



VOL. 41 NUMBER 2 • FALL 2025

SAUK COUNTY STEWARD

NEWSLETTER OF THE
LAND RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT



PHOTO BY MICHAEL FIELDS AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE

CONTENTS

.....

WI River Basin Bash	2
Welcome, Micaela!	3
Upcoming Events	4
Conserve Sauk Film Festival	5
Conservation Poster Contest	6
Available Cost Share	7
Sauk County Clean Sweep	8
Grazing Workshop	10
County Farm Corner	11
Baraboo Hills Bird Banding	14
Through the Lens of an Intern	17
Futures Forged	18
Parks+Rec Update	19
Lake Redstone Survey	20
What's Your Why	23
Rural Mental Health	25



WISCONSIN RIVER BASIN BASH

As you can see from the photo on the first page, the Wisconsin River Basin Bash was a splash! This event, hosted by the Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) was held August 7th at Veterans Memorial Park in Prairie du Sac. The Wisconsin River Basin Bash was created in 2024 by the producer led group, Eau Plaine Partnership for Integrated Conservation (EPPIC) to bring together fellow producer led groups within the river basin. The hope is to have a different producer led group host this event each year, highlighting their area of the basin.

This year SSWIG welcomed 150 community members, agency staff, and producer led groups to connect and learn about the work being done to improve the soil and water quality in the Sauk County area. Guests were able to see the Wisconsin DNR demonstrate fish shocking, a method that helps them sample fish populations to determine population density and species diversity. Species found included bluegill, paddlefish, bass and more. Attendees were able to see local initiatives, interactive demonstrations, and enjoy music and dinner.

Some of the presentations included: the Sauk County Rainfall simulator which showed how different land management practices affect rainfall infiltration and runoff; the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection shared how producer led group positively impact the environment; the Producers of Lake Redstone talked about what their group is doing to improve their lake's quality; the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association helped everyone identify invasive species near waterways and how to mitigate them; SSWIG had a rotational grazing set up; the US Dairy Forage Research Center provided research tools of the trade, the Wisconsin Dells FFA brought baby goats to play with, and more!

The Wisconsin River Basin Bash successfully brought together individuals of all ages to foster a sense of shared responsibility for local water systems and the environment. The event was not only a celebration but also a call to action, emphasizing the crucial role that communities play in sustainable management and conservation efforts. We are excited to see what next year's event will bring!



The WI River Basin Bash brought together producer led groups, agency staff, and community members



Wisconsin DNR staff demonstrate fish shocking on the river and what species of fish they found



US Dairy Forage Research Center display of forage cores

LAND RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

ADMINISTRATION

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Becky Meyer, Office Specialist

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Serge Koenig, Conservation Analyst

Brian Sadler, Conservation Specialist

Patrick Bula, Conservation Specialist

Jenn Schneiderman, Conservation Technician

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Arianna Taylor, Land Use/Sanitary Technician

Micaela Walters, Land Use/ Sanitary Technician

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Samantha Mittelsteadt, Administrative Services Coordinator

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Vacant, Office Specialist

John Starling, Maintenance Technician I

Cory Ratham- Operator I

STAY CONNECTED



Email Updates



conservation@saukcountywi.gov



facebook.com/sauk.lre



608-355-3245

WELCOME TO THE LRE TEAM, MICAELA!

Micaela Walters- Land Use Sanitation Technician



Prior to joining Sauk County as a Land Use and Sanitation Technician, I recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin – River Falls with a B.S. in Field Biology and Environmental Science with minors in Chemistry and Conservation. Throughout my schooling, I had the opportunity to intern with the USDA – Natural Resource Conservation Service as a Soil Conservationist Intern. School, however, was not where I developed my passion for the outdoors.

Growing up, I loved hunting, fishing, and hiking or simply just being outside. It was from these experiences, that I knew I wanted to do something with the environment. This job allows me to dabble in each of my interests while helping the community. In my spare time, I enjoy reading, baking, recreation leagues, catching up on my favorite shows/movies, and spending time with friends and family.

I look forward to getting out into the community and learning about what Sauk County has to offer, while working alongside this great team! If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

Phone: 608-355-4835

Email: micaela.walters@saukcountywi.gov

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 11- Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group Meeting
- 17 - Ag Plastics Recycling
- 17 - Parks+Rec photo contest deadline
- 18 - Pasture Walk at Kyle Banigan Farm
- 27 - Sauk County Clean Sweep

SUBSCRIBE TO
STAY INFORMED



OCTOBER

- 15 - Pasture Walk at the Laukant Farm
- Sasquatch Search with Parks+Rec

NOVEMBER

- 3 - Tree Sale Goes Live
- 6 - Conserve Sauk Fim Festival
- 19 - Ag Plastics Recycling
- 20 - Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group Meeting

JANUARY

- 15 - Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group Meeting
- TBD - Non Operating Landowner Workshop
- 21 - Ag Plastics Recycling

DECEMBER

- TBD - SSWIG Annual Meeting
- What's That? with Parks+Rec
- 10-11 - Nutrient Management Class for NEW participants
- 18 - Nutrient Management Refresher Class

FEBRUARY

- 3 - Annual Soil Health Workshop

MARCH

- 2 - Native Plant Sale goes live
- 18 - Ag Plastics Recycling



CONSERVE SAUK FILM FESTIVAL

Join us for the 2025 Conserve Sauk Film Festival on **Thursday, November 6th from 5:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at Carnegie-Schadde Memorial Public Library, 230 4th Ave, Baraboo, Wisconsin.** The Conserve Sauk Film Festival is a collaborative event that educates attendees and participants about important resources, environmental challenges we face, best management practices that can be implemented on farms or in our own yards, and lessons we can draw from significant environmental history or historical figures. We hope to inspire creative thought, discussion, and potential solutions to these challenges.

