



Volume 9, Issue 2

Thinking Like a Watershed

Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

Semi Annual Newsletter

Fall 2007

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

BECWA'S 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 Black Earth Watershed.
- To foster and encourage citizen and locally-based stewardship among the many members of the watershed community.
- To provide a forum for civil and informed discussion of issues and problems in the watershed.

Board of Directors

Barbara Borns, President
Porter Martin, Vice-President
Jeffrey Postle, Secretary
David Lucey, Treasurer
Richard Anderson
Steve Born
Pamela Bosben
Greg Hyer
Carl Jones, Jr.
John Mulligan
Barbara Peckarsky
Wayne Rounds

BECWA Board Meetings

BECWA Board Meetings are open to the public. Check our website for the next scheduled meeting.

We hope you will join us.

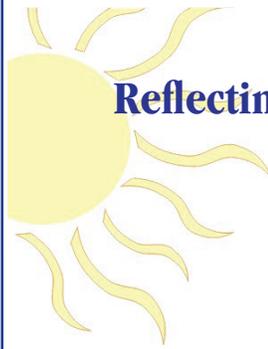
Watershed Coordinator:

Briana Burns
608-767-1475
brianaburns@yahoo.com

www.BECWA.org

Celebrating 20 Years!

1987 - 2007



BECWA

Reflecting on 20 years and Looking Forward



Barbara Borns - Board President

It was a Tuesday, July 28, 1987 at the American Legion Hall in Cross Plains. As the clock rolled around to 7:30 PM, Steve Born, Founder and first President of BECWA called the meeting to order. Agenda items included an update of the Black Earth Creek Watershed Project and other watershed activities. One might ask why there was a need for such an organization. The original invitation to the July 28 meeting includes the following statement: BECWA's purpose is to promote community, landowner and citizen cooperation and support for sound resource management and conservation.

Over the years, many folks have studied the Black Earth Creek (BEC). UW-Madison conducted summer Water Resources Management workshops in both 1977, with a focus on flooding on Brewery Creek, and in 1985 looking at management options for BEC. The USGS has for years studied the physical features of the Creek, establishing sampling stations in several locations and compiling important historic data. The Wisconsin DNR has conducted many studies on different aspects of the Creek, as have various Dane County agencies. These studies were all conducted because from early on in human habitation of the area, the Black Earth Creek was recognized as a unique and valuable resource.

Threats to the integrity of the health of Black Earth Creek were recognized early on. But it was a leaking landfill that quickly focused attention on how fragile this resource might be. In the mid 1980's toxic chemicals were found in the drinking water of some residents in the eastern edge of the watershed in the town of Middleton. This contamination was quickly identified as leakage coming from the Refuse Hideaway landfill. This led to closure of the site, its designation nationally as a Superfund site and years of remediation that continue today.

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

The attention drawn to the vulnerability of the Black Earth Creek helped to mobilize citizen participation and action resulting in formation of BECWA. We list as some of our accomplishments the following:

1. Provided a forum for public discussion of watershed issues.
 - The Refuse Hideaway Landfill groundwater contamination issues
 - Burial of railroad ties in unlined pits
 - Rights of way rehabilitation
 - Fish kills in the watershed
2. Sponsored Biannual public events with invited speakers and panel discussion and tours of the watershed.
 - Recent fish kills in the watershed
 - The Glacial Geology of the Watershed and Ice Age Trail
 - Transportation issues
 - Demonstration of Priority Watershed accomplishments
 - The role of the Black Earth Creek in the next decade and a historical tour reflecting on how the Creek has shaped settlement.
3. Semi-annual newsletter offering updates on watershed happenings
4. Sponsored or co-sponsored a variety of educational efforts to engage young people of various ages in efforts focusing on stewardship of the Black Earth Creek:
5. Secured funding to have mediator assess potential for cooperative efforts in the watershed
6. Represented BECWA by advocating for the Black Earth Creek in communities across the watershed

It seems clear now, in 2007, that the need for citizen groups such as BECWA is strong and continues to grow. Therefore, I want to conclude by thanking Steve Born whose leadership and commitment were the foundation of BECWA. And even though his retirement from UW-Madison now takes him on fishing excursions well outside the Black Earth Creek watershed, we continue to depend on his knowledge for advice and counsel.



