

Thinking Like a Watershed

Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

Spring 2013

Black Earth Creek Re-meander Project Update

Kurt Welke, WI DNR fisheries

Black Earth Creek (BEC) through Zander Park will take on a whole new look when June 2013 arrives. It is then that the creek will be re-directed into a newly constructed meandered channel and the existing channel (once the former millpond) abandoned, and reconstructed into a stormwater treatment feature.

The newly meandered channel also sidesteps the remains of the old dam structure concrete behind the hardware store. That structure served as a control point that negated placement of upstream habitat due to its influence on water elevation. Now that this structure will be bypassed, in-stream and bank habitat features can be installed and made functional.



Photo: Steve Born

DNR conducting "BEFORE"
fish census April 2013

Why a new channel?

The current stream, while scenic, lacks the habitat diversity that is characteristic of most of BEC. The channel is uniformly wide and generally shallow with abundant in-stream vegetation. Some coarse substrate – preferred spawning real estate– is present but generally less common than softer organic silts present on the channel margins. Absent are deeper pool areas, gradients of slow-moderate and fast current, as well as in-stream woody debris or micro-habitats of eddy currents, current shears or breaks, and turbulence. The new winding channel will offer variety of living space options for all stages of a trout's life history, from juveniles to adult fish. Similarly, it will offer new angling opportunities as the range of trout holding cover increases! Second, the new channel will free up the space in the "old" channel to allow stormwater that currently enters the creek untreated to be infiltrated, cooled, and stripped of its sediment and nutrient loads. The reconstruction of Hwy 14 and Lagoon street will result in new "plumbing" that uses the engineered old stream channel as an end of pipe bio-retention feature. The result will be better quality water entering the stream as clean base flow rather than as runoff.

How and When?

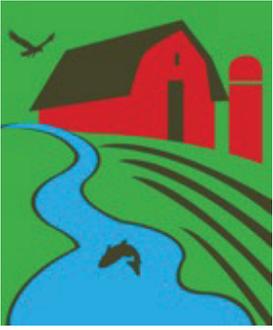
Plans for the new re-meandered length are finalized and the permitting process nearly completed. Plans are available at the Village hall for review. Construction will be jointly performed by both DNR and a village selected contractor. The Village will announce the selected contractor in early April 2013. Weather allowing, earth will be dug in June with project completion by September. The storm water channel will be constructed in sync with the highway and sidestreet projects. The new stream will be 830 feet in length (current stream is 600') and integrate 6 bends.

Questions may be directed to Kurt Welke, WI DNR fisheries 608-273-5946 or kurt.welke@wisconsin.gov. We will be posting informational signs stream side as the project progresses.



Photo: Steve Born

Future Fishers



Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

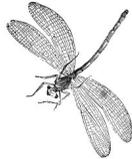
For the wise management of the land and water resources in the Black Earth Creek Watershed

BECWA Goals

- To protect, conserve, support and advocate for the wise, long term management of the physical, biological, environmental, cultural and historical resources that constitute the heritage and future of the watershed.
- To foster and encourage citizen and locally-based stewardship among the many members of the Watershed community.
- To provide a forum for civilized discussion of issues and problems in the Watershed.

Board of Directors

- Greg Hyer, *President*
- Bobbi Peckarsky, *Vice-President*
- Barbara Borns, *Secretary*
- David Lucey, *Treasurer*
- Richard Anderson
- Steve Born
- Dan Buckland
- Briana Burns
- Chris Long



Bugging Stream Water Quality Quiz - Bobbi Peckarsky

Why are macroinvertebrates excellent monitors of stream health? (Multiple choice)

- A) They are easy to collect and identify.
- B) They have widespread distributions and exist in a variety of habitat types.
- C) They have a diversity of species ranging from sensitive to tolerant of degraded conditions.
- D) They are abundant enough so that sampling does not deplete populations.
- E) They not move in and out of habitats seasonally.
- F) They live long enough to detect chronic habitat degradation.
- G) All of the above

**Answer on page 6.

President's Column

Major positive improvements to our Watershed will become a reality in 2014. Mazomanie's Lake Marion project will be enhanced with recreational amenities and Cross Plains' creek re-meandering will be completed. These are "gold standard" examples of healthy watershed initiatives – improvements that enhance a cherished natural resource and provide economic and recreational amenities for the people who live along Black Earth Creek.

BECWA continues to educate, mediate and advocate for watershed projects that are healthy for the people who live, work and play along, and the brown trout, insects and plants that live in and around, Black Earth Creek. BECWA's annual creek clean-up day; occasional newsletters; special educational events on Creek ecology and timely informative meetings on issues of controversy or great interest are the building blocks we use to help all of us leave this Watershed "better than we found it".

