



# CONSERVATION CHRONICLE

Newsletter of the Land Resources and Environment Department

## Conservation Night By the Lake



On July 26th, over 150 producers and lake homeowners alike came to the McWilliams Heritage Farm, Folk and Forest School near Lake Redstone in La Valle, WI to learn about rotational grazing, soil health and see the county rainfall simulator in action.

Mitch McCarthy (Sauk Co. LRE) used the rainfall simulator to discuss the effects of turf grass, conventional tillage, no-till, prairie buffer, and rotational grazing on rainfall infiltration and runoff. He explained shoreline stabilization (see page 8) and how to minimize runoff from lawns.

Serge Koenig (Sauk Co. LRE) shared how rotational grazing decreases the amount of runoff that empties into the nearby lakes. He emphasized the importance of starting at the farm to win the conservation battle. Farm owners Erin and Scott demonstrated rotating their cattle to a new paddock of fresh grass.

Jamie Patton, State Soil Health Coordinator with USDA-NRCS, taught from a soil pit to show the farm's no-till soil profile. The geology of the area, hills, and farming practices all play a part in how rainfall cycles through the soil.

A farm fresh meal by the Relish Tray in Baraboo and networking concluded the night. Thank you to our sponsors: McWilliams Heritage Farm & Folk School, Lake Redstone Protection District, Producers of the Lake Redstone Watershed, Farmers of the Lemonweir Valley, Guardians of Lake Decorah-GOLD, and Juneau County Land and Water. Sign up for email updates to be informed of events like these.

**“ The battle is won or lost when it comes to conservation right here where the raindrop hits the ground ”**

-Serge Koenig, Sauk County Conservation Analyst at the Conservation Night at Lake Redstone



## Contents

.....

- Welcome Patrick & Jacqui .....page 2
- Upcoming Events .....page 2
- Available Cost Share Funding .....page 3
- Welcome Anastasia .....page 3
- Sauk County Tree & Plant Sale .....page 3
- Sauk County Clean Sweep .....page 4
- Jim Gerrish Grazing Workshop .....page 6
- Sauk County Farm Updates .....page 7
- Shore Stabilization .....page 8
- Hemlock County Park Dam .....page 9
- Watershed Sign Refresh.....page 10
- USDA-FSA News .....page 10
- Through the Lens of an Intern .....page 11
- SSWIG .....page 12
- Radon Testing .....page 13
- WiWiC .....page 14
- Hunting Blind at White Mound .....page 15
- NACD Poster Contest .....page 16
- Leopold Pines .....page 17

## Land Resources and Environment Staff

### Administration

Lisa Wilson, Director

Becky Meyer, Office Specialist

### Land Conservation

Melissa Schlupp, Conservation Manager

Serge Koenig, Conservation Analyst

Brian Sadler, Conservation Specialist

Patrick Bula, Conservation Specialist

Jenn Schneiderman, Conservation Technician

Mitch McCarthy, Watershed Program Coordinator

Jacqui Peyer, Conservation Educator

### Planning and Zoning

Brian Simmert, Planning & Zoning Manager

Cassandra Fowler, Planner

Will Christensen, Land Use/Sanitation Specialist

Tate Hillman, Land Use/Sanitation Technician

Megan Krautkramer, Land Use/Sanitation Technician

### Parks and Recreation

Matt Stieve, Parks and Recreation Manager

Jekka Alt, Administrative Services Coordinator

Craig Meyer, Jr., Parks Maintenance Supervisor

Samantha Mittlesteadt, Office Specialist

John Starling, Parks Maintenance Technician I

## Upcoming Events

- **September 18:** [Ag Plastics Recycling](#)
- **September 19:** [Miller Pasture Walk](#)
- **September 28:** [Sauk County Clean Sweep](#)
- **October 24:** [Roger Bindl Pasture Walk](#)
- **November 1:** [Sauk County Tree Sale](#)
- **November 20:** [Ag Plastics Recycling](#)
- **January 3:** [NACD Posters Due](#)
- **January:** [Ag Plastics Recycling](#)
- **February 4:** [Soil Health Workshop](#)
- **March 1:** [Sauk County Native Plant Sale](#)

## Stay Connected



[Mailchimp Email Updates](#)



[conservation@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:conservation@saukcountywi.gov)



608-355-3245



[www.facebook.com/sauk.lre](http://www.facebook.com/sauk.lre)

# Welcome to the LRE Team, Patrick & Jacqui!



## Jacqui Peyer - Conservation Educator

Growing up surrounded by agriculture in rural Wisconsin Dells started my passion for the outdoors. With Horticulture and Agronomy degrees from UW-Madison, I have worked with McKay Nursery as a Plant Propagator, Administrative Assistant and Farm to School Coordinator for nearby school districts prior to joining Sauk County.