The 2025 Festival will include screenings of a wide array of conservation-focused films, many of which were produced locally or regionally. The festival has the honor of premiering a film featuring Sauk County farmer, Roger Bindl, as the Conservation Farm Family of the Year Award recipient.

Facilitated discussions will follow screenings and intermissions will allow attendees to engage with a variety of local organizations to learn more about their conservation efforts and opportunities for involvement.

For more information about the film festival, visit www.conservesaukfilmfest.org.



NMFE TRAINING

Register by November 15th for Nutrient Management Farmer Education Courses (NMFE) to prepare for the 2026 cropping season. Located at the MATC Reedsburg Campus 10am-3pm each day. December 10-11 is for new participants and Decemeber 18th is a refresher course.

Contact Brian Sadler
brian.sadler@saukcountywi.gov or 608-3554841

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT
FARMER EDUCATION
COURSES (NMFE)

CROPPING SEASON
2026

MATC REEDSBURG CAMPUS
ALL DAYS 10AM-3PM

10-11 DECEMBER

2-day for new participants

18 DECEMBER

Refresher course for prior participants

RSVP BY NOVEMBER 15!

Time to start planning for your 2026 cropping season!
Register early to hold your seat and your lunch!
Contact Brian Sadler for questions or to register
brian.sadler@saukcountywi.gov or 608-355-4841

SAUK COUNTY STEWARD

5

2026 CONSERVATION POSTER CONTEST

SOIL. WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

The 2026 theme for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Conservation Awareness Poster competition is **“Soil. Where it all Begins.”** The Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department is sponsoring the program locally, encouraging students to submit unique artwork to address this year’s theme.

Details

- Open to grades K-12; public, private or home school students
- Each poster must go through the following contest process: Local/County, Area, State, Nationals.

Contest Rules

- Poster size must be 12"x18" or 14"x22". Contact our office if you need paper
- The 2026 National Contest Theme, **“Soil. Where it all Begins”** must be written on each poster.
- All posters shall be created by an individual student, rather than a team of students.
- Any media may be used: paint, crayon, colored pencil, charcoal, stickers, paper or other materials on regular posters. (Computer-generated posters will not be accepted)
- To be eligible for judging, each entry must have a completed and signed entry form attached to back.

Posters at the county level were voted on by Sauk County employees with the following for criteria:

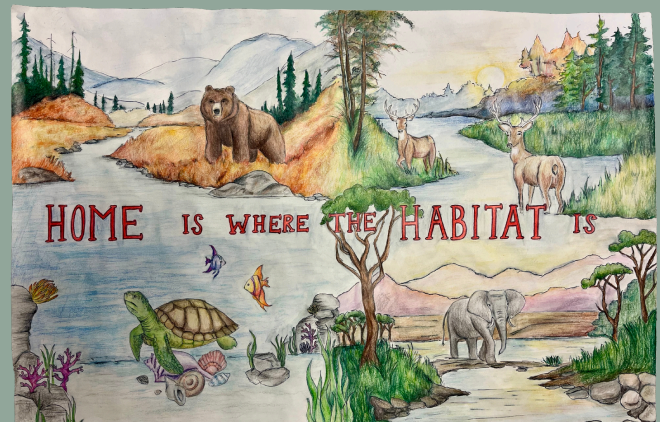
- Conservation Message: 50%
- Visual Effectiveness: 30%
- Originality: 10%
- Universal Appeal: 10%

Soil. Where it all Begins



National Association of Conservation Districts
Stewardship Week 2026

2026 NACD Conservation Poster theme
“Soil. Where it all Begins”



Vivian Spencer, Weston School District Grade 12,
received 1st place at state & is moving on to the
national poster competition

The first-place poster from each grade division moves on to regional, state, and national competitions. Students receive prizes and awards at each level where their posters compete and win. In 2025, Sauk County awards included Amazon gift cards, stickers, colored pencils, custard coupons, Sauk County Parks annual pass and a DIY bee pollinator house.

POSTER CONTEST INFORMATION



SAUK COUNTY TREE SALE

Every spring, Sauk County LRE hosts a tree sale that offers a variety of native conifer and hardwood trees and wildlife shrubs. The 2025 tree sale was held on May 2nd with a total of 18,200 trees and shrubs being distributed to landowners throughout Sauk County.

Plans are already in full swing for the 2026 Tree Sale which will include some new species (Witchhazel & Tulip Poplar) and increase the quantities of more popular species. The tree sale website will go live **November 3rd**.

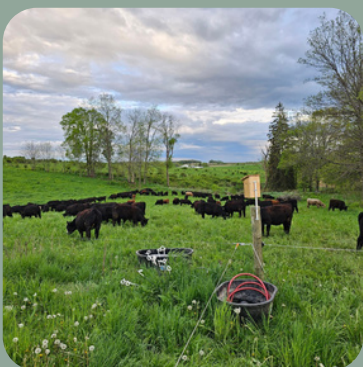
The second annual native plant sale was held on May 30th. Five kits were offered including a pollinator kit, prairie sampler kit, semi shade garden kit, rain garden kit, and low grow shoreline kit. These kits were selected for different light exposure, soil type, and habitat goals.

Due to the continued interest in the program, plans for the 2026 Native Plant Sale are underway. The native plant sale will go live **March 2nd**.

TREE SALE UPDATES

NATIVE PLANT SALE

COST SHARE FUNDING AVAILABLE



RECEIVE UP TO 70% COST SHARING!

Technical and financial assistance is available to landowners to install conservation practices to reduce soil erosion, protect water quality, and conserve the natural resources of Sauk County.



