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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Conservation Chronicle is Going 100% Electronic

Starting with the Fall 2023 edition, the Conservation Chronicle will only be offered in an electronic format. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter electronically, you can subscribe to our email notifications by scanning the QR code or visiting https://mailchi.mp/6c348f037dbf/tag-landing-page. With this new service, you will be able to manage your subscription more easily and subscribe or unsubscribe to emails for several other department topics including Grazing, Pollinators, Clean Sweep, Youth Education Programs, and more!



Great Sauk State Trail is Making the Connection



S auk County is launching a planning process to route the Great Sauk State Trail (GSST) from its current terminus in the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area to connect to the 400 State Trail in Reedsburg. A multi-modal pedestrian bridge will be constructed over the Wisconsin River in a partnership between Sauk and Dane County to connect the GSST in Sauk City to the future Walking Iron Trail. Once built, this will create a full cross-state connection from Milwaukee to the Mississippi River in La Crosse. Bike trails are shown to improve the health and vitality of both a community's citizens and economy. The U.S. Department of Commerce found that bicycling alone brings in an annual \$261 million in gross sales output for the state of Wisconsin.

Outdoor recreation in WI is the fastest-growing industry in the economy, contributing \$7.8 billion to the state's GDP according to the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis. This supports 93,000 jobs and contributes to \$3.9 billion in worker compensation. The GSST in the Sauk Prairie area averages 494 annual passes and over 100 daily passes each year, bringing significant tourism dollars to the area.

The GSST is anticipated to be routed through Devil's Lake State Park, the City of Baraboo, Village of West Baraboo, Village of North Freedom, Village of Rock Springs, and into the City of Reedsburg, bringing increased economic activity into our rural communities. Sauk County has enlisted the services of HKGi, a planning and design firm that has worked on projects such as the High Cliff State Park Connection and the Minnehaha Regional Trail. As we route the GSST through Sauk County, we are hoping to engage residents, visitors, and recreationalists to gather their opinions on route options, community highlights, and amenities desired along the trail.

There are many ways to get involved and stay informed including participating in an online interactive mapping tool, joining us for an event, taking a survey, or subscribing to the Sauk County Land Resources

and Environment email notification list. Please join us for one of our upcoming open house listening sessions, where we will be ready to answer questions, hear concerns, and provide a general overview of the trail routing process. Join us at either the Reedsburg Train Depot on Tuesday,

April 11th, 2023, or the Baraboo West Square Building, Room 213, on Wednesday, April 12th, anytime between 4:00 - 7:00 pm. Please visit our project website by using the QR code to learn more about this exciting project and access the engagement activities listed above.



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Schoepps Named 2023 Conservation Farm Family



Dave Schoepp (left) and Ron Schoepp (right) standing in a lush mob grazed pasture at Schoepp Farms with a herd of Holsteins.

When visitors arrive at Schoepp Farms in West Point township in Columbia County, they are instantly struck by the picturesque view of Lake Wisconsin, which is located just adjacent to and downslope of the third-generation farm. However, the view is not the only impressive thing to be found at the 600+ acre operation. For decades, Ron, Dave, and Nancy Schoepp have continued to look for ways to implement and promote conservation practices and soil health principles on their farm. That dedication earned them recognition from WI Land+Water as the 2023 Conservation Farm Family of the Year.

Schoepp Farms is a well-diversified grazing and cash grain operation that grows over 500 acres of corn, soybeans, winter wheat,

and alfalfa, as well as 110 acres of grass pastures that are dedicated to raising 200 dairy heifers, 30-50 dry cows, and 15 grass-fed beef. The Schoepps' conservation ethic goes back for decades, beginning with Dave and Nancy's conservation plan in the 1980s, followed by their enrollment in the Farmland Preservation Program in 1988. Ron traces his father Dave's conservation ethic back even further to the 1960s, noting that the plow was always picked up and sprayers turned off when going through waterways. The family added no-tilling in 1991 and converted to all no-till by 1995. In 1997, they frost-seeded red clover into a winter wheat field and Ron introduced rotational grazing to their operation.

Their 30-plus years of no-tilling crops and rotational grazing has made soil erosion almost nonexistent on their operation. Water infiltration and retention have been significantly improved, while crop residue and organic matter act like a sponge and enable the farm to withstand droughts and extreme rains with minimal yield losses. These grazing practices allow for portions of the pasture to remain untouched annually until mid-July, providing crucial space for grassland birds to nest. The 60-day grazing rotation also allows native plants to continuously bloom and provide habitat for pollinating insects.

