

Land Resources and Environment Department: Monthly Report

Land Conservation

Highlights

- Staff collaborated with SSWIG to host a the pasture walk at Roger Bindl's farm on 10/19. A total of 30 people were in attendance to learn about grazing cover crops.
- Staff assisted with Youth Conservation Days at Upham Woods on 10/2 (Reedsburg) and 10/10 (River Valley). A total of 270 students attended the event.
- Staff presented to the WDNR Leadership Team on 10/5. A total of 50 DNR staff were in attendance.
- Staff provided a rainfall simulator presentation to 20 Reedsburg High School students on 10/12.
- Recruitment for the Conservation Technician position closed on 10/25 with 6 applicants being selected for interviews.

Wisconsin DNR Leadership Field Day



LRE hosted a field day for the WDNR leadership team. This event was held at a rotationally grazed farm near Blackhawk and included a pasture walk, rainfall simulator demonstration and remarks from LRE staff and the DNR Secretary. The goal of the field day was to identify opportunities for the DNR to engage with the agriculture community beyond enforcement and regulations. The newly formed Office of Agriculture and Water Quality will strive to facilitate better relationships between the DNR and farmers.

Sauk County Stream Monitoring Program



Each year, staff identify watersheds to monitor to assess the health of the water bodies and determine if additional resources are needed. Water samples are collected monthly throughout the summer and are analyzed for phosphorus, nitrogen, total suspended solids and dissolved oxygen. Stream flow data are collected weekly to help calculate how many pounds of phosphorus the stream is transporting annually. Macroinvertebrates are collected in the fall to assess overall health of the waterbody. Four streams near Spring Green were sampled in 2023 and will be sampled again in 2024.

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Planning and Zoning

Highlights

- Staff continue to work with HKGi meeting with municipalities and stakeholders and coordinating additional public input opportunities on proposed route alternatives.
- 17 Septic maintenance citations were issued at the end of October for property owners who have not met Wisconsin's 3 year maintenance requirement.
- Staff are finalizing Comprehensive Plan updates with the Towns of La Valle, Honey Creek, Sumpter, and Excelsior. Staff assisted the Town of Freedom with a new community survey.
- Staff are working with the Sauk Prairie Chamber and Town of Merrimac to place wayfinding maps at the new GSST County Rd Z and Goette Rd parking lots.

Ordinary High Water Mark Training with DNR



Sauk County LRE staff attended a field training day hosted by the DNR in Warrens. The focus was identifying the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) at the border of navigable waterways, a determination that is used for shoreland and wetland protection during construction. The hands on experience included a variety of habitats and led to great discussions about wetland delineations and shoreland-wetland regulation. The training was also an opportunity to meet with DNR staff and the staff of other counties to discuss the challenges we collectively face and strengthen our partnership with the state on the shared mission to protect water resources.

GSST Master Planning Public Input



Sauk County along with HKGi hosted open houses in Baraboo and Reedsburg on October 23rd and 24th and gathered input on proposed routes from approximately 160 attendees. The event collected 112 comments at Baraboo and 53 comments at Reedsburg. The event received coverage in the Wisconsin State Journal, Baraboo News Republic and other newspapers across the state. The GSST planning website has received over 3,512 visits to date and social media posts have been viewed by 3,512 individuals and of those views, 360 led to engagement such as shares or comments. The online platform, Social Pinpoint received 165 visits (107 unique users) who spent an average time of 9:15 minutes on the site, which shows great engagement (typical time of engagement for this type of project is 2-3 minutes). Thus far 343 comments have been placed on Social Pinpoint.

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Parks and Recreation

Highlights

- Staff attended a grant coordinator workshop for motorized recreation grants hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- All of the seasonal workers completed their employment with Sauk County.
- Construction continued on the mechanical building at the horse campground and the accessible hunting stand.
- Staff attended multiple public input sessions for the Great Sauk State Trail.
- The water at the dump station, sinks and spigots in the campground have been shut down for winter.
- The prairies at White Mound County Park were mowed.

Ash Tree Removal



A majority of the ash trees affected by Emerald Ash Borer have been removed from White Mound County Park, Hemlock County Park and Lake Redstone County Park. The logs will be sold through an auction later this fall or next year. The stumps have been grinded down and each hole has been filled with black dirt and will be seeded with grass - approximately 70 stumps were ground down. Pictured are the logs from the ash tree removal project at the parks.

Spongy Moth Removal



Staff spent some time outdoors at White Mound County Park in an effort to reduce the population of spongy moth egg masses from affected trees. This included spraying each egg mass with soapy water and scraping the egg mass off of the tree into a bucket of soapy water. Fun fact - egg masses often contain over 600 eggs, so each egg mass destroyed can help reduce the caterpillar population the following year. Pictured and circled in green are several egg masses found on one tree.