Sauk County
Financial Assistance



Agronomy Practices

- Cover Crops
- No Till
- Nutrient Management



Livestock Facility Practices

- Manure Storage Abandonment
- Roof Runoff System (Gutters)



Rotational Grazing Infrastructure

- Fence
- Waterlines
- Seeding
- Trails & Walkways
- Winter Watering System



Lakeshore Practices

- Shoreline Protection
- Native Buffer & Rain Garden
- Fish Sticks, Diversion & Rock Infiltration



SAUK COUNTY CLEAN SWEEP

SAUK COUNTY CLEAN SWEEP EVENT SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 8AM-12PM

This annual event will be hosted on **Saturday, September 27, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.** at the former Sauk County Landfill, **E8795 Evergreen Lane, Baraboo**. Clean Sweep is an opportunity for homeowners, agricultural enterprises, and businesses to dispose of hazardous products and items that pose an environmental risk, such as pesticides and toxic cleaning products. Household hazardous

waste will be collected at no charge, however, there are fees for tires, some electronic items, and appliances.



[SAUK COUNTY
CLEAN SWEEP
INFORMATION](#)

CAN'T MAKE IT? HAVE ITEMS THAT AREN'T ACCEPTED AT CLEAN SWEEP?



[ALTERNATIVE DISPOSAL GUIDE](#)



[CLEAN SWEEP VOUCHER
PROGRAM](#)

SAUK COUNTY CLEAN SWEEP VOUCHER PROGRAM

Sauk County residents can dispose of their household hazardous waste at the Dane County Clean Sweep facility through a voucher program. Sauk County residents need to complete a voucher form at the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department (LRE) (West Square Building at 505 Broadway Street, Ste 248, Baraboo). Please bring an

inventory of materials when applying for the voucher program; materials need to be approved by LRE staff. Participants with the Sauk County voucher pay a \$15.00 fee upon arrival at the Dane County Clean Sweep instead of the \$75.00 fee for out-of-county participants.

SAUK COUNTY CLEAN SWEEP



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 27, 2025

8:00am - 12:00pm

Old Sauk County Landfill

E8795 Evergreen Ln, Baraboo

Date, time, & fees subject to change



SAUK COUNTY RESIDENTS

Dispose of household hazardous waste safely

NO CHARGE: Pesticides, cleaners, oil-based paint, batteries, light bulbs, and many electronics

FOR DETAILED INFORMATION:

bit.ly/SCcleansweep

608-355-4842

conservation@saukcountywi.gov



Stay in your vehicle at all times while at Clean Sweep. Staff will unload items at each station. Make sure ALL items are loaded in the rear of vehicle.



NOT ACCEPTED:

- Latex Paint
- Used motor oil
- Demolition Materials
- 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
- Mattresses



ELECTRONICS: Cash, Credit, Check payable to Resource Solutions

*Remove batteries from electronics

NO CHARGE: Computer towers, cords/wire, power supplies, cell phones, routers/modems, Christmas lights, laptops, tablets, telephones, video gaming devices, cable/satellite boxes, most small electronics



TIRE FEES:

Cash or Check payable to Sauk County Treasurer



- | | |
|------------------------------|------|
| • Car and light truck tires | \$7 |
| • Car and light truck w/rims | \$9 |
| • Ag and Semi tires | \$14 |
| • Ag and Semi tires w/ rims | \$26 |
| • Oversized Industrial tires | \$50 |
| • <13" tires | \$3 |
| • <13" w/rims | \$5 |

Small businesses and farms with **Paints & Chemicals** >200 lbs **MUST** register with Veolia at least 1 week before the event.
Call (262) 875-7014

QUESTIONS ON WHAT'S ACCEPTED?

ELECTRONICS: RESOURCE SOLUTIONS (608) 244-5451

HAZARDOUS WASTE: VEOLIA (262) 875-7014

GENERAL: SAUK COUNTY (608) 355-4842



RecycleThatStuff.com

Resource Solutions

- | | |
|---|------|
| • Hard Drive Removal and Destruction | \$10 |
| • Microwaves & Large Copy Machines | \$15 |
| • Small AC Units, mini fridges, dehumidifiers | \$20 |
| • Stoves, washers, dryers, dishwashers | \$25 |
| • Refrigerators & Large Freezers | \$35 |
| • All monitors, CRT & Flat Screen | \$20 |
| • TV 29" & under | \$20 |
| • TV 30"- 49" | \$40 |
| • TV 50" - 60", projection, wooden console | \$60 |
| TVs Over 60 Inches - ADDITIONAL FEES APPLY | |



Funding for this was made possible, in part, by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). The views expressed in written materials, publications, speakers, and moderators do not necessarily reflect the official policies of DATCP; nor does any mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organization imply endorsement by the State of Wisconsin.



GRAZING WORKSHOP WITH STEVE KENYON

This August, the Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) hosted a grazing workshop with Sauk County LRE. The event featured renowned grazing expert, Steve Kenyon from Greener Pastures Ranching in Alberta, Canada. This workshop was in conjunction with a string of other events that hosted Kenyon in Sinsinawa and Viroqua.

Nearly 50 attendees gathered for a classroom session at the Reedsburg County Club to hear from Kenyon about integrating economic viability with ecological stewardship with their grazing operations before traveling to the Sauk County Farm for a pasture walk.

Kenyon stressed that grazing principles help with the water cycle, sunlight harvesting, nutrient

recycling, building biology and creating a poly culture. These principles are outlined in the acronym, G.R.A.S.S. G-Graze Period, R-Rest Period, A-Animal Impact, S-Stock Density, S-Soil Armor. Each of these components work together to achieve the soil building and productive grazing outcome of advanced grazing.

Sign up for email updates to be informed of future grazing events: [EMAIL UPDATES](#)





COUNTY FARM CORNER

Contributed by Jenn Schneiderman

With harvest season fast approaching, it's time for an update of all the amazing people and organizations that have shared the Sauk County Farm!

NEW LANDOWNER WORKSHOP

Sauk County Land Resources and Environment partnered with the University of Wisconsin – Forestry Extension to host a New Landowner Workshop. This event provided resources to landowners who are new to rural land ownership (5 years or less) and allowed them to connect with conservation professionals. Attendees came from Sauk, Marathon, Dane and Iowa counties to participate and learn together.