Two other folks who have served as BECWA presidents include Ron Ahner* and Jim Van Duerzen, and as board members: Bob Boehnen, Tom Ehlert, Del Esser* Jim Festge, Tim Griswold, Walter Haack*, Tim Mattix, Jeff Rettenmund, Bud Sather, Wendy Sterne, Lee Swanson, Jim Troupis, Vern Wendt and Ken Zander*. Sadly several of these folks (noted with astericks) are now deceased. We owe a debt of gratitude to them as well as our current board of directors.

Onward to the Future!

Pamela Bosben - A New Member of the BECWA Board of Directors

A few months ago, I was asked if I would be interested in possibly serving on the BECWA Board. Knowing the extraordinary work done by this organization to fulfill their mission of wisely managing the "land and water resources in the Black Earth Creek Watershed," I realized I not only had an opportunity to play an active role in protecting and preserving this natural legacy but also to learn more about the intricacies of the Watershed and issues facing its preservation and existence.

Spending nearly fifty years of my life in Cross Plains, I became intimately acquainted with the Black Earth Creek and its abundant attributes. Many a summer day was spent with siblings and friends wading in the water flowing past Doc's Island, catching crayfish and screeching at the leeches affixed to our knobby ankles. My Dad taught us how to skip stones down the stream and my Grandma often let me accompany her while she stood at the banks, cane pole in hand, fishing for whatever would bite. In later years, I would introduce my twin sons to this magical creek where they too learned to skip stones and watch for elusive trout.

Though the Black Earth Creek holds many charms for those partaking of its aesthetic and recreational features, it is also vital to our ecology, economy and subsistence. Over the past twenty years, debates have raged over how to best utilize and protect the Watershed. Discussions have been passionate, thoughtful and, at times, controversial. Anything that evokes this much fervor and discussion must be worth protecting, managing and sustaining.

I view my role in BECWA as two-fold. I find myself in the unique position of promoting the educational aspects of the Watershed through provision of information via my position as library director of the Rosemary Garfoot Public Library and as a citizen championing the cause of wisely managing this incredible resource. As the erudite Aldo Leopold once said, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." I am privileged to be counted among the numbers who have served on the BECWA Board and look forward to joining the perpetual quest of managing the Watershed.

Where will the new power line go?

Barbara Borns - BECWA Board President

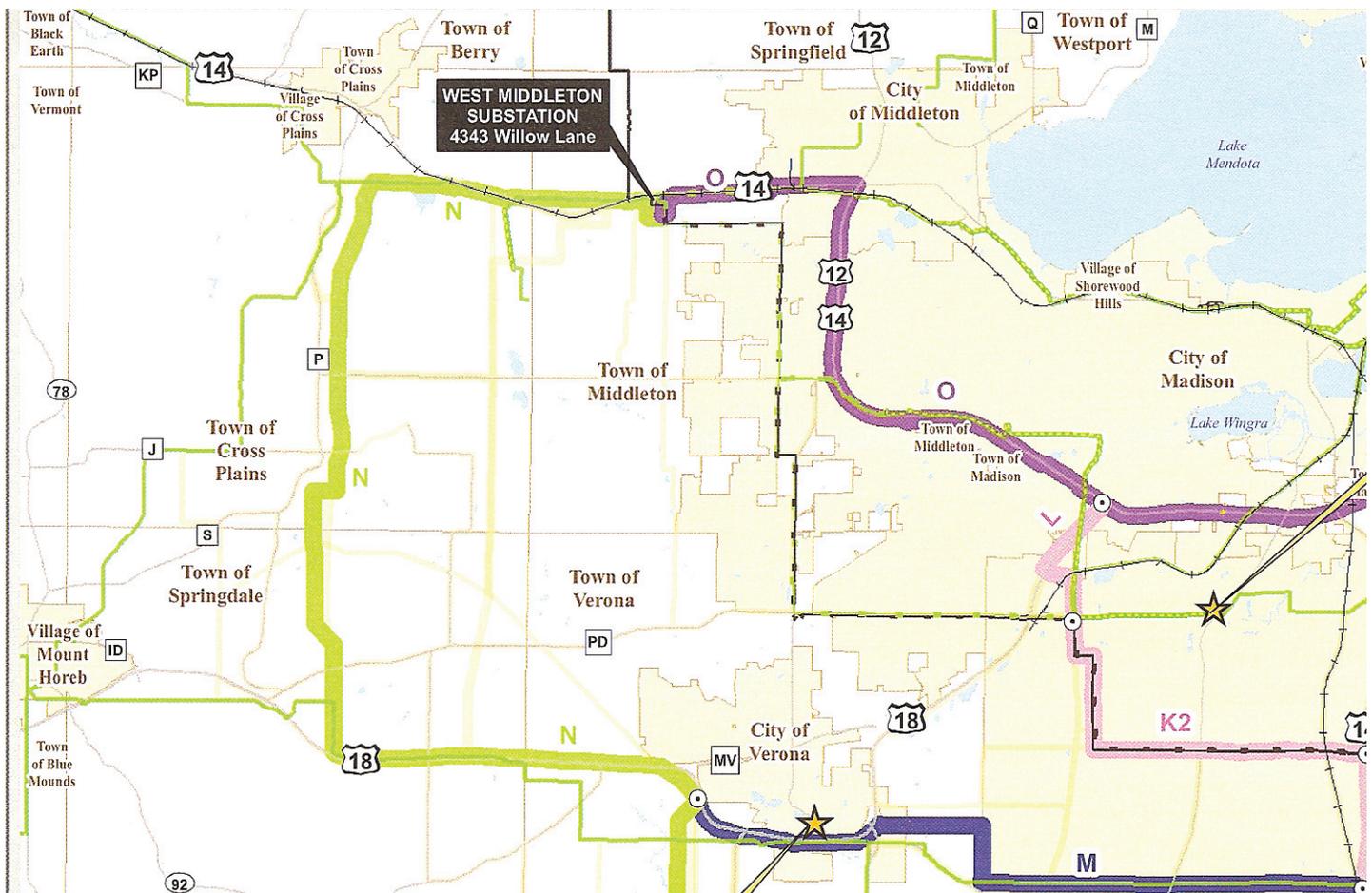
American Transmission Company (ATC) has narrowed down the possible routes for its 345-kilovolt electric line through Dane County from three to two. These two suggested routes along with a couple “shortcuts” will be forwarded to the Public Service Commission (PSC) this fall. The PSC will make the final decision as to where the lines will be located.