Community involvement is near and dear to my heart as I have been active in numerous agriculture and volunteer based organizations including 4-H and FFA throughout my life. Outside of county work, you can find me managing my vacation rental and event barn on my family's farms in Oxford, playing various musical instruments, cheering on the Badgers, crafting, and exploring the outdoors with my husband and dogs.

I am beyond excited to work with Sauk County youth and adults alike! Watch for youth programming such as Wheat Week and Youth Conservation Days as well as the Sauk County Clean Sweep, agriculture plastic recycling, field days, film festivals and more for community programs!

Phone: 608-335-4842 | Email: [jacqui.peyer@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:jacqui.peyer@saukcountywi.gov)

## Patrick Bula - Conservation Specialist

Prior to joining Sauk County as a Conservation Specialist, I received Bachelor's Degrees in Wildlife Ecology and Biology from UW Stevens Point in 2014 and went on to join Peace Corps Jamaica where I worked with smallholder farmers to develop agricultural enterprises and integrate conservation practices.



Since returning to Wisconsin I have worked with Marathon County as Conservation Specialist and more recently with the USDA-NRCS as a Soil Conservationist out of the Baraboo Field Office, assisting landowners and operators to plan and implement a wide range of conservation practices on their lands. In my spare time I help manage a small, diversified farm near Baraboo and enjoy getting out to hike and backpack when I can.

I look forward to continuing to work with the folks around Sauk County to protect and improve our natural resources.

Phone: 608-963-2166 | Email: [patrick.bula@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:patrick.bula@saukcountywi.gov)

# Welcome, Anastasia Kurth!



Sauk County Extension welcomes Anastasia Kurth as the new Regional Crops & Soils Educator, covering Sauk, Juneau, and Richland counties. Anastasia will be working to address the specific needs of producers and residents on issues related to crop production. Outreach efforts will aim to form a bridge between university lead research and on farm practices.

Kurth grew up in Illinois where agriculture was always in her backyard. She earned her undergraduate degree in soil and crop science and environmental horticulture from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 2022. She then went on to complete her master's degree in plant science at North Dakota State University.

Her master's research was titled 'Integrating alfalfa and winter camelina into wheat, sunflower and soybean rotations' and examined the agronomic, economic and environmental impacts of various crop sequences. Most recently, Kurth was a part of the Forages and Industrial Crops lab, where she gained experience in forage and bioenergy crop production.

Kurth's primary interests include forages, creating more resilient cropping systems and practices to improve soil health.

If you have any agricultural questions, we encourage you to contact Sauk County Extension by emailing [anastasia.kurth@wisc.edu](mailto:anastasia.kurth@wisc.edu) or calling 608-355-3250.

## Sauk County Tree and Native Plant Sale



Every spring, Sauk County LRE hosts a tree sale that offers a variety of native conifer, hardwood, and wildlife shrubs. The 2024 tree sale was held on May 3rd with a total of 18,975 trees being distributed to landowners throughout Sauk County.

Plans are already underway for the **2025 Tree Sale** which will include a few new species and increase the quantities of more popular species. The tree sale website will go live **November 1st**.



The first annual native plant sale was held on May 31st. Four kits were offered including a pollinator kit, prairie sampler kit, semi shade garden kit and low grow shoreline kit. These kits were selected for different light exposure,

soil type, and habitat goals. The kits were made available for preorder on March 1st and sold out within 48 hours! Additional kits were made available and sold out in a couple weeks.

Due to the incredible interest in the program, plans for the **2025 Native Plant Sale** will include more kit types and more kits available in total. The native plant sale will go live **March 1, 2024**.

## Cost Share Funding Available

Sauk County provides financial assistance for installation of conservation practices. These practices not only protect land and water resources but oftentimes increase farm productivity and profitability. There are several practices that can be cost shared. Visit our website below to learn more about conservation practices will work on your land.



[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

# 2024 Sauk County Clean Sweep and Waste Disposal Resources



## SAUK COUNTY CLEAN SWEEP EVENT SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 8AM-12PM

The next Sauk County Clean Sweep will be hosted on **Saturday, September 28 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.



**2024 SAUK COUNTY  
CLEAN SWEEP  
INFORMATION**

## Sauk County Household Hazardous Waste and Clean Sweep Alternative Disposal Guide

Can't make it to the Clean Sweep or have items that aren't accepted?