But the Schoepps' work doesn't stop with the implementation of these practices, as conservation education and demonstration have been equally as important to the family. They have hosted numerous events, research studies, field days, and farm tours to promote and educate others on the importance of conservation in farming.

"It is truly difficult to emphasize everything that the Schoepps have done to protect land, water, and wildlife integrity for no other reason than genuinely caring about doing so," said Todd Rietmann, Land & Water Resource Management Senior Specialist for Columbia County. The Schoepps were nominated for the award by the Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department. "They have generously given countless hours and donated their own money towards hastening conservation-related public outreach events. Despite everything that they are already doing and the steps they take each and every day for land and water resources, they are always asking questions and wondering how they can do more to improve their own land and to educate others," added Rietmann.

As part of those educational efforts, Ron has become an active leader in the community, working closely with the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) and the Lake Wisconsin Farmer Led Watershed Council. He has worked with both groups to host events, including Conservation Day by the Lake aimed at educating farmers in the area and Conservation Night by the Lake aimed at highlighting farming practices to local lakeshore homeowners.

As recipients of the award, the Schoepps will also host the state's next Conservation Observance Day on June 23, 2023. The free public event will showcase the family's conservation practices, as well as their impact on the community and watershed. During the daylong event, visitors will have the opportunity to stop at various demonstration stations around the farm, including a rainfall simulator, soil pit, cover crop field, and barnyard.

(continued on next page)

But for Ron, the event is also an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the support of the very community that these conservation practices benefit. "This isn't just about one person—the name of the award is the 'Farm Family' and I couldn't do this without my family, friends, and community who support this work," said Ron Schoepp. "Without their support—and without the watershed groups and collaborators, agency partners, and nonprofit partners—none of this would be possible."

A full schedule and additional event details will be released soon, and available at www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/lwcd. Interested attendees can RSVP to Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department at land.conservation@columbiacountywi.gov or (608) 742-9670.

Conservation Youth Education Award

On March 2nd, Justine Bula was recognized with the 2023 Brad Matson Youth Education Award for Outstanding Youth Educator at the annual Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association Conference awards banquet. This award is in honor of Brad Matson, Iron County LCC, and his work involving youth education and all of its programs. Justine's outstanding work will carry on this awards legacy which recognizes the importance of educating our youth about protecting and managing our natural resources for generations.

Justine has worked with the Sauk County LRE Department for just over 4 years as the Education Coordinator. During this time, she has completely redefined how youth education is delivered in Sauk County. Justine has established excellent partnerships with local school districts with "Wheat Week" and the NACD Conservation Awareness Poster Contest. A teacher once said "As an educator with more than two decades of experience, I was very impressed with Justine's teaching talents. From the moment she



From left to right, Ron Bula, David Oglesby, Justine Bula, Maureen Bula, and Patrick Bula

entered our classroom, she exhibits the traits of an expert educator. Justine is able to hook the students every day with her warm, captivating personality and her passion for science."

Justine is also an intricate part of the <u>Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group (SSWIG)</u> producer-led watershed protection group with the coordination of their educational events. We are so fortunate to have Justine as part of our team here in Sauk County – congratulations on this well-deserved award!

Sign up to receive email notifications of all of our upcoming education and outreach events at: https://mailchi.mp/6c348f037dbf/tag-landing-page

Sauk County Public Health Dept. Well Testing

Fresh, clean water is a precious resource. To make sure that water coming from public drinking water systems is safe to drink, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has rules set in place that protect people from harmful chemicals and bacteria. However, these rules do not apply to individual water systems like privately owned wells. If you own a private well, it is up to you to make sure that your water is safe to drink.

Testing your well water is the best way to make sure that your drinking water supply is safe from harmful chemicals and bacteria. Generally, the <u>Public Health Sauk County Environmental Health</u> team recommends testing your well once a year.

If you are a Sauk County resident that is pregnant or has an infant younger than 12 months of age, Public Health Sauk County will provide you with a free well water test kit (limit 1 per household). If not, contact Extension-Sauk County for more information about private well testing. They have several different test kits available to suit your needs or concerns. The UW Extension office and Public Health Sauk County are both located on the third floor of the West Square Building in Baraboo. To get in touch with the UW Extension office, please call 608-355-3250. To contact Public Health's Environmental Health, please call 608-355-4327.