Focusing on all types of land cover, attendees were able to ask questions of UW professors, conservation farmers, wildlife ecologists, professional foresters and more! Attendees started out attending one of two walks focused on invasive species and riparian areas or farmland, birds, pollinators, and prairies.

The diversity of habitat and cropland at the County Farm allowed everyone to get hands-on experience with identifying plants, seeing conservation farming at work, and checking out a streambank restoration project. After a brief lunch, everyone embarked on a woodland walk to examine forest structures and how to go about restoring a native forest based on what is already present.

Events like these bring communities across the state together and act as a resource for people who may be interested in land conservation but don't know where to begin. From farmland to forests, conservation can be a huge part of rural landownership, and we hope to host more events like these at the Sauk County Farm in the future!

WILDLIFE RESEARCH

Research has been a part of the Sauk County Farm since its inception and we're proud to continue that tradition! This year, we conducted our second year of surveys devoted to bird species on rural working lands. These surveys are designed to capture the number of species that are likely breeding on the County Farm.

Our bird surveys from 2025 found an amazing and rich community of birds on the landscape. The highest number of species were found in the rotationally grazed pastures on the Farm including a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Bobolinks, and Eastern Meadowlarks. The Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolinks are Wisconsin species of conservation concern and require grasslands in order to successfully raise young. Grasslands once covered a large swath of Sauk County and rotationally grazed pastures are an important component of providing habitat for declining species.

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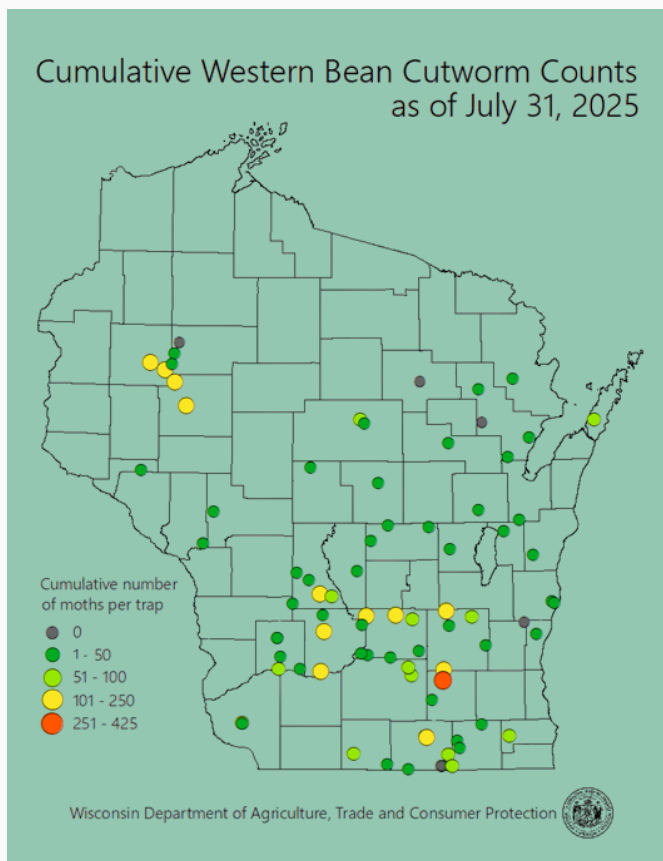
The forest surveys had an equally interesting number of species including Brown Thrashers, Yellow Warblers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Healthy forests possess a community of plants and insects that can support a wide variety of bird life. These species are able to coexist because there are enough resources for them to survive and thrive, meaning forests with a variety of trees, shrubs, and groundcover can support more bird species.

While cropland on the County Farm had the least number of bird species, it still hosted Killdeer, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Sandhill Cranes.

continued on page 13

CROPLAND PEST SURVEYS

This year, we partnered with UW-Madison Division of Extension, UW Researchers, and UW's Slugnet to capture data on the number and types of pests for rowcrops. These included Army Cutworms, Black Cutworms, True Armyworms, Slugs, and Japanese beetles. A local volunteer and SSWIG affiliate checked the pheromone traps once per week during the season to capture the number of pests that were lured in. This data collection takes place across the state and helps researchers build understanding of local pest pressure. To start setting up your own monitoring stations, check out the [DATCP Pest Monitoring Programs!](#)



SAUK COUNTY FARM WEBSITE

COMMUNITY GARDEN BEDS



COMMUNITY GARDENS

The inaugural year of Sauk County Farm's Community Gardens was a huge success! Four renters took advantage of the garden beds and grew an abundance of tomatoes, corn, squash, lettuce, broccoli, and so much more! We are thrilled to support our community and have a place for folks to grow their food, themselves, and their support network. Thank you to our first year tenants, we look forward to many more growing seasons ahead!

IN THE FORESTS OF THE BARABOO HILLS

PICTURES COURTESY OF BARABOO HILLS ECOLOGY RESEARCH COLLECTIVE

In the forests of the Baraboo Hills, a calm sense of detachment can be found. Throughout the serene landscape, birds flit through all levels of the canopy, feeding their young, preparing for migration, and finding safe places to sleep. This habitat, as peaceful as it is in the moment, is constantly in flux and particularly threatened by climate change. This is where the Baraboo Hills Ecology Research Collective found a sense of curiosity for the wilds in our backyard. How are the hills' wild residents changing in response to new weather patterns? What will remain the same? And how do management decisions affect the flora and fauna of these historic hills?