Find alternative disposal options to Clean Sweep



[CHECK OUT THE ONLINE GUIDE](#)

## SAUK COUNTY CLEAN SWEEP VOUCHER PROGRAM

Sauk and Dane Counties are working together to provide Sauk County residents with the opportunity to dispose of their household hazardous waste at the Dane County Clean Sweep facility through a voucher program. Sauk County residents wanting to participate 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 all materials or an inventory of materials when applying for the voucher program. All materials for disposal through the voucher program 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. Learn more about the voucher program by visiting: <https://www.co.sauk.wi.us/cpz/clean-sweep-voucher-program>

# Sauk County Clean Sweep

Saturday, September 28, 2024 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](mailto:conservation@saukcountywi.gov)

**Stay in your vehicle at all times while at Clean Sweep. Event staff will unload items at each station. 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
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

**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
- 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, iPods, 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

\$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

TV's Over 60 Inches - ADDITIONAL FEES APPLY

**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 regarding 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

# JIM GERRISH GRAZING WORKSHOP

Contributed by Serge Koenig



Photo by Grassland 2.0

On June 11, 2024, nearly 100 people gathered in Sauk County for an engaging and educational grazing workshop led by Jim Gerrish, a renowned independent grazing lands consultant, author, and researcher. The event highlighted the multifaceted benefits of managed grazing, emphasizing its positive impacts on forage quality, carbon storage, soil health, and overall human well-being.

The workshop commenced with a morning classroom session at UW Platteville Baraboo Sauk County. Here, Gerrish shared his extensive knowledge and research, elucidating the critical role of managed grazing in sustainable agriculture. Participants gained insights into how rotational grazing can enhance forage quality, promote carbon sequestration, and improve soil health. Gerrish also discussed the broader implications of these practices for human health, underscoring the interconnectedness of ecosystem health and community well-being.

In the afternoon, attendees transitioned from theory to practice with a pasture walk at the Sauk County Farm. Under a clear, sunny sky, Gerrish, alongside Connor Laukant, who manages the pasture lands at the County farm with his cattle, led the group through hands-on learning experiences. The lush green pastures served as a living classroom where participants could see firsthand the principles discussed earlier. Gerrish and Laukant demonstrated effective grazing management techniques, highlighting the tangible benefits of their implementation.



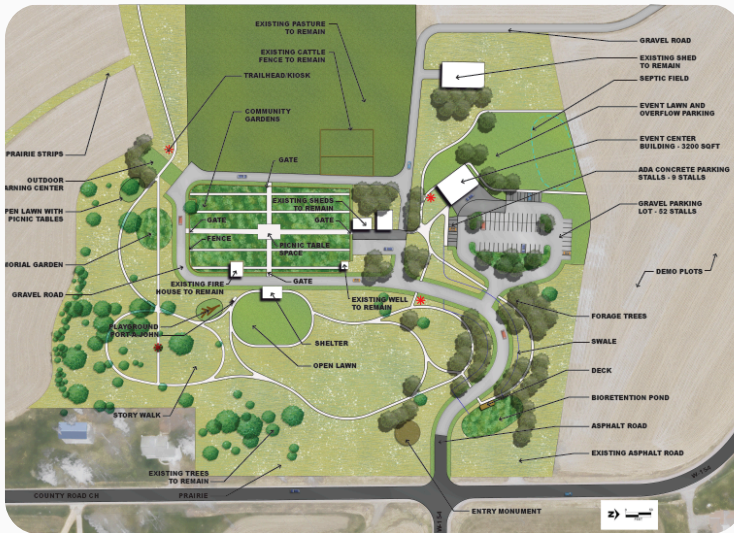
The picturesque summer day added to the workshop's success, making the outdoor learning experience enjoyable and memorable. Attendees were able to ask questions, engage in discussions, and see real-world applications of managed grazing practices. The combination of indoor and outdoor sessions provided a comprehensive understanding of the topics covered, making the workshop both informative and practical.

Overall, the Jim Gerrish grazing workshop was a resounding success, leaving participants equipped with valuable knowledge and practical skills to implement managed grazing techniques in their own practices. The event fostered a deeper appreciation for sustainable agriculture and its critical role in promoting ecological and human health.

Want to be updated about future events like these? Sign up for email updates for pasture walks and more through the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department:

● ● ● ● ● ● ● [Subscribe](#)

# Sauk County Farm Master Plan Implementation Continues



The LRE Department began implementing the Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan in 2023. We are excited to share project updates as they arise:

**Additional information on the Master Plan can be found on the [Sauk County Farm StoryMap](#).**

## Demonstration Plots at the County Farm

Contributed by Jenn Schneiderman



The Sauk County Farm, located 4 miles south of Reedsburg, is alive with activity and will only ramp up as fall rolls around! As part of the property mission, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment seeks to create a place to converge, learn, and demonstrate with regenerative agriculture and conservation-friendly farming best practices. Part of the farm is designated as demonstration plots of corn and soybean rotations. These demonstration plots are designed as a learning resource for the community to see how to set up and maintain farming practices which reduce operation costs and protect land and water. Demonstration plots also act as an experiment for different managements, to learn how different practices influence soil health and crop success.

The Sauk County Farm's plots are operated by the Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group (SSWIG), as an effort to disseminate the results to the community and provide cost share for conservation practices.