UW Extension Welcomes Regional Crops Educator



The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension would like to welcome Sam Bibby as the new Regional Crops Educator, covering Sauk, Vernon, and Juneau counties. Sam will be working to address the specific needs of producers and community members related to crop production. Outreach efforts will aim to form a bridge between university lead research and on-farm practices.

Sam grew up on a farm in Trempealeau County Wisconsin where he still farms part-time today. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Platteville where he earned his undergraduate degree in soil and crop science in 2019. He then attended North Dakota State University and earned his master's degree in plant science. Sam's master's research was titled "Corn-Alfalfa Intercropping with Different Row Spacings" and focused on developing a more profitable way for

producers in the Northern Great Plains to establish alfalfa. Most recently, Sam worked for the NDSU Forages and Industrial Crops Program as the Research Specialist and was responsible for designing, managing, and analyzing field trials related to foraging and industrial crop production.

Sam's primary interests lie in conservation, farm technology, intensive crop management, forages, and alternative crops. Sam hopes his background in research and day-to-day farm operations will help him deliver tangible, data-driven solutions to growers.

Please contact the Sauk County Extension Office at 608-355-3250 if you have any questions.

Sauk County Compost Bin & Rain Barrel Sale

With the warmer weather of spring and summer fast approaching, worms will soon again be actively turning that backyard compost pile into black gold. Similarly, the spring rains will be here in no time providing a great opportunity to collect water in rain barrels. To help you plan for all your spring gardening endeavors, Sauk County is holding a compost bin and rain barrel preorder sale now through April 16, 2023. By ordering in bulk, the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department is providing rain barrels and compost bins to residents for a significant discount.

Rain barrels catch water from your home roof. That water can later be put into outdoor uses like watering gardens and lawns. Rain barrels help reduce urban runoff that carries pollutants into surface water and reduce storm surges and floods in local streams. The 55-gallon FreeGarden™ Rain Barrel is available for \$70.

Reduce your household waste and return nutrients to the soil by composting. Food scraps, lawn clippings, leaves, and other waste can be converted into rich, healthy compost. Composting reduces the amount of refuse sent to landfills and is a wonderful soil amendment for gardens and lawns. The 80-gallon FreeGardenTM EARTH Compost Bin is available for \$60.

80 Gallon Compost Bin: **\$60**



The preorder deadline is April 16, 2023. All orders will be taken online only via debit or credit card. There will be no walk-up purchases available at the distribution location. Orders must be picked up on Friday, April 28, 2023, from 8:30 am-3 pm at the Baraboo City Services Center, 450 Roundhouse Court. Orders can be placed online at https://enviroworld.us/saukcounty.

For more information regarding the Sauk County Rain Barrel and Compost Bin Preorder Sale, contact Melissa Schlupp at 608-355-4838 or melissa.schlupp@saukcountywi.gov. You can also visit https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/landconservation/urban-conservation for more information on how to improve the environment on a small scale.

55 Gallon Rain Barrel: \$70



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Sauk County Clean Sweep

Saturday, September 30, 2023 from 8:00 AM - 12:00 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.



🔼 Latex paint and waste oil are not accepted at Sauk County Clean Sweep events.



Fees for Tires Car and light truck tires \$7 \$9 Car and light truck w/rims Ag and Semi tires \$14 Ag and Semi tires w/ rims \$26 <13" tires \$3 <13" w/rims \$5 Payment for tires can be made in CASH or

CHECK payable to Sauk County Treasurer.

What is *NOT ACCEPTED*:

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

Small businesses and agricultural producers with quantities exceeding 200 lbs. MUST pre-register for Paint & Chemicals with Veolia at least 1 week prior to the event. Please contact Zach Davis at (262) 253-3504.

No Late registration will be accepted.

Resource Solutions will accept the following items at Clean Sweep:

Please remove all batteries from electronics

No Charge: CPUs, Computer Printers, Speakers, Scanners, Fax Machines, Vacuum Cleaners, Phones, Laptops, Record Players, Tape Players, CD Players, iPod, 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

\$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 for electronic items not included on the list above.



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.

