
Thinking Like a Watershed

Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

Fall 2013

On the Wolf Family Farm, a Vision of Stewardship Is Growing

Christopher Long

BECWA Board Member & Wolf Run Trail Project Coordinator

A vision for natural resource stewardship continues to become reality on the Wolf family farm bordering Black Earth Creek in the Town of Mazomanie.

Construction crews are due back at the Wolf property this fall for the next phase of improvement work on the creek and also to begin construction of the Wolf Run Trail along the restored stream.

“The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) recently awarded Wolf Run Association (WRA) two new grants totaling \$95,000 to support construction of the multiuse recreational trail planned between the Village of Mazomanie and Wisconsin Heights High School (WHHS) as well as continued restoration of an adjoining section of lower Black Earth Creek,” WRA President Scott Stokes said.

The \$45,000 grant made under the WDNR Recreational Trails program will help fund the two-mile Wolf Run Trail planned for construction between the east end of Crescent Street in Mazomanie village and the WHHS south parking lot. The year-around trail is to be the first constructed part of the 18-mile Good Neighbor Trail planned between the City of Middleton and the village, running roughly parallel to USH 14, Black Earth Creek and the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad tracks.

A \$50,000 grant from the WDNR River Protection Management program will support restoration of Black Earth Creek from the former dam at Lake Marion downstream to the USH 14 viaduct, a stretch adjoining the Wolf Run Trail route and adjacent to 2012 and 2011 restoration work areas on the stream. The state grant coordinates with funding from Dane County, the Natural

Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Southern Wisconsin chapter of Trout Unlimited.

Funding for the Wolf Run Trail project comes primarily from a \$250,000 Dane County Partners for Recreation & Conservation grant that was awarded jointly last year to the Village and Town of Mazomanie, WRA and SWTU. The roughly 60 acres of trail and Black Earth Creek easements were generously made in perpetuity by local landowner and WRA board member Fred Wolf and facilitated by The National Heritage Land Trust.



Fred Wolf with his grandson Kolby Fieck

“We are pleased with the continued success and support of Wolf Run. We are hopeful that this will tie into our evolving plans for nearby Lake Marion as well as our other parks in Mazomanie, making them more inviting and attractive for all recreational users,” said Mazomanie Village Trustee Jeri Springstead.

Stokes said the first phase of trail construction, from the Village of Mazomanie through the Wolf property, is expected to begin this fall in coordination with the stream restoration project.

The Wolf Run Association is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to support the preservation, protection, and improvement of Lake Marion, the Lower Black Earth Creek, and its watershed, for the benefit of the general public.

Photo: John Donaldson



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*
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 Briana Burns - Kathy Haig - Christopher Long

Deb Nemeth - *Newsletter Design*

Re-Meandering Quiz - Bobbi Peckarsky

Re-meandering Black Earth Creek:

- Permanently disturbs the plants and animals living in the stream.
- Creates an unnatural (artificial) form for the stream channel.
- Reverses previous negative effects of stream channelization (straightening).
- Reduces the habitat quality for the trout living in the stream.
- Destabilizes the stream banks.

**Answer on page 5.

Stay tuned for a children's book that is set in a stream inspired by Black Earth Creek. UW-Madison art professor Michael Connors and limnology graduate student Kara Cromwell are collaborating on a stream ecology story, called Mayfly, that encourages children to take a closer look at the wildlife under their noses, in their own backyards or local public spaces.

President's Column

Greg Hyer

It's been a busy summer for the Creek and the Association. Black Earth Creek through the Village of Cross Plains has finally returned to its "original" meandering course after many years on the straight and narrow. The Creek will be healthier and the change allows Cross Plains to both redevelop and protect the stream. Mazomanie continues to get support for amenities along their Creek meandering and Lake Marion projects that will make the area more accessible for all. Congratulations to the Villages of Cross Plains and Mazomanie. There'll be a ribbon cutting for the Cross Plains project at 1pm on September 20th.

Chris Long of BECWA finished a project to develop bumper stickers, magnets and door decals that let everyone know you're a supporter of the Black Earth Creek Watershed. I want to thank Chris for his efforts to create this highly visible project. I hope you'll pick them up at one of the businesses in the Watershed and proudly display them.