Sections of the farm are broken up into six equal sections, each with a different treatment. By rotating crops, increasing, or decreasing fertilizer, implementing cover crops, and monitoring yields from all plots, the hope is to showcase how local farmers can integrate cover crops into their rotations and implement regenerative management systems. These plots are currently in their second year and will continue for a minimum of five years to collect enough precision-agricultural data to see the effects of different management practices. If you have any questions about the demonstration plots or SSWIG funding, check out the SSWIG website at [www.sswig.org](http://www.sswig.org)





# Shoreline Stabilization

Contributed by Mitch McCarthy

The configurations of our lake shorelines in Wisconsin have been constantly changing over the last few thousand years. Soil erosion is a natural process that is part of that configuration. Unfortunately, when the rate of erosion speeds up due to loss of vegetation, physical disturbances, changes in water levels, or increases in wave action, the increased soil loss and removal of native vegetation is bad for the health of the lake. Soil eroding into the lake can reduce water quality and increase the growth of algal blooms and aquatic plants. Eroding soil also has a damaging effect on fish and wildlife habitat. The negative effects of shoreline erosion are a concern for landowners who care about the health of their lake and their property.

There are different techniques landowners can use to control stormwater runoff, repair soil erosion, and restore native shoreline buffers.

Contact Mitchell McCarthy, Sauk County Watershed Coordinator, to get your shoreline assessed and ask about potential cost share assistance to protect your shoreline.

Eligible projects may include but are not limited to: vegetated buffers, 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, fish sticks and tree drops), and rock riprap with bioengineering techniques (e.g. Rock riprap with native plantings, geotextile bags, geogrid lifts, and synthetic engineered matting), diversions, rock infiltration, and rain gardens.

**Apply for cost share assistance by  
November 4th**  
Contact: [mitchell.mccarthy@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:mitchell.mccarthy@saukcountywi.gov)  
608-355-4835



Dutch Hollow Shoreline Stabilization Project using vegetated rock riprap, geotextile bags, and native plants



Lake Redstone Shoreline Stabilization Project using rock riprap, geotextile bags, and native plants



Dutch Hollow Shoreline Stabilization Project using log revetments, fish sticks, and native plants



# Reconstruction of the Hemlock County Park Dam

Contributed by Cassandra Fowler

Hemlock County Park is a 72-acre dammed slough of the Baraboo River located approximately ½ mile north of the Village of La Valle in Sauk County, WI. The property features extensive bird habitat in the form of the shallow 12-acre floodplain slough, sandstone outcrops, wetlands, forest and hemlock relic which gives the property its name. This property has been cherished by local citizens through the decades not only for the unique landscape, but the recreational opportunities provided by the dammed slough.

Sauk County acquired this property in 1963 when a group of landowners donated their land for the purpose of creating a park. The natural oxbow of the Baraboo River that flooded the Hemlock Slough had been dammed since prior to 1900 by the Chicago Northwestern Railroad Company when they channelized a portion of the Baraboo River and built the embankment through a section of the floodplain. This embankment separated the natural oxbow floodplain from the main Baraboo River Channel, except for an opening along the southern edge of the slough. After the property was acquired in 1964, the County constructed a dam and water control structure along the embankment, raising the level of the water in the slough and removing it from the natural fluctuations of the River. This dam was proposed to hold water 4' (four feet) above the stream bed, increasing the recreational opportunities available on the floodplain lake. At some point in time, additional stop logs or screens were placed in the spillway to raise and maintain the water levels approximately 1.5' above the engineered design.

In 2018, a 100-year flood event overtopped the dam, causing failure and lowered lake levels. Through a five-year process with local citizens, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Town of La Valle and Sauk County, restoration discussions concluded with replacement of the dam. The dam was finished this Spring and already the levels of the lake have begun to rise again to better support the fish population. With the replacement of the dam, the Land Resources and Environment Department is undergoing a master planning process for this property to create a 20-year development and maintenance plan. Through the planning process, citizens will have the opportunity to bring forth ideas and have discussions on further improvements for the property and ways to preserve the unique habitats on the site for generations to come. **If you would like to get involved with the planning process, please reach out the Cassandra Fowler at (608) 355-4832 or at [Cassandra.fowler@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:Cassandra.fowler@saukcountywi.gov).**



# DELL CREEK WATERSHED SIGNS GET A REFRESH

Contributed by Melissa Schlupp

The Dell Creek watershed covers 133 square miles in the northeast corner of Sauk County and the southeast corner of Juneau County. It is the waterbody that creates Mirror Lake and Lake Delton and drains into the Wisconsin River. The Dell Creek Priority Watershed Project began in 1995 and ended in 2008. The watershed project was initiated to assess the nonpoint pollutants in the Dell Creek watershed and guide the implementation of control measures. Several soil loss and phosphorus reduction goals were surpassed upon completion of the project. A total of 7 watershed signs can be found on the perimeter of the watershed in Juneau and Sauk Counties. The 4 signs in Sauk County were recently given a refresh by Conservation Intern, Matt Provost. They look incredible - great work Matt!