USDA FSA News

USDA United States
Department of
Agriculture

The following deadlines or program sign-ups are approaching at the Sauk County FSA office in Baraboo:

Farm Service Agency

- April 7, 2023—Deadline to submit offers for the General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).
- Ongoing—Continuous sign-up for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) (not general sign-up) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
- June 15, 2023, to August 1, 2023— Nomination period for Sauk FSA County Committee (COC) elections).
- July 15, 2023— Crop and acreage reports are due for all spring seeded crops forage seeding and perennial forage, and all CRP acreage. These reports are vital for establishing and maintaining eligibility for many USDA programs. In order to maintain program eligibility and benefits, producers must timely file acreage reports. Failure to file an acreage report by the crop acreage reporting deadline may result in ineligibility for future program benefits. FSA will not accept acreage reports provided more than a year after the acreage reporting deadline. Maps are available at the Sauk County FSA Office for acreage reporting purposes. If you wish to receive your maps by e-mail or wish to pick them up, please call our office at (608) 355-4420, ext. 2, or email at fsa.baraboo@usda.gov.

For more information, please contact the Sauk County FSA Office at (608) 355-4420, ext. 2.

Value of Writing Your Own Nutrient Management Plan

As winter turns to spring, the days get longer, the trees sprout new buds, and farmers begin the final preparations for another growing season. Farmers are one of the most diverse and well-rounded occupations. In a single day, they can be a mechanic, a veterinarian, an agronomist, and so much more. Farmers often rely on experts to help guide their management decisions. With continued record-high fertilizer prices and tight margins, there is an opportunity for agricultural producers to become an expert in nutrient management planning and save thousands of dollars!

According to the <u>University of Wisconsin-Madison Nutrient and Pest Management Program</u>, "A Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) is a living document outlining the planned use of nutrient sources manure, legumes, organic wastes, and commercial fertilizers to supply plant essential nutrients on crop fields and pastures. Sauk County producer Tom Wolfe operates over 400 acres of no-till corn and soybeans along with pastured chickens and rotationally grazed beef.

In the winter of 2021, Tom participated in the Nutrient Management Farmer Education Course, which is a FREE training held every winter at the MATC campus in Reedsburg. When asked why he took the class, Tom said, "It makes you feel like you are vested in what you're doing. The class gives you the ability to understand the context of the how's and why's. By just tweaking a few things here and there in the NMP it opens up opportunities to see change and save money." In 2022 when Tom wrote his own NMP he saved over \$38,000 by using UW recommendations. In turn, Tom took \$6,500 of the savings, reinvested in his operation, and applied biologicals to his crop fields for results that exceeded the farm's yield average! Tom says, "Don't be afraid to try it. You might not see results right away, but the benefits will come over time."

Tom is not the only Wisconsin producer that gained the knowledge to become an NMP expert. According to a 2012 study published in the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation, of the more than 250 Wisconsin farms with NMPs found:

- 69% of farms saved money with an NMP, with an average savings of approximately \$18/acre.
- 65% of farms decreased nitrogen applications by an average of 54 lbs. N/acre.
- 51% of farms decreased phosphorus applications by an average of 32 lbs. P205/acre.
- With these nutrient reductions: 74% of farms cited no change in corn yield & 18% of farms cited increased corn yield.

Producers in Wisconsin can receive up to \$40/acre in incentives for NMP. Writing and following an NMP often increase farm profitability through improved nutrient management and cropping system practices. Contact our office to learn more about NMP financial and in-person training opportunities so that you can become the NMP "expert". If you'd prefer to do online classes in the winter, UW has you covered! Check out their website https://ipcm.wisc.edu/blog/2022/10/2023-virtual-nutrient-management-training-for-farmers/ as well as a self-paced program https://nmfe.webhosting.cals.wisc.edu/.

Upcoming Events

Pasture Walks

- Wednesday, April 19th, 6:00 pm: Stop out to the <u>Sauk County Farm</u> located at S4555 Co Rd. CH, Reedsburg to learn about transitioning row crops to managed pasture.
- Wednesday, May 31st, 6:00 pm: Hosted by <u>Bula's</u>
 <u>Pleasant Valley Farm</u> at S4473 Scenic Rd., Baraboo,
 learn about multi-species grazing.
- Thursday, June 15th, 6:00 pm: Learn all about custom grazing at this pasture walk hosted by Connor Laukant at S5737 Rock Elm Rd., Rock Springs.
- Thursday, July 27th, 6:00 pm: Hosted by the Savanna Institute at 6511 Hillside School Rd, Spring Green, WI. We will branch out to learn more about Silvopasture and how to manage animals, trees, and forages across the landscape.