One proposed route will follow the current south Beltline, turning west in Middleton on highway 14 and proceeding approximately two miles to the current substation just south of 14 on Willow Road. While this route will surely impact the eastern end of the BEC Watershed, of particular interest to BECWA is the second proposed route which would have the line proceed west of Madison on county M, south of Verona, follow highway 18 to just east of County P then turning north on the east side of P, extending all the way to highway 14 in Cross Plains. At that point the route would turn east and proceed along the BEC to Willow Drive. (See map.) In the Town of Cross Plains south of 14 and east of P there are springs critical to recharge of the Black Earth Creek. It also appears that they would be crossing the Creek several times as they proceed east down highway 14.

Either route involves heavy construction at the substation just southwest of the location of the former Superfund site—the Hideaway Refuse Landfill. Toxic compounds continue to be monitored by the Wisconsin DNR as groundwater moves southwest of the landfill. So construction of the huge electric towers needed for this line will be very close to this plume.

The need for this project is based on a study done by ATC projecting increased future electric demand. In fall 2006, over 85% of voters in Dane County requested another independent study be made of projected electric usage. So far this request has been ignored.

A series of hearings will be held in August to allow public comment about the proposals. BECWA has also been invited to comment. Our response will include the concerns mentioned above as well as the need for all of us to concentrate on conservation as well as investing in renewable resources instead of continuing to depend on electricity produced largely with non-renewable fuels.



Connecting the Drops

Understanding Groundwater from the Top Down

Denny Caneff, Executive Director - River Alliance of Wisconsin



Understanding the Water Underground

Understanding the connection between water under the ground (groundwater) and water on top of it (surface water) is almost a metaphysical exercise, a leap of faith. Everywhere we deal with water, it is contained – in a beer bottle, in a bathtub, in a pond, in a river. It is tangible, defined, visible, limited. But how can we understand uncontained water, underground, that we can't see? And what does that invisible, uncontained water have to do with that stream, or lake, right over there, that you can see?

I experienced this challenge recently with my Aunt Annette, who lives on a lake in northwest Wisconsin. That part of the state is very dry these days; ponds, lakes and rivers are all visibly low. Auntie Net was worried that their lawn would dry up again, and her son-in-law's solution was to pump water from the lake – an idea she opposed because the lake level was so low. Her solution? Use the well water supplying the house.