## USDA-FSA News



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

- **November 4, 2024:** COC election ballots will be mailed to eligible voters in the Local Administrative Area (LAA) #1
- **November 15, 2024:** 2024 acreage reporting deadline for fall seeded crops, such as wheat and rye, etc.
- **December 2, 2024:** Deadline to return to COC election ballots, or postmarked

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





## THROUGH THE LENS OF AN INTERN Contributed by Matt Provost & David Espino

My name is Matt Provost and I'm the Conservation Intern for the summer. I grew up just East of Wisconsin Rapids and cultivated a passion for conservation through hunting, fishing, and trapping. I went on to attend UW-Madison and graduated with a Bachelor's of Science in Landscape Architecture. From there, I worked as a gardener and ecological restoration technician in the private sector in Madison. Last fall, I returned to UW-Madison to pursue a Master's degree in Environmental Planning.

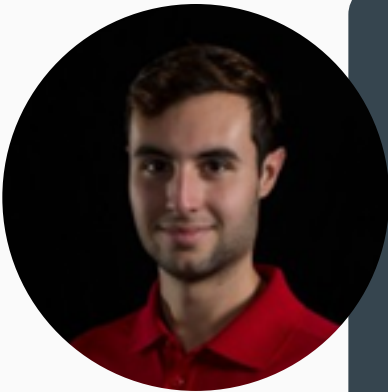
As an intern I have had the privilege to work on a wide variety of projects that have left me with a solid understanding of the tools available and the processes necessary to implement conservation at the county level. One of my main tasks was to conduct 5-year status reviews on streambank protection and managed grazing projects throughout the county that were implemented in 2019. I have also helped plan and facilitate county run events like the Jim Gerrish Grazing Workshop, Soil Health Field Day on the County Farm, and Conservation by Lake Redstone. I have also helped conduct

research by taking stream samples on some small streams in the Spring Green area, monitoring water quality on Lake Wisconsin, and assisting with a bird survey at Hemlock County Park. While in the office, I have been using ArcGIS to create a prioritization list of agricultural fields that may be the most vulnerable to erosion. Recently, I've been using ArcGIS to model hydrology in the Upper Honey Creek Watershed to better understand where specific conservation practices may be most useful. I have also been enriching my conservation skills by attending various trainings on soil health, silvopasture, rotational grazing, and stream restoration.

Overall, a summer in Sauk County is a summer well spent. I feel grateful that I have been able to work for an organization with good values, a great team, and a mission I can wholeheartedly support.



Matt taking a secchi disc reading



I am Dave Espino, the Planning and Zoning Intern for the summer. I am originally from New Jersey but have called Wisconsin home for a little over seven years now. I attended UW – Madison where I received a Bachelor of Science in Landscape and Urban Studies in 2022. I immediately began my Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning which will be completed this August.

This summer has been a great experience, with many opportunities to work on various projects and assignments, as well as become more familiar with Sauk County! Primarily, my work this summer has been focused on the updates to the various Town Comprehensive Plans, updating census data, the narratives, and maps, as well as having the opportunity to attend several meetings to discuss these updates and even being able to facilitate one. I was also tasked with conducting easement checks as part of the Baraboo Range Protection Program, specifically in Baraboo and Honey Creek. This was an incredible experience, being able to venture through and enjoy the beautiful Baraboo Hills.

Other opportunities included going on septic closings, looking at specific cases and understanding the permitting processes, and assisting with a bird survey at Hemlock County Park. As a whole, the time spent here offered many diverse experiences and I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked on these many diverse projects in such a wonderful place.



# SAUK SOIL & WATER IMPROVEMENT GROUP (SSWIG)

**SSWIG Mission:** Improving soil health and water quality through regenerative agricultural practices and education to build resilient family farms and thriving rural communities.

SSWIG is a producer led watershed protection group, led by farmers for farmers. SSWIG began in 2019, when area farmers came together with the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department and UW-Madison Division of Extension staff to discuss ways to collaboratively help and support area farmers. Through this, SSWIG and a supporting network of farmers and partners were formed.

**SSWIG Programs:** SSWIG offers support for farmers and anyone who is interested in learning more about regenerative agricultural practices including:

- Cover Crops
- No-Till
- Rotational Grazing
- Grazing Cover Crops
- Much more!

**SSWIG Education and Outreach:** SSWIG also hosts a variety of field days, pasture walks, workshops, and meetings to provide learning and networking opportunities.