Pasture walk attendees at a 2022 Sauk County Pasture Walk Event.

- Thursday, August 3rd, 6:00 pm: Watch a fencing demonstration firsthand and learn all about fencing installation, maintenance, and tips from a professional out at Narrows Valley Seed Supply, E4566 Stoney Ridge Rd., Loganville.
- **Thursday, September 14**th, **5:30 pm:** Learn the ins and outs of running a stocker enterprise from Daniel Jackson at his farm located at E6576 Skinner Rd., Reedsburg.
- **Thursday, October 19th, 5:00 pm:** Hosted by Roger Bindl, at S10620 Weidner Rd, Spring Green. This pasture walk will be focused on grazing cover crops and will showcase information collected as part of an ongoing research project with the <u>Sand County Foundation</u> and four graziers from <u>SSWIG</u>.
- **Thursday, December 7th, 3:00 pm:** Join us out at Gabe Bauer's Farm, E435 Co. Rd EE, Wonewoc for a winter walk to learn more about winter waterers and unrolling hay for winter feeding.

Pasture walk events are free and open to the public unless otherwise posted. Please contact Serge Koenig at (608) 355-4837 or serge.koenig@saukcountywi.gov for more information on the pasture walk programs or if you are interested in learning more about rotational grazing for your farm. Subscribe to receive updates and reminders on the upcoming pasture walks at: https://mailchi.mp/6c348f037dbf/tag-landing-page

Conservation Observance Day - Schoepp Family Farm

Save the date for June 23, 2023, Conservation Observance Day hosted by Schoepp Family Farms. This free public event will showcase the family's conservation practices, as well as their impact on the community and watershed. During the daylong event, visitors will have the opportunity to stop at various demonstration stations around the farm, including a rainfall simulator, soil pit, cover crop field, and barnyard.

A full schedule and additional event details will be released soon, and available at www.co.columbia.wi.us/columbiacounty/lwcd. Interested attendees can RSVP to Columbia County Land and Water Conservation Department at land.conservation@columbiacountywi.gov or (608) 742-9670.



Conserve Sauk Film Festival

Save the date for the 2023 Conserve Sauk Film Festival on Saturday, November 4. The 2023 Festival will include screenings of a wide array of conservation-focused films.

Conserve Sauk Film Festival is a collaborative event to educate 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. For more information about the film festival, visit www.conservesaukfilmfest.org.



We're on Facebook - Search <u>@sauk.lre</u> then "like"



Sauk County LRE 505 Broadway, Ste. 248 Baraboo, WI 53913 www.co.sauk.wi.us conservation@saukcountywi.gov

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	(608) 355-4420, ext. 2
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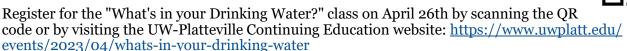


Local Continuing Education Courses Offered

W-Platteville Continuing Education Institute, in partnership with Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department, welcomes you to the Baraboo Sauk County Campus for a free informative learning session with esteemed speakers.



Join us on Wednesday, April 26 from 6:00 - 7:30 pm, in the Rodem's Room, UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County (1006 Connie Rd., Baraboo, WI) for the "*What's in Your Drinking Water?*" program. Join Groundwater Education Specialist, Kevin Masarik, for a presentation on drinking water, what you should know, testing options available and more. This program is open to city and well water consumers. These events are free and open to the public, but registration is required.



Making the Most of Your Acre(s)" through the Reedsburg Campus, on Wednesday April 19 from 6:00 - 9:00 pm.

Join for an evening at <u>Bula's Pleasant Valley Farm</u> to learn more about growing healthy foods, soil health, sustainable gardening, managing pastures, rotational grazing, and diverse operations. Register and save your seat for this class to enjoy a networking and learning opportunity.

The cost for this class is \$45.00/person. Register for "Making the Most of Your Acre(s)" class on April 19 by scanning the QR code or by visiting the MATC Continuing Education website: https://madisoncollege.edu/academics/professional-continuing-education/reedsburg