Auntie Net's Challenge

I tried to explain how pumping water from the well was virtually like pumping it from the lake, but I could see my explanation wasn't sticking. Auntie Net could only see two containers of water: the lake was one, and the water in the well was another distinctly separate container. Here was someone who profoundly loved her lake, and I was unable to explain how the lake and her well were the same water.

There's a paradox to unpack to explain this connection to the public: water is so basic and essential, but where it comes from and how it moves is very complex, and requires sophistication to understand both the physics and the politics of it. For without public understanding and support for groundwater protection, we will likely deplete this irreplaceable resource, and we'll wonder what happened.

But there are some tangible examples unfolding, and useful lessons to be learned, right now in Wisconsin about the groundwater-surface water connection. People are starting to get it. And along with that understanding comes the sober realization that there are serious limits to water, even here in water-rich Wisconsin.

Groundwater Ground Zero: Waukesha

The groundwater-surface water hot spot right now is Waukesha County. Municipal wells there are like deep straws, sucking water that is over 1,000 feet below the surface. There are two big problems for that area: the deep aquifer (rock layers soaked in water) contains radium,

and the federal government is requiring the municipalities there to supply their residents with untainted water.

But where to go? If Waukesha were to put the straws of its municipal wells into the shallow aquifer (300-400 feet down) for its drinking water, pumping millions of gallons per day for lawn watering, cappuccino making, car washing and toilet flushing, that aquifer eventually would drain down too. And because the "contained" water that's visible to everyone on the surface as they drive through Waukesha County – Lake Koshong, Vernon Marsh, the Oconomowoc River – is fed and sustained by the uncontained and invisible water underneath the surface, the fate of the surface water is intricately tied to the pumping of the water underground. It is why Waukesha is gazing thirstily at Lake Michigan as a source of water. But that is an option fraught with hydro-geologic and political hazard. Waukesha is struggling to figure out its future water supply, even while Waukesha County executive Dan Vrakas projects a population of over half a million (from 380,000 currently).

Can We Put It Back?

Compounding the problem of as-goes-the-groundwater-so-goes-the-rivers-and-lakes is the fact that we simply waste water in this state. Some it is profligate use, such as watering a useless crop like suburban grass or not using water-miser plumbing fixtures. We could mitigate the impending water supply crisis in Wisconsin by simply being more careful with what we have.

That includes, in the memorable words of Bob Zimmerman, the sharp, energetic executive director of the Boston-based Charles River Watershed Association, not "throwing water away." This occurs when we take water out of the ground in one place, clean it up at the sewage treatment plant, then send it away down a river to a completely different watershed. For Boston or any ocean side city, the waste of fresh water dumped into the ocean is obvious, but the same thing happens in Wisconsin, where our groundwater ends up, once used, either in a Great Lake or the Gulf of Mexico.

Two communities, however, mindful of the groundwater-surface water connection, didn't want to throw their water away. An innovative cooperative effort between the city of Madison's sewage district and the city of Verona takes water from one basin (the Upper Sugar), sends it away for treatment to another basin (the Yahara), and sends it back again to the basin of origin.

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

Planners feared that as west Madison and Verona expanded, the groundwater pumping from the Upper Sugar River basin would deplete the Sugar River itself, which at that point in its early life is almost totally groundwater-fed. So rather than create a water budget deficit for the Sugar, all water is pumped back from Madison's sewage treatment plant in the Yahara basin to an outlet at Badger Mill Creek, which flows into the Sugar, thus keeping that water in its "home basin."

Innovations like these will need to be business-as-usual in the coming years, as the days of wasting water and, worse, not understanding how all water is connected, have to end.

Re-printed with permission from Wisconsin Rivers, a publication of the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

www.wisconsinrivers.org



Our Water is Connected So it should be for water groups

Lindsay Wood Davis, Board Chair - River Alliance of Wisconsin

"We have changed the world around us faster than we can change ourselves; we are applying to the present the habits of the past."

- Winston Churchill

Many of us still respond to the trumpet blast of that first Earth Day in 1970, but if Wisconsin's water organizations want to be truly effective in today's political, legislative, regulatory, philanthropic and financial world, we must begin functioning as if we are in 2007, not 1970.