**SSWIG Demonstration and Research:** The group collaborates with area agencies and organizations to conduct on farm demonstrations and research projects.

**SSWIG Incentives:** SSWIG offers custom cost share programs to farmers who operate within our focus watersheds (see Fig. 1) and want to implement conservation practices. In 2024, seed discounts were offered to members. Connect with us for 2025 incentives and programs!

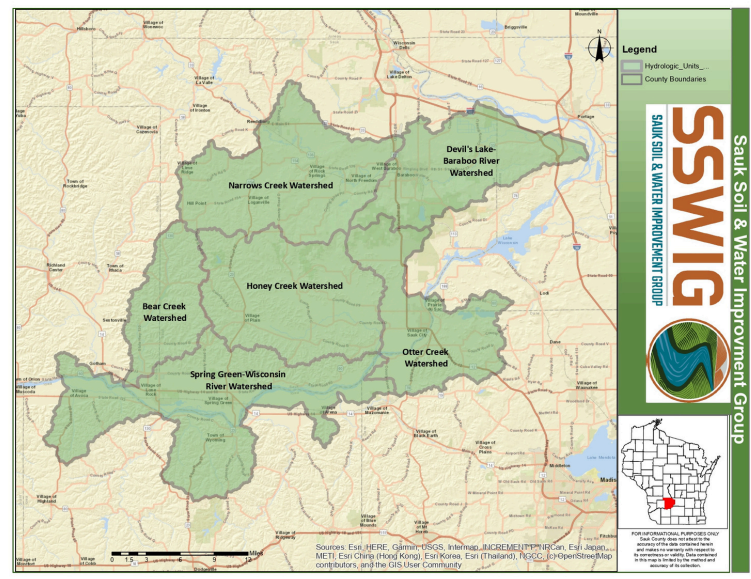


Fig. 1. SSWIG Focus Watersheds. Newly added for 2025: Bear Creek and Spring Green-Wisconsin River Watersheds

Stay Connected with SSWIG



[www.sswig.org](http://www.sswig.org)



[sswig.wi@gmail.com](mailto:sswig.wi@gmail.com)



[@SaukSoilWaterImprovementGroup](https://www.facebook.com/SaukSoilWaterImprovementGroup)



## Environmental Health: Radon

Contributed By [Public Health Sauk County](#)

### What is radon?

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that is **radioactive**. It can leak into your home and is common in Wisconsin. It is invisible and has no smell.

### Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.

We can answer your questions regarding radon and radon testing. You can purchase a radon kit from us for only **\$10!** Please note that we take cash or check only.

Radon test kits are sold at the locations noted below:

- **Baraboo West Square Building** (3rd Floor), 505 Broadway St, Baraboo, WI
- **Lake Delton Village Offices**, 50 Wisconsin Dells Pkwy S, Wisconsin Dells, WI
- **Reedsburg City Hall**, 134 Locust St, Reedsburg, WI
- **Spring Green Village Offices**, 154 N Lexington, Spring Green, WI
- **Prairie du Sac Village Offices**, 335 Galena St, Prairie du Sac, WI
- **Columbia County Health Department**, 111 East Mullet St, Portage WI

*“Whether your home is old or new, we recommend that all residents test their homes for radon every 2-3 years. You can check the levels in your home with a simple and affordable test.”* --Steve Lisser, Environmental Health Manager

For questions, please call us at (608)-355-4327 or visit our website below.

### More Information on Radon in Sauk County

Public Health Sauk County supports the well-being of all people in our community. Through wellness programs, environmental health initiatives and a focus on creating systemic change, we cultivate healthier places and people so that Sauk County can thrive.



**PUBLIC HEALTH SAUK COUNTY**  
WISCONSIN  
Together we thrive



# Wisconsin Women in Conservation Field Day

Contributed By Kriss Marion

On June 10, nearly 30 women gathered at Bula’s Pleasant Valley Farm in Baraboo for a field day with Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC). It was a beautiful, clear day for a walk to see the regenerative practices put in place by the family over the years. Farmers Maureen Bula and her daughter Justine led the tour and explained the practices, supported by conservation professionals Janice Kelley, Sauk County NRCS Resource Conservationist; Melissa Schlupp, Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Conservation Manager; Lindsy Hagen, Juneau County NRCS Soil Conservationist; and Brianna Schroeder, Juneau County NRCS Soil Conservationist.

“It was fascinating!” said Allison Crook, Central Region Coordinator for WiWiC, who organized the event. “We learned about the family’s grazing system, which sequences cattle, sheep, and chickens to minimize invasive species growth and pests. There were a lot of questions during the tour from landowners of all different backgrounds and scales. Participants were also passionate to learn about Maureen’s no-till garden.”