The Baraboo Hills Ecology Research Collective is a newly established 501c3 nonprofit operating out of The Nature Conservancy land in the Baraboo Hills. Its main goal is to collect and curate a long-term ecological dataset encompassing several trophic levels and taxa. From monitoring seasonal peaks in caterpillar biomass to learning about the populations of forest birds, BHERC focus on data-driven conservation goals of the Baraboo Hills. To this end, BHERC operates five bird banding stations during the spring and summer, following MAPS protocols (Measuring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) and joining a network of banding stations coordinated by the

Institute for Bird Populations. This protocol ensures that safe and ethical practices will be followed to minimize stress to the birds. USGS Bird Banding Laboratory permit #24298.

In 2025, BHERC staff completed the fifth MAPS bird banding season, and submitted several hundred bird records to the Institute for Bird Populations. While it's important to contribute to continent-wide monitoring efforts, we were also encouraged to see detailed information about the bird communities at each of the banding sites begin to take shape.

*Continued
on page
15*



ADULT FEMALE BLUE JAY AT PAN HOLLOW

Collecting demographic information on bird species gives BHERC and the wider scientific community a window into population changes over time. MAPS banding data can be used to study individual bird health, and to identify which part of the annual cycle might be driving species declines. For example, finding that only a few individuals return from migration each spring points to threats on the wintering grounds or migration routes, while encountering low numbers of fledging birds in late summer indicates poor nesting success. For common species, this information can be collected more readily but for rare species, it will take years to compile enough data to estimate population vital rates.

Hemlock Draw Uplands: This site was established in 2021 within one of The Nature Conservancy's woodland restoration sites. Characterized by a steep south-facing sandstone bluff, mature white and red oak trees, and a recovering herbaceous ground layer, this site is approaching open woodland conditions after decades of fire suppression. The most abundant bird species encountered during MAPS operations are **Indigo Bunting, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and American Redstart**, and a total of 27 bird species have been banded, indicating that bird diversity is higher here than any of our other sites.

This site also has the record for the oldest individual bird in our study area – a Mourning Warbler, banded in the site as an adult (at least two years old) in 2021 and recaptured in 2025. For a 13 gram bird which migrates to Central or South America each year, surviving for six years is impressive! The oldest Mourning Warbler ever recorded was seven years old.



Happy Hill Woodland: Another site located within a large oak woodland managed by The Nature Conservancy, the Happy Hill Woodland banding site was established in 2021. Located within Baxter's Hollow Preserve, one of the most extensive forests in southern Wisconsin, this site is at the top of a flat quartzite blufftop in an oak-hickory woodland. The most abundant birds banded here are **American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Eastern Wood-Pewee**, and 26 species have been banded to date. *Continued on page 16*

Natural Bridge Uplands: This site was operated in 2022 and 2023, and is located at the top of a steep sandstone bluff within Natural Bridge State Park, owned and managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Mature oak trees are dominant in the canopy, however years of fire suppression have resulted in dense midstory and shrub-layer conditions. The most abundant birds encountered were **Ovenbird, Downy Woodpecker, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, and in total, 22 species were banded.

Pan Hollow Uplands: This site, owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy, is part of an extensive forest preserve extending across a wide stream valley to uplands on either side. The current Pan Hollow Uplands banding site was established in 2022, and is on the top and south slope of a quartzite bluff above a quartzite outcropping. Oaks, hickories, and maples are common in the overstory, and the midstory has become dense due to regeneration of maples and other shade-intolerant species. The ground layer is predominantly leaf-litter and maple seedlings with some shrub growth near tree-fall gaps and one remnant oak opening. The most abundant birds encountered are **Wood Thrush, Ovenbird, and Veery**, and 21 bird species have been banded.

Pine Hollow: This site was established in 2021 within a stream gorge forest characterized by hemlock, sugar maple, white pine, and basswood. This is a unique site in that our nets are located along a stream and so are ideal for studying **Louisiana Waterthrush** populations. This has been consistently the most abundant species at this site, followed by **Acadian Flycatcher**. Only 13 species have been banded at this more specialized site, but several are species of high conservation concern in this landscape.

While this is just the start, the Baraboo Hills Ecology Research Collective hopes to continue exploring the ecology of these landmark hills. Join us at our website and follow our research at <https://bhrcollective.org/>



LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH
AT PINE HOLLOW



PINE HOLLOW



THROUGH THE LENS OF AN INTERN

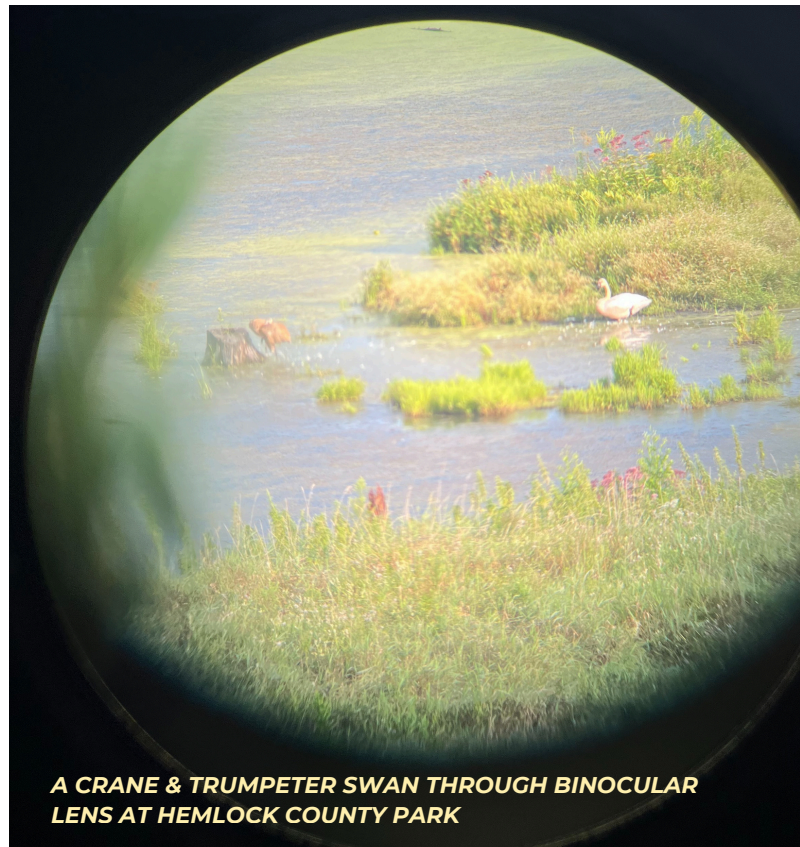
Contributed by Morgan Jensema

My name is Morgan Jensema and I am the Planning and Zoning Intern for the summer of 2025. I am from Cloverleaf Lakes, Wisconsin in Shawano County where my interest in nature and preservation began. I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a bachelor's degree in Geography and Environmental Studies in the spring of 2024. I am currently pursuing a master's degree at UW-Madison in the Urban and Regional Planning Program and will be graduating in the spring of 2026.

In my time at Sauk County, I gained an immersive experience that taught me an incredible amount about county functions, the planning process, and inter-organizational collaboration. Part of my experience involved assisting in and observing several exciting projects including the connection of the 400-State Trail and the Great Sauk State Trail. I was also involved in the planning and outreach processing for the updating of Sauk County's Comprehensive and Strategic plans and the updated Chapter 7 Zoning Amendment.

Through the guidance of Sauk County Land Resources and Environment staff, I was immersed in the community planning process and got to attend several Sauk County decision-making board meetings, town meetings, and progress meetings on various county projects. I got to learn about land use permitting processes and be included in sanitary permitting and inspections as well. Some of my additional tasks include updating town data and maps and inspecting land in the Baraboo Range Easement Protection Program for compliance with development restriction and preservation requirements.

I am so thankful for this introduction into the career of planning and the opportunity to learn from people who are skilled and passionate about their work. Seeing the landscape of planning at a county level and learning from conservation and planning experts has been invaluable. I look forward to using the knowledge and perspective of this experience as I continue my education and enter the work force full time.



A CRANE & TRUMPETER SWAN THROUGH BINOCULAR LENS AT HEMLOCK COUNTY PARK



SAUK COUNTY

— WISCONSIN —

Futures Forged

SAUK COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Sauk County is indeed a special place, rooted in history, rich in natural beauty, and home to iconic destinations from circus heritage to rock climbing to waterparks. As one of Wisconsin's fastest-growing counties, planning for the future is critical. Sauk County is building a Comprehensive Plan—a big-picture roadmap that guides how Sauk County grows, invests, protects, and supports its communities over the next 10 to 15 years. This plan will outline the county's vision for the future and provide a policy framework to guide decisions on land use, development, and investment to best meet the needs of citizens focusing on key issues that impact the entire community. This isn't just about land use or zoning, it's about your quality of life, focusing on issues such as housing, transportation, economic vitality, farmland and natural resource preservation, community character, public services and how all of these connect.

The goal for this process and ultimate plan is to have it shaped by public input and incorporating the needs of all citizens and municipalities within the community. This plan is created for Sauk County citizens, by Sauk County citizens and we

want to hear your voice at every phase. Take a quick survey. Sign up for email updates. Drop us a note. Come to a pop-up. Visit our website or stop by your local library to share thoughts. Attend in person or virtual workshops. This is a two-year long planning process which has three main phases:

- First, Engage and Assess—where we gather your input and inventory and analyze where we are.
- Then, Envision—where we explore big ideas together. Explore plausible scenarios and test goals and strategies to better define our collective future.
- And finally, Implement—where the plan becomes a guide for action.

To get involved and share your voice, please see the project website

www.saukcountyfuturesforged.com.

Currently, there is a survey open for public feedback, word clouds, and you can subscribe to receive project news and updates. However you want to get involved, just know, your input shapes this future!



SAUK COUNTY PARKS + RECREATION UPDATES



PHOTO CONTEST

Have a photo from a Sauk County Park? If you have photos from any of the Sauk County Parks send them to us for a chance to win!

RULES+DETAILS:

Each photo that is sent will be entered into the contest. At the end of the contest staff will choose the top three photos as the winners. All photos that are sent will be saved and potentially used in future posts. Make sure you enter your photo by September 17th for a chance to win.

Send your photo(s) to our Facebook, Instagram, parks.rec@saukcountywi.gov, by mail to Sauk County Parks, S7995 White Mound Drive, Hillpoint,WI 53937 or stop by our office during regular business hours. No purchase necessary, however, there is an entrance fee required for motorized vehicles in most Sauk County Parks. Participants may only send in one guess. Photos must be entered by September 17th by 8:00 AM. Only one prize per person. Prizes must be picked up by December 1st.

Call 608-355-4800 or visit the Parks+Rec website for more information on events:
<https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/parksandrecreation/parks-recreation-news-events>

HAPPY RETIREMENT

Our Parks + Recreation Manager, Matt Stieve retired June 18th. Matt was employed with Sauk County for over 29 years.

Throughout Matt’s career with Sauk County, he has greatly contributed to the success and growth of Sauk County Parks and Recreation through multiple different achievements, including: planning, construction and management of the Great Sauk State Trail, negotiating the purchase of White Mound County Park from the State of Wisconsin for \$1, construction of multiple award-winning buildings – the Prairie Smoke Terrace and an accessible hunting blind for people with disabilities, and many dam repairs and improvements.

Thank you Matt, for all of your wisdom, generous contributions and hard work. You will be greatly missed!





