

Land Resources and Environment Department: April 2024 Monthly Report

Land Conservation

- Earthwork began at the Sauk County Farm to remove two old field terraces north and south of Herritz Road to improve farming operations.
- Staff continue to assist Lake Redstone Protection District with organizing a Conservation Night by the Lake event in July.
- Staff taught Wheat Week Classes at Al Behrman and North Freedom Elementary schools and Prairie Ridge Intermediate school with 246 students participating.
- Staff attended the Woodland Town Board meeting on 4/8 to present information on establishing an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA). A total of 30 people were in attendance.
- Staff assisted with the Baraboo School District kindergarten farm field trips on 4/22 and 4/23. A total of 105 students attended.
- Staff continue to assist farmers with updating their nutrient management plans. June 1st is the deadline for submitting annual nutrient management plans.
- Staff assisted with the annual Adopt-A-Highway clean up after work on 4/24.

Sauk County Farm Drone Photos



Nearly 100% of the Sauk County Farm was a vibrant green this spring. The current renter, Echo Y Farms Inc., planted cover crops on all crop fields harvested last fall. The remainder of the fields were planted to winter wheat or were alfalfa fields. The photo to the left was taken by a drone in mid-April just before we received some timely rains and warmer weather so it doesn't show the peak green color viewed at the farm. Having growing plants on farm fields throughout the year helps to improve water infiltration and nutrient cycling and it sure is a beautiful sight to see in the spring when everything else is brown!

American Kestrel Eggs at the Sauk County Farm



An American Kestrel nesting box was installed at the Sauk County Farm in early March. We are excited to report a nesting pair have taken up residence there and have produced a clutch of three eggs. The pair will incubate the eggs for 28-31 days and we expect to see fledglings by the end of May. A volunteer with the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance uses a flexible rod with a camera mounted at the end to monitor the nest weekly to document progress. We will report back when the eggs have hatched!

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Planning and Zoning

- The Department reviewed three proposals from firms to provide civil engineering services on an as-needed basis. The selected firm will primarily work with P&Z for storm water plan review.
- Land use and sanitation permits are picking up for construction season. Seventy-two (72) permits were issued in April, up 20% from the 60 permits issued in April 2023.
- The P&Z team had some fun after work and participated in Run for the Trees, a Happy Little 5K, a fundraiser for state park tree planting in celebration of Earth and Arbor days.
- The P&Z team plans to implement a new permitting platform later this year. Current permit processes and forms are being assessed to identify areas to simplify or modify the application process in the new system.

New Permitting Software Planned for the Future



Our department is getting onboard with online permitting, joining a trend for counties statewide. The advantages are many, including the environmentally and budget friendly aspects of going paperless. Online platforms also offer streamlined workflows, improved communication with both applicants and team members, improved record keeping and searching ability, increased data management, and time savings across multiple tasks. Our team has been evaluating a number of software platform options in recent months to determine which one best suits our needs. We are looking forward to implementing the new technology and expect improvements for staff and increased satisfaction for citizens applying for permits or seeking records.

State Basic Soils Course



Soil training continued this month as one staff member attended a two-day basic soils training in Tomahawk. Topics spanned a wide set of subject material including soil chemistry and biology, formation and physical properties, soil classification, soil and site evaluations and suitability for septic treatment. Soil tests are a critical component to septic system design and placement. The State of Wisconsin sets the requirements for in-situ soil as a treatment component to private on-site wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) through administrative codes enforced by county staff.

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Parks and Recreation

- Many trees were planted throughout White Mound County Park and Lake Redstone County Park.
- Staff attended a Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association meeting at Madison College.
- Trails at White Mound County Park were checked for down trees and trail markers, in preparation for summer.
- Work continued on the Hemlock Dam.
- A bat house was installed at the North End Boat Landing.
- Proposals for the golf utility vehicle were received and opened, with 2 proposals total.
- Proposals for the engineering/design services of the maintenance building at White Mound County Park were received and opened, with 6 proposals total.
- The water to the RV dump station, fill station and campground was turned on.
- Staff installed counters in new locations along White Mound Drive and the GSST.

Volunteers help at Sauk County Forest



Staff from Cardinal Glass, in Spring Green, volunteered their time on Earth Day to help pickup trash along US Highway 14 and the Sauk County Forest. With only 10 volunteers, they collected over 20 large bags of trash in a short stretch. Thank you, Cardinal Glass, for all of your hard work - it's much appreciated! Volunteers are pictured to the left.

Road improvements started at the campground



Staff from the Highway Department and the Parks + Recreation service area spent much of April at White Mound Campground, starting the road improvements. Fill from the road was hauled and placed in a ditch along County Highway GG. Weather has been a concern, delaying some improvements. Paving will be completed in May.