A drop of water anywhere in our state is part of the waters of Wisconsin. It doesn't matter if it falls into a muskie lake near Hayward, irrigates a bean field outside Plover, fills a boreal slough along Lake Superior near Cornucopia, flows down a rocky stream in Langlade County or appears as outfall from a sewage treatment plant in Waukesha; a drop of water anywhere in Wisconsin will eventually join others to form our rivers, lakes, wetlands and groundwater. Water is water, and it is all connected.

Our waters are connected, but the organizations that work to protect each of these are, for the most part, DIS-connected. That means that communication and cooperation are often irregular, sporadic, less than timely and, too often, short on effectiveness. Our responses to threats to Wisconsin's waters are much more 1970 than 2007; we are "applying to the present the habits of the past." How we manage the protection of Wisconsin's waters must change.

Here's what organizational guru Tom Peters calls the Paradox of Modern Management:

"Perform, as an independent unit, or else

AND

Power stems from constant cooperation among units."

If one were to translate that into "Wisconsin waterspeak," here's what it would say:

"Each organization protecting a part of Wisconsin's waters must operate and succeed on its own, or else the waters it is protecting will be severely damaged."

Organizations defending Wisconsin's waters must operate as powerfully as those with whom we battle, whether a giant conglomerate, a trade association or just an ill-informed neighbor; otherwise, our adversaries threaten to destroy much of what we love about Wisconsin. Protection of Wisconsin's rivers, lakes, wetlands and groundwater rightly belongs in the hands of effective, focused organizations. But if we are to protect the irreplaceable treasures of Wisconsin, those individual groups must work together on a formal, ongoing basis. And we need to start right now.

Wisconsin's water organizations should join together in a unified coalition, allowing (and helping) each to perform independently while, at the same time, acting together as a powerful single voice for Wisconsin's waters. You'll be hearing more from us soon on this important subject.

Re-printed with permission from Wisconsin Rivers, a publication of the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

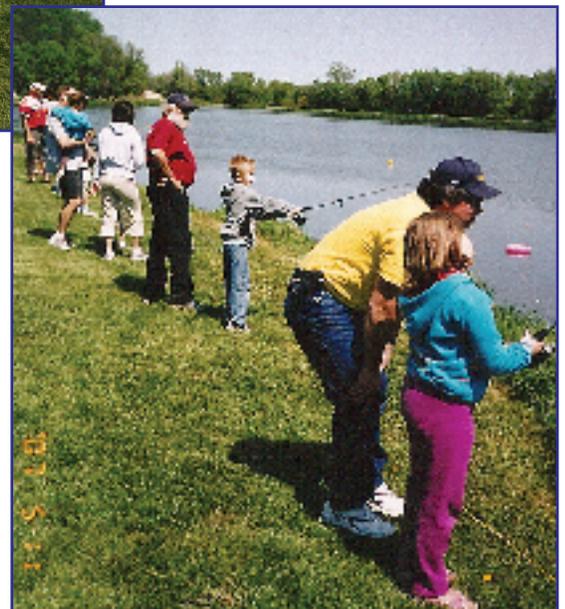
Family Fishing Day on Lake Marion Is Huge Success

Peter Jopke

On Saturday, May 12th, the first annual Family Fishing Day was held on Lake Marion. Lake Marion is a small impoundment just south of the Village of Mazomanie adjacent to Black Earth Creek. Watershed residents Pete Jopke and Terry Frey organized the event to promote one of Wisconsin's great outdoor pastimes.....*fishing*!! The emphasis of the day long event wasn't just the fishing. Kids and parents alike were afforded the opportunity to learn about stream ecology, water safety, fishing rules and regulations, knot tying, fly casting, spin casting, and much more. All participants were treated to lunch and afterwards were given a free rod and reel combo provided by Okuma. The youngsters then hit the shores of Lake Marion to try their luck. Many of the kids caught fish and the smiles on their face indicated the day was a huge success. BECWA provided t-shirts for the fish printing station and assisted with the organization of the day's events. Many thanks go out to all the sponsors and volunteers who created such a positive experience for our area watershed residents. Almost 200 kids took part and just as many parents or family members participated.



Family Fishing Day participants with their Okuma Rod and Reels



Take a Look!