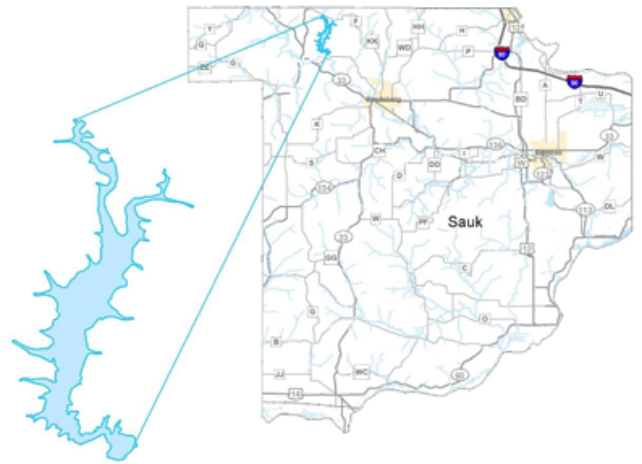
PHOTO BY SKILLET CREEK MEDIA

LAKE REDSTONE SURVEY

CONTRIBUTED BY MITCH MCCARTHY

Summer Sauk County Land Resources and Environment (LRE) Intern Robert Sosinski completed the Lake Redstone Shoreline Assessment with help from local volunteers. The survey process was developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to evaluate shorelines. This survey is intended to provide management recommendations to individual property owners based on the evaluation of their property. This process involves photographing each parcel from the lake which is then matched to land use information in the riparian zone. For this survey the riparian zone is defined as the strip of land along the shore from the high-water level back 35 feet. The information collected includes ground cover type, number of human structures in the riparian zone, and runoff concerns.

This process also assesses the amount of coarse woody habitat present in the lake. However, this is done for the entire lake instead of for each individual parcel. Coarse woody habitat provides habitat for fish, birds, and many other wildlife. It also provides protection from bank erosion. This process defines woody debris as wood in no deeper than 2 feet of water that is at least 4 inches in diameter at the widest point and at least 5 feet long.



BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Each parcel assessed will have best management practice recommendations. There are a variety of practices that homeowners can implement to improve their shoreline for habitat, runoff control, stabilization, natural beauty, and upkeep to include labor and cost savings. It is important to take into consideration the needs of the property as well as the landowner's goals. There are several guides available to homeowners to better assess which practice they should consider. All can be cost shared by Wisconsin DNR through their Healthy Lakes initiative, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment, or the Lake Redstone Protection District.

continued on page 21

COST SHARE FUNDING

Sauk County Cost Share Program: The Sauk County LRE Department is accepting applications for lake shore protection projects. Cost share funding is typically limited to 50% of the project cost up to a maximum amount (i.e. \$3000). Eligible projects include practices that reduce sediment loads and runoff that cause degradation of habitat and water quality of lakes in Sauk County. These projects may include but are not limited to: bioengineering with natural fiber products (e.g. natural fiber rolls and logs, blocks, and mats), wave-reducing natural timbers (e.g. log and root wad revetment), and riprap with bioengineering techniques (e.g. rock riprap with native plantings, geotextile bags, geogrid lifts).

Sauk County Tree & Native Sale: The Sauk County LRE holds an annual palnt sales that are perfect for shore protection projects. See page 7 for more details.

continued on page 22

Log Revetmenet
Installation on Lake
Redstone



Funding Source		Sauk County	Healthy Lakes	LRPD
BMP	Wave Reducing Timbers- Fish Stick		X	
	Wave Reducing Timbers- Log Revetment	X		*
	Native Plantings	X	X	X
	Tree Cover	X		
	Diversions		X	X
	Rock Infiltrations		X	X
	Rain Gardens		X	X
	Bioengineered Shorelines- Natural Fiber Rolls, Blocks, and Mats	X		*
	Bioengineered Shorelines- Riprap with Native Plantings	X		*
	Bioengineered Shorelines- Geotextile Bags	X		*

Table 3: Cost Share Funding Breakdown

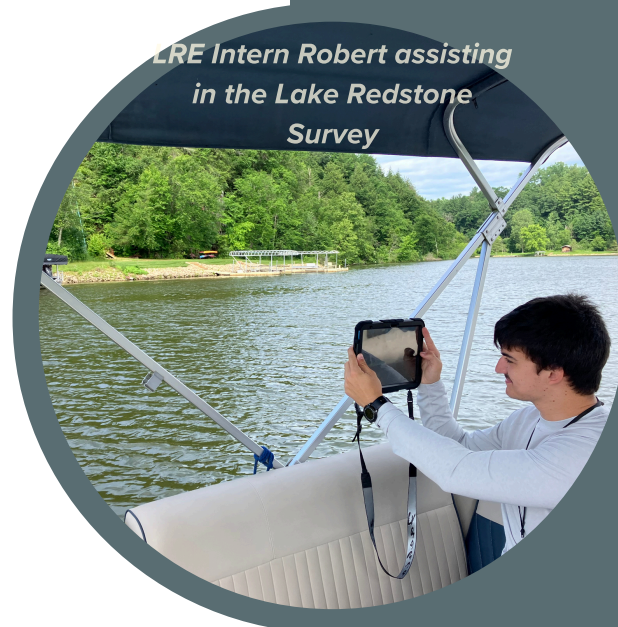
**Case by Case Basis*

Healthy Lakes Initiative: The Healthy Lakes Initiative is a program that has been set up by the WDNR to provide support through information and grant funding to small scale projects that will help improve both shoreline habitat and lake health. The grants available for these projects are intended for small, inexpensive projects, so there is \$1,000 limit in grant funding per project. This program is focused on helping individual property owners improve their shoreline. There are five projects that are eligible for Healthy Lakes Grants. The projects that qualify for these grants are installing fish sticks, rain gardens, native plantings, diversions, and rock infiltrations. Although trees as canopy cover is not available for funding, it is still a highly encouraged practice within the riparian zone.

To learn more, visit the Healthy Lake Initiative Website at <https://healthylakeswi.com>

Lake Redstone Protection District Shoreline Reimbursement Program: The LRPD board renewed the “Shoreline Reimbursement Program” for 2025, allocating up to \$2000 in reimbursement to property owners. The application is open until November 1st of the year the work was performed. Landowners can utilize all three funding sources for a possible reimbursement of \$6000.