We need and appreciate a consistent commitment of your volunteer time, interest and financial support. **Thank you** for all that you do to make the Black Earth Creek Watershed a treasured and nationally recognized region.



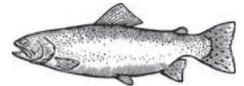
Greg Hyer

Happenings in the Watershed

BEC Clean Up - April 20th
BECWA & TU at Salmo Pond - 9 AM

**Natural Heritage Land Trust
30th Anniversary Celebration - April 25**
Wisconsin Institute for Discovery - 5:30 PM

Trout Days - May 4th
Bugs by the Creek - 1 PM



Swamplovers - June 19th
25th Anniversary Celebration - 4 PM

Festge Park - September 14th
50th Anniversary

Mark your Calendars!

Archaeological Investigations at the Brunner Site

An Early Nineteenth Century Farmstead on Black Earth Creek

Norm Meinholz - Museum Archaeology Program-Wisconsin Historical Society

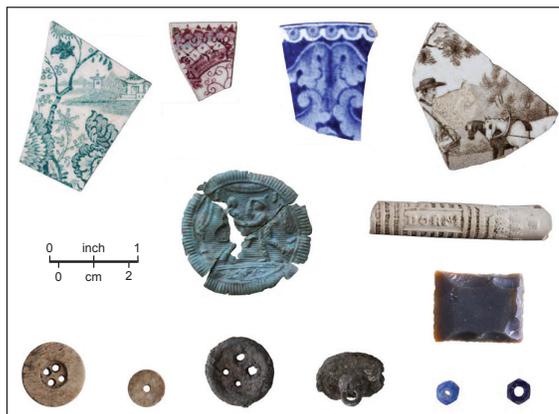
In 2011, the Museum Archaeology Program of the Wisconsin Historical Society conducted archaeological investigations for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) associated with the planned reconstruction of USH 14 through the Village of Cross Plains. A field survey located a 50 x 100 foot concentration of historic Euroamerican artifacts, designated the Brunner Site (47DA1417), in a pasture at the foot of a bluff just south of Black Earth Creek and west of CTH P.



To determine if the site is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places an excavation was conducted later in the summer. These excavations identified several features including the structural remains of a house, measuring 6 x 17 feet, and a cellar, measuring 3 x 4.5 feet and 3 feet deep. The Old Military Road was identified immediately west of the site along the bluff.



The house and cellar contained a variety of artifacts totaling nearly 4500. These included transfer printed plates; many produced in England and locally produced redware pottery. Personal items included glass beads, buttons, clay smoking pipe fragments, a decorative copper disc and an 1828 U.S. large cent. Several gunflints, a lead ball and other lead ore pieces were also recovered.



The artifacts and archival research indicates that the site dates between 1836 and 1854. An 1852 pencil drawing of the Black Earth Valley by Adolf Hoeffler appears to indicate a farmstead at the site location with lightly wooded bluffs and the open prairie across the floor of the Black Earth Valley.



WHi 31174

The property was originally owned by Wallace Rowan and Berry Haney, two of the earliest and most colorful characters in Dane County. The site was determined eligible for listing on the National Register in 2012. Due to subsequent redesign by WisDOT the site will not be impacted by this project and will remain as a pasture on the banks of Black Earth Creek.

Black Earth Creek Improvement Project

Multi-year Infrastructure Commitment

Matt Schuenke

After many years of discussion, planning, preparation, and design, the Village of Cross Plains is proud to announce the Black Earth Creek Improvement project will finally commence on or around June 3, 2013. The Village Board will be awarding a contract to Joe Daniel Construction Company of Madison on April 3, 2013 to assist the Village as the general contractor to partner with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to help move the creek back to a more natural state with improved habitat structures and drainage flow. Dane County is also partnering with the Village through the award of a PARC Grant in 2012 to assist in the cost of implementing the project. In addition to the creek improvements, there will be two new bridge crossings and a much more substantial paved path through Zander Park which will help provide better access for the creek's users or people generally interested in the creek. This is the first step in a multi-year public infrastructure commitment made by the Village to the Downtown Core Area to help improve our interaction with the creek. The Village plans to reconstruct Lagoon Street in 2014, work with the DOT and Federal Government to reconstruct Main Street (US Highway 14) in 2015, and implement stormwater treatment facilities in 2016 for the creek's benefit. We are excited as to what the future will bring for the Black Earth Creek in the Village of Cross Plains, and look forward to completing this project for the benefit of the region.

How do local business people feel about the project?

We asked and here's what they said:

Mike Roessler, *Realtor* - "I believe the changes will be a huge benefit to the community in the long run."

Ray Buchanan, *True Value Hardware* - "When it is done the Lagoon Street area will be more scenic - so it should help in the long run."

Todd Opsal, *On the Creek Fly Shop* - "The re-meandering of the BEC will result in a boost to the community. This creek is a real asset and is underutilized. These changes will result in new state-wide attention."