Maureen and Justine led the group into managed grazing fields, discussing fencing, water lines, pasture seeding, multi-species management, and the learning curve of integrating silvopasture. They looked at a pollinator planting in another section of the farm and walked through the no-till beds of vegetables, which Maureen sells at farmers market and the on-farm store, along with honey and pastured meats.

“It was inspiring to see so many women come together to learn and connect at the Bula Farm. Justine and Maureen did an excellent job sharing their experience and encouraging others to implement regenerative practices on their land, no matter the size of their property,” said Schlupp, who offered participants information about technical assistance and cost-share opportunities to try similar practices.

*Continued on page 15*



Maureen and Justine Bula were generous with their knowledge and expertise - as well as their time and energy.



The field day included a tour & learning circle where participants shared challenges and goals regarding conservation.



Justine Bula demonstrates some of the tools and practices used in the no-till vegetable beds

Continued from page 14

**WiWiC** is a state-wide collaborative effort led by the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in partnership with Wisconsin Farmers Union, Renewing the Countryside and Marbleseed (formerly MOSES). Funded by the NRCS, the WiWiC project brings together women landowners, farmers, farm workers, urban growers, and conservation professionals to share conservation practices, resources, and funding opportunities through field days, webinars, bus tours, potlucks and peer-driven learning circles.

The next WiWiC event in the Central Region Central Region: Fall Learning Circle on the theme of Well Water Protection at Vines and Rushes Winery in Ripon, October 20, 1-5pm.



Melissa Schlupp explains regenerative grazing practices & cost share opportunities to field day participants

## Hunt at White Mound County Park!

Contributed by Jekka Alt

Sauk County Parks and Recreation is excited to announce the addition of an accessible hunting blind at White Mound County Park! Nestled behind the park maintenance building near a food plot area sits the blind - complete with two chairs, heat, electricity and lighting. The blind is available to those with a valid Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources permit for people with disabilities to hunt deer and turkey.

There are seven hunting periods to choose from - starting in September and ending in December - please see below. The hunting periods for spring turkey will be available for future years.

- **Archery / crossbow deer season opener:** September 14 – 22, 2024
- **Gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities:** October 5 – 12, 2024
- **Archery / crossbow deer early rut:** October 19 – 27, 2024
- **Archery / crossbow deer prime rut:** November 2 – 10, 2024
- **Gun deer season:** November 23 – December 1, 2024
- **Muzzleloader deer season:** December 3 – 11, 2024
- **Combined antlerless deer rifle:** December 12 – 15, 2024 + archery / crossbow deer late season: December 12 – 20, 2024



Hunting Blind Application



Hunting Blind Map

The use of the blind will be determined by a lottery. If you're interested in utilizing the accessible hunting blind, please review, complete and submit the application and agreement above. Completed and signed applications and agreements can be sent to Sauk County Parks and Recreation via email at [parks.rec@saukcountywi.gov](mailto:parks.rec@saukcountywi.gov) or by mail at 57995 White Mound Drive, Hillpoint, WI 53937.

Upon the application deadline, Sauk County Parks will randomly choose eight applications. The first application drawn will get first choice of a hunting period. If awarded, we'll contact the applicant. After notification of the award, the applicant must schedule a visit to meet with Park staff for explanation of rules, parking, blind access, etc. This meeting will occur at White Mound County Park, anytime Monday through Thursday, 8 AM to 3 PM, unless otherwise arranged with Park staff.

# 2025 CONSERVATION AWARENESS POSTER CONTEST

## “HOME IS WHERE THE HABITAT IS”

The 2025 theme for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Conservation Awareness Poster competition is **“HOME IS WHERE THE HABITAT IS.”** 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” x 18” or 14” x 22”.**
- The 2025 National Contest Theme, “Home is where the Habitat is” 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.**

### Poster Evaluations

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

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. Sauk County awards a special prize for the classroom with the most student participation at the local level. Our winners receive Amazon gift cards, reusable water bottles, coloring books, and custard coupons this year. The first-place winners are also awarded a Sauk County Parks annual pass.



2025 NACD Conservation Poster theme




1st place poster for the 2024 Sauk County Contest for grades 10-12 submitted by Ashlyn Lichman. “May the Forest Be With You Always” was the 2024 theme.

Posters are due to the Sauk County Land Resources & Environment Department by **4:30pm Friday, January 3rd, 2025.** More information and past winners can be found at:

**Sauk County Website**



A black and white photograph of Aldo Leopold, an older man with glasses, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt. He is standing in a forest of tall pine trees, reaching out with his right hand to touch the trunk of a tree. The background is filled with the dense foliage of the forest.

# Leopold Pines Threatened by Climate Change

Contributed by Kysh Lindell, Aldo  
Leopold Foundation, Inc.

Aldo Leopold examining his red pines in 1946

2023 was exceptionally hot and dry in Sauk County.