Contact Mitch McCarthy for more information:
mitchell.mccarthy@saukcountywi.gov or
 608-477-3192



*2018 Survey Report
 released by the Lake
 Redstone Protection
 District*

Completed Installation of Geotextile Bags with Riprap on Lake Redstone



WHAT'S YOUR "WHY"

SERGE KOENIG, SAUK COUNTY LRE

It's been stated, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." Framed another way, "If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you get there?" Another question that should arise is "WHY am I doing this?" These are questions we need to wrestle with on the farm and life in general.

During these tough economic times where we have lost 10% of farms since 2017 (USDA) in the state of Wisconsin, having a vision for what you want your life to look like in one, five and fifteen years down the road can help weather these tough times and give some measure of hope. Having a mission and vision session(s) are important to any operation. Unfortunately, most of us do not take the time to figure out EXACTLY what that looks like for our particular operation.

WE FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THE HOW AND WHAT BUT FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE WHY.



The first question we should all ask ourselves is "WHY?". Why do I row crop? Why do I raise livestock? Why do I till my soil and make 2-3 passes across the field when one pass is all that's necessary and would save me \$14-\$21 (University of Minnesota) per acre? Why do I do things the way we have always done it? Why don't I look into alternative methods to raising animals, like rotational grazing? Is it because I fear what my neighbors and friends might say about me or....why? Why do I resist changing my operation? Why am I not willing to explore other ways to grow crops or raise animals? Why did I bother getting out of bed this morning? Why am I even farming? Etc..

"WHY BOTHER GETTING OUT OF BED THIS MORNING?"



So often, we focus too much on the how and what but fail to understand the why. When things get tough it is much easier to throw in the towel when our why is not solidly entrenched. The answers are different for everyone. There is no wrong or right answer but the important thing is that it comes from YOU.

Once you have “your why” answered then we focus on the how and what. This is where goals and objectives come into play. There are multiple approaches but setting SMART goals is one effective method. SMART goals are Specific Measureable Attainable Related Timed. An example of a SMART goal statement might be, “I want to have a grass-based dairy farm and be milking 100 cows by spring of 2031 with a debt:asset ratio less than 50%.”

The goals can be financial and answer the following questions: “What income level is required to support your lifestyle? How will you achieve that level of income?”.

There are also resource goals to consider such as: How do you want your living and working environment to look? What are the resources available to you and how do you plan to utilize them? Do you want wildlife on your farm or do you want to exterminate them? Are you going to mine the soil or build the soil?

Finally, we need to set goals for the production systems we will use to accomplish our lifestyle, financial, and resource goals. Many commit to a production system they inherited without knowing whether it will ever move them towards their more important goals. The production system should be the last thing determined during a planning session, not the first thing. Production systems goals on the farm could include: Will we focus on livestock only? Do I want a mix of crops and livestock? Do we want to tap into direct markets? Should we own or contract out services?

Setting these farm goals and knowing your WHY provides a roadmap towards our life goals. It gives us direction during tumultuous times. We may have some detours along the way but it can keep us moving in the right direction for OUR farm. Please contact the Land Resources and Environment Department if you would like some assistance in creating a roadmap for YOUR particular farm. We are happy to talk through the process with you.

608-355-3245

conservation@saukcountywi.gov





SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Contributed By Public Health Sauk County



*An interview with Jodie Molitor,
Farmer Angel Network Board
Member and Public Health
Sauk County Health Educator*



**PUBLIC HEALTH
SAUK COUNTY**

Together we thrive

Tell us about yourself and how you understand farmers' mental health challenges.

My name is Jodie Molitor. Farming has been my life—from childhood on a dairy farm to nearly 30 years raising Holstein steers with my husband. I've seen how long hours, unpredictable weather, and market stress can weigh heavily on farmers' mental health. With Farmer Angel Network, we're here to remind farmers: you're not alone.

How does Farmer Angel Network support rural mental health?

We listen to farming communities' experiences with stress and build partnerships through honest communication. We provide peer support, stress/suicide prevention education, resource connections, and small financial assistance. Through community events, our goal is to break the stigma surrounding mental health and remind farmers that asking for help shows strength.

Why is addressing mental health in farming communities so important right now?

More than ever, farmers are facing economic uncertainty, extreme weather, long hours, and isolation. With suicide rates among agricultural workers among the nation's highest, addressing mental health is urgent to save lives, reduce stigma, and sustain rural communities.

continued on page 26

What warning signs should people watch for?

Key signs can include withdrawing from activities, loss of interest in farming/hobbies, hopelessness, mood/sleep changes, neglecting livestock care, increased substance use, giving away possessions, or comments about death. In close-knit communities, even small behavior changes can signal distress.

How should someone approach a struggling person?

Approach with kindness and without judgment. Express concern and listen. Ask directly about suicide plans and if firearms and medications are safely locked up. Don't rush to fix problems—being present helps. Encourage and help them to seek professional help and remind them that the 988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline provides confidential support 24/7.

Photo Credit: FAN

What misconceptions do you encounter most?

Many believe seeking help shows weakness or that "talking won't change anything." We address this by sharing success stories from farmers who've sought help, emphasizing that resilience includes asking for support, and connecting people with agriculture-focused resources.



The Farmer Angel Network builds strong rural communities that support agriculture by providing **education, resources, and fellowship** with a focus on mental health.

Farmer to Farmer Suicide Prevention
988
24/7 Call, Text, Chat

Visit

FarmerAngelNetwork.com or find us on Facebook for confidential support and resources.

Call or text 988 anytime for help.

Farming is tough, but no one has to face it alone.



www.farmerangelnetwork.com



facebook.com/FarmerAngelNetwork



988