Mary Devitt, *Cross Roads Coffe Shop* - "We already have hikers, fishers, bikers and that will continue to increase as the Creek is improved and access to it is more convenient...we will become a destination."

Welcome New Board Members

Christopher Long and Dan Buckland

Chris is a Town of Black Earth resident, a lifelong trout angler and a member of Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited and Wolf Run Association. His professional interests are in multi-media and digital strategies.

Dan is a long-time Village of Cross Plains resident who has been active for years working on Black Earth Creek issues with Black Earth Creek Conservation Organization; the Village's Parks and Open Spaces and developing and maintaining the Ice Age Trail through the Watershed.

178-Acre Black Earth Farm Permanently Protected

Agricultural Conservation Easement at Lucey Farm

Re-printed from Natural Heritage Land Trust Newsletter

On November 7, 2012, Natural Heritage Land Trust completed an Agricultural Conservation Easement on a 178-acre farm in the Town of Black Earth. The agricultural conservation easement ensures that the land will be available for agricultural use in perpetuity and prevents the building of non-agricultural buildings. The farm is adjacent to Black Earth Creek, a world-class trout stream, and the Black Earth Rettenmund Prairie, a State Natural Area owned by The Prairie Enthusiasts.

“I wanted to make sure this land stayed a farm forever,” said George Lucey. George approached Natural Heritage Land Trust about permanently protecting his farm in 2009. It took over three years to bring the project to completion, but George says he doesn’t regret any of it. “Back in the early 1960’s, my father said this was the best farm in the Town of Black Earth. He didn’t live to see me own and farm it, but he would be happy to know it will remain a farm forever.”

The farmland in the valley of Black Earth Creek, in western Dane County, is rich and fertile. Thousands of years of alluvial processes have formed the thick, dark soil that leaves no uncertainty about the aptness of the creek’s name. The productivity of the soil is only one part of the farming equation, however. The viability of any given farm relies as much on the likelihood that a neighbor’s land is going to remain a farm as the number of bushels of corn the land produces. An area’s farming economy relies on having a critical mass of productive

farms. Without that, the farming infrastructure can deteriorate and the idea of converting the farmland to other uses begins to look more appealing.

Preserving farmland in the Black Earth Creek valley is a key strategy of Natural Heritage Land Trust to protect the quality and quantity of water in Black Earth Creek and is consistent with the local land use planning. The upland areas adjacent to the creek serve to collect the rain and infiltrate it to the groundwater, which in turn feeds the creek. Every addition of impervious surface in the valley contributes to stormwater runoff, rather than infiltration. Rainwater that runs off the surface of the land tends to do more harm than good to the water quality of the creek. The surface water is warmer, which makes it less desirable to trout and other cold-water species, and it often carries pollutants with it. Permanent easements ensure that the farmland itself remains available for water infiltration, but they also send a signal to neighbors that agriculture can remain a viable land use.

Natural Heritage Land Trust won’t likely be able to protect all the land in the valley, but if we can help ensure that farming remains a viable economic use of the land, we can make the market work for us to keep the Black Earth Creek valley a stunning agricultural, scenic, and recreational resource.

David Lucey (BECWA Treasurer),
Dennis Lucey, Kathy Endres, JoAnn
Foote, George Lucey, Mark Lucey, Sheila
Muehlenbruch, Jim Lucey, and Gary
Lucey.

Photo: Scott Lucey



News: THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF RAILROADS ISSUED THE FOLLOWING FINDING
That the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad Co. shall install and maintain a crossing at-grade of the Wolf Run Trail
with its tracks in accordance with the design plans for Alternative 1 of the Village of Mazomanie in the Village of
Mazomanie, Dane County by August 1, 2013.

Seniors Explore the Environment

Northwest Dane Senior Services

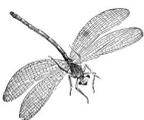
Barbara Borns

Last fall Northwest Dane Senior Services (NWDSS), located in Black Earth, launched a new program for seniors. The focus of the program is to explore and enjoy the wonderful natural resources of our area. Angela Velasquez, who was Executive Director of NWDSS until earlier this year, worked with a small group of folks to identify and plan the first outings. This group consisted of Melody Moore, a Town of Mazomanie resident and a member of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board; Harriet Irwin, Town of Vermont resident and naturalist; and Barbara Borns, Town of Vermont resident and board member of NWDSS and BECWA.

In October over a dozen seniors traveled to Lake Marion near Mazomanie where they were met by Bob Dodsworth, president of the Mazomanie Historical Society. On a cool but pleasant fall morning Bob recalled the interesting history of how Lake Marion was formed, how it became a location for a flour mill, and also a thriving ice industry – in the days when ice boxes were common in homes. The coming of the railroad was a major factor in the development and shaping of Mazomanie, and the rail tracks still skirt the northern border of Lake Marion.



