

Land Resources and Environment

Department: February 2024 Monthly Report

Land Conservation

- Staff attended the Grassworks Grazing Conference 2/1-2/3 in Wisconsin Dells.
- Staff assisted with the Soil Health Workshop on 2/6 with 70 people in attendance.
- Staff assisted with Farmland Preservation Plan listening sessions.
- Staff were interviewed by Capital Times on the transition to grass grazing pilot program bill.
- Interviews were held for the conservation technician position that was previously held by Gus Johnson. Patrick Bula will begin work with the LRE department on 4/8.
- Staff met with the Sauk County DNR forester on 2/20 to discuss plan for improvements along the stream at the Sauk County Farm.
- Staff attended the DATCP Producer Led Watershed Project Meeting in Wausau on 2/20.
- Staff assisted with planting 6 acres of native prairie at Prairie Ridge Intermediate School in Reedsburg.

Annual Soil Health Workshop Held on 2/6



The annual soil health workshop was held on February 6th at the Baraboo Performing Arts Center with 70 people in attendance. This event is a collaboration between several producer led watershed groups and county land conservation departments. Blake Vince was the keynote speaker and shared his experience incorporating cover crops into his farming operation in southeastern Ontario, Canada. Staff from USDA-NRCS and UWEX presented on soil fertility and soil health metrics.

Prairie Ridge Native Prairie Planting



Brian Sadler assisted with planting 6 acres of native prairie grasses and wildflowers at Prairie Ridge Intermediate School in Reedsburg. Brian initially brought the idea of planting native prairie on the large open campus to the principal and school board in 2023 and received a lot of support. He was working on identifying potential funding sources when the local PTO said they would cover the costs. The prairie will take a couple years to establish and future maintenance will require mowing and prescribed burning. Trails will be established along with interpretive signage for students to learn and interact with.

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Planning and Zoning

- Staff finalized Comprehensive Plans for the Towns of Sumpter, Excelsior, and Honey Creek. Staff began working with the Town of Woodland on their Comprehensive Plan process and continues to work with Freedom, Winfield, and La Valle.
- Staff completed the submittal of the 2023 nonmetallic mining reclamation annual report to the DNR as required by Wisconsin Administrative Code NR135. The report includes total acres approved for mining, the number of mining sites, sizes of individual sites, public hearings for new or existing sites, and any enforcement actions.
- Work continues to identify a preferred route for the GSST. Staff and HKGi recently met with WSOR regarding opportunities for shared rail with trail usage opportunities along the Reedsburg Rail Subdivision.

Staff Training/ Continuing Education Credits



Four staff members attended a two day course for continuing education credits for POWTS Inspector and Certified Soil Tester licenses. The course was specifically designed for county staff and provided by Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) Wastewater Specialists. There were ten training sessions covering various aspects of code, soil tests, septic design, permitting, inspections, approved products and materials, and credentials/licensing. One of the more interesting sessions was “Stump the State” where county staff could bring up various questions or issues that were not clear in Wisconsin Administrative Code. The DSPS staff would then respond with their interpretation(s).

Farmland Preservation Plan



Sauk County's Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) expires on December 31, 2025. The FPP is a foundation piece in enabling landowners to participate in other elements of the program such as farmland preservation zoning, agricultural enterprise areas, and farmland preservation agreements. Sauk County held a series of Listening Sessions in Rock Springs, LaValle, and Plain to meet with producers to better understand the needs of the agricultural community with regard to FPP programs, non farm development, and farm succession planning. The information gathered will be incorporated into the FPP plan as policy direction for staff to develop and implement programs to keep farming profitable and viable in Sauk County.

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Parks and Recreation

- Staff attended the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association conference.
- All events for 2024 were planned, including Music in the Park and outdoor movie nights.
- Picnic tables for the horse campground were assembled.
- Debris and down trees were removed from the Great Sauk State Trail.
- Applications for the Parks Seasonal Worker positions were reviewed. Interviews will be held in March.
- All contracts with the motorized recreation grant associations/clubs were updated.
- Requests for Proposals were created for a utility golf cart and maintenance building at White Mounty County Park.
- A police bodycam documentary was filmed on the Great Sauk State Trail.
- The privacy fence boards were removed from the campground at White Mound County Park, planed and re-oiled.

Riprap installed at Lake Redstone County Park



Riprap was installed along the beach shoreline at Lake Redstone County Park. The shoreline, along with the neighboring property's 10' of shoreline, was experiencing erosion. The Highway Department assisted in the project, using a track skid steer to haul riprap down to the beach and an excavator to place it.

Work continues on the Hemlock Dam



The concrete work is 100% completed, and Janke General Contractors is awaiting on the stop logs to be constructed. The last rainfall set us back, as the soil to be used for back filling is predominantly clay. The soil originally met the compaction test prior to the rain, but has since failed. The soil will need to dry out before Janke is able to back fill.