedlings on your property? Planting tree seedlings could be done for creating wildlife habitat, timber management or aesthetics. These trees could be hand planted or machine planted.



DNR foresters are available to meet with Sauk County landowners that are interested in planting tree seedlings. Foresters can meet landowners on their property and introduce landowners to activities involved with planting tree seedlings. If a tree planting project is significant (in number of trees to plant and acres), a tree planting plan can be developed at no cost for the landowner. This plan, in conjunction with guidance from a DNR forester, will prepare landowners for a successful project. Plans address landowner objectives and give recommendations on site preparation, various species, plantation maintenance, equipment needs, and any other questions pertaining to tree planting.

Financial assistance programs may be available to you for tree planting. Other services include rental of tree planting machines, tree planting tools and pruning equipment.



Additional information on tree planting can be found at the DNR Forestry Tree Planting website: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/TreePlanting/>

If you have questions about tree planting, or would like to schedule a property visit with DNR Forester in Sauk County, please contact:

Paul L. Kloppenburg

124 2nd Street, Room 31

Baraboo, WI 53913

Cell Phone: (608) 604-4846 Email: Paul.Kloppenburg@wisconsin.gov

Sauk County Well Water Monitoring Program's Year One Results

In June of 2019, Sauk County and the UW-Stevens Point Center for Watershed Science and Education initiated a five-year project to gather information on well water quality that will allow for analysis of groundwater quality trends in the county. This project is a joint effort between Sauk County Land Resources and Environment, Public Health and Extension. The goal of the program is to determine where groundwater quality is getting better, worse, or staying the same. If it is changing, the information will be used to analyze where and what factors may be contributing to those changes.



UW Stevens Point established a network of 438 private well owners to perform annual testing for a period of five years. The well network is intended to be representative of Sauk County (i.e. accounting for the wide variety of geology, soils, land-use, and well construction found throughout the area). Each year the wells will be analyzed for nitrate-nitrogen, chloride, pH, alkalinity, total hardness, and conductivity.

Summary of Year One Results

Sauk County's groundwater can generally be characterized as slightly basic (mean pH = 7.55), moderately hard water (mean total hardness = 237 mg/L as CaCO₃), with low-moderate alkalinity (mean = 209 mg/L as CaCO₃). These aesthetic characteristics of the water are largely influenced by the geologic materials groundwater is stored and transported in; lower values of pH, alkalinity, and total hardness are found in wells in northern Sauk County, wells near the Baraboo Hills where wells may be drilled into Baraboo Quartzite and wells along the Wisconsin River which may be shallower and access the sand/gravel aquifer versus bedrock.

Nitrate is a common health-related contaminant found in Sauk County's groundwater (mean = 4.2 mg/L nitrate-nitrogen). Nine percent of wells tested greater than the 10 mg/L drinking water standard. Approximately 57% of wells tested measured greater than 2 mg/L, which provides evidence that land-use activities are impacting water quality in over half the wells of Sauk County.


More information about the results, including this year's report and recorded educational session, are available online at <https://sauk.extension.wisc.edu/>. If you have questions, contact Kevin Masarik, Groundwater Education Specialist at (715) 346-4276 or kmasarik@uwsp.edu or Jenny Erickson, Community Resource Development Educator at (608) 963-1170 or jennifer.erickson@wisc.edu.

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NRCS..... (608) 355-4420, ext. 3
FSA..... (608) 355-4420, ext. 2
DNR Foresters (608) 235-5685
APHIS (WDS) (608) 837-2727
1-866-487-3297

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Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP pays landowners to install filter strips along waterways or to return continually flooded fields to wetlands while leaving the remainder of the adjacent land in agricultural production. Thousands of Wisconsin landowners have enrolled land in one of two enrollment options: 15-Year Agreement or Perpetual Easement. Currently, there are about 32 easements and 117 agreements enrolling 2,500+ acres into CREP in Sauk County.

What land is eligible for CREP?

Eligible land must be located in one of about 50 designated CREP counties, have a history of crop or pasture land, and be located within 150 feet of a ditch, stream, lake, or wetland. The typical CREP site consists of buffers ranging from 30 to 150 feet wide along a stream.



What are the eligible conservation practices?

There are many different conservation practice options through the CREP program. The practice installed on a property depends on both site factors and desires of the landowner. Conservation practices include filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, wetland restorations, marginal pastureland habitat buffers, permanent introduced grasses, permanent native grasses, grass prairie ecosystem restorations, and established legumes and grass.

For more information, please contact Serge Koenig at 608-355-4837 or serge.koenig@saukcountywi.gov.