This summer BECWA received the *Annual Report - 2006 from the Community Analysis and Planning Division from the Dane County Department of Planning and Development*. One article from this report is reprinted below but there were several other items of interest in this report. To view these reports you can go to www.danecorpc.org

Here are the topics they covered:

1. Regional Trends Report from Dane County
2. 2005 Land Use Inventory
3. Urban Service Area Amendments
4. Dane County Population and Housing Growth Trends
5. Dane County Wetland Resources Management Guide
6. Relative Infiltration Maps for Dane County
7. January 2006 Population Estimates

Governor and Local Units Create New Regional Planning Commission

Governor Doyle signed Executive Order #197 on May 2, 2007, establishing a new regional planning body to serve Dane County. Petitions from 39 towns, villages and cities representing 84 percent of the population of the county asked the Governor to create the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission. Additionally, the Dane County Board supported creating the new planning body. The local governments also requested that the Commission be designed as the water-planning agency for Dane County, according to guidelines established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Jeff Miller, President of the Dane County Cities and Villages Association; Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk; Jerry Derr, President of the Dane County Towns Association; and Madison Mayor Dave Cielewicz said by press release, "The key mission of CARPC will be working with our towns, villages, cities and county to plan for our urban growth with protection of our vital water resources; our lakes, rivers, streams, springs, wetlands and ground water. CARPC will do such planning on a collaborative, proactive, long term basis, all of which we need more of."

County Executive Kathleen Falk praised the work of the Dane County Towns Association and the Dane County Cities and Villages Association saying, "They worked together over a significant period of time, working to protect our resources."

Jeff Miller said, "It is our hope that the CARPC agreement. . . will provide the necessary foundation for fair regional representation, fair regional discussion and fair regional decisions in the delicate balance between continued economic development and maintaining one of our most valued economic resources: water quality.

Jerry Derr said that the body's budget and personnel panel – made up of the County Executive, Mayor of Madison, towns association president, cities and villages association president, and Commission chairperson – would ensure that the Commission be responsive.

Mayor Cielewicz said, "The Capital Area Regional Planning Commission gives us a new tool for working together to find mutually acceptable growth policies and solutions, and noted, "Fortunately, Dane County and the supporting units of government have had the foresight to preserve the core professional planning staff from the former DCRPC."

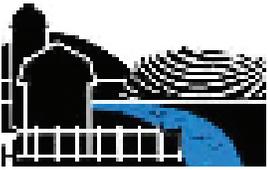
Falk described what she called "proactive meaningful water planning" saying, "Planning for urban development will be done with the CARPC working with communities to develop 25-year Future Urban Development Areas. The objective of this work will be to assist communities in long range planning that provides for the protection of natural resources and orderly growth."

The new Planning body will be governed by 13 commissioners. Any modifications of sewer services will require eight votes.

WISCONSIN HISTORICAL QUIZ

1. Between 1970 and 2000, the population of the Village of Cross Plains increased by:
 - a) nearly 50%
 - b) nearly 65%
 - c) nearly 80%
2. What year did the first European settlers arrive in Black Earth?
 - a) 1829
 - b) 1843
 - c) 1852
3. When did the first train arrive in Mazomanie?
 - a) 1856
 - b) 1866
 - c) 1870
4. What was the name of the human -made feature that greeted European settlers to Black Earth when they first arrived??

(Answers on back page) 



Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

c/o Barbara Borns
9580 Union Valley Road
Black Earth, WI 53515

www.BECWA.org

✓ **Mark your Calendar** ✓

BECWA 20th Anniversary Celebration
The Old Feed Mill
Mazomanie, WI
Wednesday, October 3, 2007
5-7pm
RSVP: Dave Lucey at 608.798.4469

Answers to the Wisconsin Historical Quiz:

1. C--the population increased nearly 80%
2. B--first European settlers came in 1842
3. A--the first train arrived in 1856
4. The "Man" Mound, 700 feet in length and 330 feet at the outstretched arms--now levelled by building.

Join BECWA Today!

Become part of a dedicated community of people who recognize this gem. Please lend your support to protecting this outstanding creek which runs through the heart of our community!

Your membership will support BECWA's:

- Educational Forums
- Annual Earth Day Creek Clean-Up
- *Thinking Like a Watershed*, our twice annual newsletter

Membership Levels:

Watershed Patron \$35 YES! I will volunteer my time. _____

Household \$25 _____

Basic \$15 _____

* All donations are tax-deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Fill out this form and mail it with your check to:

BECWA - Treasurer David Lucey
7952 County Hwy K
Cross Plains, WI 53528

Questions? Call Watershed Coordinator Briana Burns

608-767-1475 or email at brianaburns@yahoo.com

Visit our websites : www.BECWA.org

www.madison.com/communities/becwa