Bob Dodsworth



Answer: **Bugging Stream Water Quality Quiz - G**

The Black Earth Creek has historically provided the water for the lake by a diversion and dam northeast of the current Lake Marion. It was just within the last year that the dam was removed. Since Lake Marion has become a valuable resource to both human and wildlife communities, experiments are underway to use pumps to maintain the level of water in the lake.



The second outing of the new group was in January. We traveled to Sauk City for lunch at the Blue Spoon Café, and to view the bald eagles who were catching their own lunch right outside the restaurant windows. The dam just north of Prairie du Sac keeps water open during

the winter, providing a happy hunting ground for hungry eagles.

This spring we are planning a trip to Walking Iron Park in Mazomanie, where we hope to catch pasque flowers in bloom, as well as see returning birds. Paulette Glunn, the new director of NWDSS, has expressed her enthusiasm for keeping this Eco-Group active. NWDSS is in the backyard of Vermont Creek, just blocks before it flows into Black Earth Creek. The area is a wonderful gift for those who value and appreciate our natural resources.

BECWA MEMBERSHIP

Membership in BECWA runs from January to December. Thanks to all who have already sent in their membership dues for 2013. Your continued membership support will allow us to keep area residents informed of issues that are important to the watershed by holding educational forums and via our newsletter, *Thinking like a Watershed*.

See the back page of this newsletter for a membership form and instructions for mailing.

Thank you!

Festge Park - 50 Years Old!

Festge Park and Salmo Pond UPDATE

David Lucey, BECWA Treasurer

Festge Park will celebrate its 50th anniversary as a Dane County Park on September 14th. A fun and varied program for the community is being put together to recognize this milestone. Before that day, volunteers, with assistance from Dane County Parks, are working to improve the natural appearance of the park. The stone overlook has been reconstructed, with additional work scheduled for this summer. Acres of invasives have been cut and burned to open up the park. A five-acre former cornfield along Hwy 14 will be planted in prairie this May. A carriage road dating to the Civil War era has been exposed and is open to foot traffic. A new kiosk and signage will make it easier for park visitors to obtain information about trails and other park features. Future projects include new playground equipment will be purchased with donations, and new park shelters will be built from trees removed from the park. At Salmo Pond, located adjacent to Festge Park, work continues to remove invasives along the pond and Black Earth Creek, to increase the enjoyment by visitors of these areas.

An organization called *Friends of Festge* has been formed to facilitate, coordinate, and maintain all the efforts to improve the park. This group will be able to accept tax-deductible donations from members to help pay for improvements and expenses not covered by Dane County Parks. People or groups who are interested in volunteering to help with park improvement activities are encouraged to call the DC Parks volunteer coordinator at 224-3601. Look for more information about the park celebration and the Friends organization in the next few months.

Volunteers clearing prickly ash and box elder near a tributary of the Black Earth Creek to increase accessibility to the stream.



Save the date!!! Please join us on Tuesday, June 18th from 4PM until dark for a celebration of 25 years of conservation and restoration efforts at the Swamplovers Nature Preserve! (In the event of inclement weather a rain date of Wednesday, June 19th has been set). The celebration is open to everyone, so spread the word. Activities will include a pig roast with refreshments (vegetarian dishes will also be provided), wagon and walking tours, activities for children, discussions on restoration techniques, and the opportunity to mingle and connect with friends and colleagues. There is no charge for the event, although we ask that you RSVP so that we know how many people to expect and can provide enough food and refreshments for everyone. Directions: From HWY 14, travel north on county road KP and turn left onto Scheele Road (the first left) and follow to the Ice Age Trailhead. Park at the base of the picnic hill in the area provided. We look forward to seeing you there!

RSVP: The Swamplovers Foundation, Inc. Attn: 25th Anniversary Celebration
5053 County Road KP Cross Plains, WI 53528
How many? Veg or pig roast? And please provide you email.



**Black Earth Creek
Watershed Association**

c/o Greg Hyer
4296 County P
Cross Plains, Wi 53528

**2nd Annual Trout Day - *Bugs By the Creek*
May 4th, 2013 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

On the Creek behind the Hardware Store in Cross Plains

Join us for some fun and learn about insect life native to Black Earth Creek!

**I want to help protect
Black Earth Creek Watershed!**

Sign me up as a new member.

Please renew my membership.

Membership levels:

Lifetime member - \$100 Business Member - \$50

Watershed Patron - \$35 Household - \$25

Basic membership - \$15

I would like to volunteer!

Name

Address

City State Zip

Email Phone

Make your check out to BECWA and
mail with this form to:

David Lucey

7952 County Hwy K

Cross Plains, WI 53528

All donations are tax deductible.