If you had the chance to visit the Aldo Leopold Shack and Farm last year, you might have seen the impacts of record-low precipitation and blazing heat on the flora and fauna of the Leopold-Pines Conservation Area. Phenological timelines jumped weeks ahead. The typically healthy and towering Shack Prairie was left stunted, inches shorter than in previous years. Migrating sandhill cranes left the area for a mere four weeks, most traveling only a short distance to stopover sites in the Lower Midwest before turning around.

One of the most visible changes, though, lay in the pines.

Just after Aldo Leopold purchased the Shack property in 1935, the family began planting upwards of 3,000 pine seedlings every year. It seemed the perfect intervention for the time: soil erosion was rampant, pines grew quickly, and the government was providing people with seedlings for dirt cheap. When the trees finally began to put down roots a few years later, they cemented the Leopolds' legacy of ingenuity, hard work, and ecological experimentation on this "sand farm in Wisconsin, first worn out and then abandoned by our bigger-and-better society."

Fast forward to today. Just off the winding footpath to the Shack, a small pocket of 18-25 red pines stirs in the wind. The thinning crowns are nothing but brown needles and brittle branches. These historic trees, planted by Aldo Leopold, family, and friends, have met their untimely end.

*Continued on page 18*

Drone image of dead red pines near the Shack Gate.





Evidence of the Armillaria fungus in the red pines. The fungus manifests in white mats during its early life stage, then begins to form dark-colored, stringy rhizomorphs that spread several feet underground.

*Continued from page 17*

In southern Wisconsin, the last part of this story is becoming all the more common. Our land stewardship team recently met with Wisconsin DNR Forest Health Specialist Michael Hillstrom to investigate just why these and other red pine stands in our area are in rapid decline. Peeling away the bark from the decaying trees reveals one answer: infection.

String-like webs of white, black, and red fungus found under tree bark are a tell-tale sign of Armillaria root disease—a fungal infection that dries out roots and prevents trees from taking in the water and nutrients they need to survive. While Armillaria occurs naturally and even helps Wisconsin’s forests by recycling nutrients stored in wood back into the soil, it can also behave like a parasite and kill its host plant. This particular stand of red pine was ripe with the fungus in all different life stages.

Armillaria can spread through spores produced by mushrooms or underground via shoestring-like rhizomorphs that infect the root systems of surrounding trees. Unfortunately for these Leopold pines, trees already facing stressors like drought, overcrowding, pests, or periods of heavy rain are especially susceptible.

Fungus is not the only concern, though. Where drought and infection strike, insects quickly move in.

During their investigation, Michael and our stewardship team also found evidence of bark beetle activity in the pines. Species like the red turpentine and pine engraver beetle bore into the bark of conifers to feed, mate, and lay their eggs. Larvae and adult beetles carve pin-sized holes and tunnels around the inside perimeter of the tree, creating striking patterns in their wake. These tunnels, called boring galleries, disrupt the flow of water and nutrients throughout the tree.

Like the fungus, these beetles are opportunists and tend to strike trees whose defense mechanisms are compromised by disease, drought, or other stressful conditions. To make matters worse, beetle larvae develop faster in hot and dry conditions like those we experienced last summer.



Boring galleries carved by bark beetles.

*Continued on page 19*



*Continued from page 18*

What does this mean for the pines, and for the Leopold legacy?

While there are no surefire remedies for Armillaria or bark beetle infestation, removing infected trees from the stand can help slow their spread. At the recommendation of the Wisconsin DNR and other experts, our stewardship team plans to remove the dead or dying red pines in this portion of the stand this fall and continue exploring further interventions to protect the surrounding trees. Luckily, many other stands of Leopold pines are in no danger of mortality from Armillaria infection and have long, healthy futures ahead.

Though a somber decision to fell trees the Leopold family so carefully tended, the longevity of the remaining pines and the health of the entire ecological community remain our top priorities. In Leopold's own words, "a conservationist is one who is humbly aware that with each stroke [of the axe] he is writing his signature on the face of his land." With rising temperatures, droughts, and increasing pest populations accompanying climate change, it seems our signatures must readily evolve, along with our pens.

While the Leopold pines face an uncertain future, their legacy should not. Over the last 89 years, these trees bore witness to the complete transformation of the Shack property, the restoration and recovery of 4,500 acres of land now protected as the Leopold-Pines Conservation Area, and countless "little dramas of the woods" playing out below. They have shown us their own resilience, surviving storm, drought, flood, fire, and likely impacts of human-caused climate change yet unknown to us. No doubt they have inspired you if you have stood under their wobbling boughs. It would be difficult to forget such giants—and we must not.

You can follow along on this developing story by following the Aldo Leopold Foundation on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) where we post weekly Stewardship Saturday updates, or by subscribing to our e-newsletter [here](#).

Learn more about [Armillaria root disease](#) and [bark beetles](#) on the Wisconsin DNR website.