There are three new projects BECWA will be tackling in the next few months. We're starting to explore with Chambers of Commerce in the Watershed how BECWA can work with them to promote resource-based economic development in Watershed. We're also tracking the proposal to add a significant number of new homes in Middleton at the Headwaters to Black Earth Creek. And, we're looking for a couple of handy volunteers to take down and refinish the wooden signs that say "Welcome to Black Earth Creek Watershed" that were put up in about six places some twenty plus years ago – they're a bit faded and could use some caring craftsmanship.

Finally, we added one new Board member, Kathy Haig. She's a great addition and you'll learn more about her in this issue. We would like to add a couple of more board members in the near future. Let me know if you'd like to recommend someone or if you'd like to join the Board.

Happenings n the Watershed

Festge Park - 50th Anniversary - September 14th

Music 10:30 - Ceremony 11:00

Pot luck & food for sale at 11:30

Cross Plains/BEC Ribbon Cutting
September 20th - 1 PM

Taste of Cross Plains - Lagoon Street
Along the Black Earth Creek
September 21st

River Alliance - 20th Anniversary - October 13
Riverside Resort, Spring Green - 3-6 PM

A Celebration of Decades of Community Work in Black Earth Creek Watershed
November 6 at 7 PM - Crossroads Coffee
2020 Main Street, Cross Plains

SWTU - Annual Icebreaker Fundraiser
January 18, 2014
For details: www.swtu.org

Black Earth Creek Re-meander Project Update

Kurt Welke

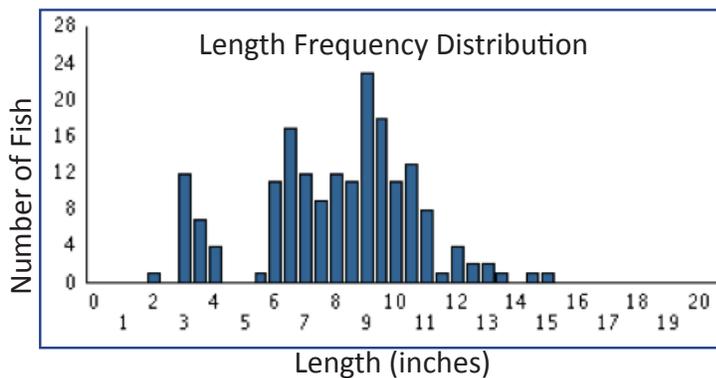
Dane County Fisheries Manager - WI-DNR

The Black Earth creek re-meander project was completed in July 2013 by Joe Daniels construction, with assistance from WI DNR and Village of Cross Plains staff. The old streambed (formerly the millpond for the dam that was behind the hardware store) was abandoned, with a new 880' stream channel constructed through Zander park.

The new channel was designed to add more diversity of stream habitats, improve public use and access, as well as provide space for stormwater features and treatment in the old channel. Additionally, banks were re-graded and sloped to help pass flood flows, and pedestrian bridge crossings added to get folks to and from the new waterfront.

In late July, DNR fisheries crews stream-shocked the stretch from the lower bridge upstream to the mouth of Brewery Creek, about 430 meters. This reach has been a longstanding index station for fish surveys to measure abundance, size structure, and document natural reproduction.

This year's survey tallied 185 trout from young –of –year (2") to adults 15" in length.



Brown trout being measured during the survey.

Fish of angler desired size (9" and >) comprised 46% of all fish . The catch-per-unit of effort (CPE) or fish per mile was 340 legal fish per mile, well within the expected range for high quality driftless streams.

Our first impression, given the clear water, was that trout were relatively sparse as they were not readily visible. However, we were pleased to see good numbers of fish using areas where depth wood or under-bank cover had been added. Fish were common in areas of flow where the surface tension was disturbed, disguising their presence. We expect good use of the new gravel areas by spawners in fall and the continued colonization of rock surfaces by macro-invertebrates ("bugs"). DNR fisheries crews sample this stretch annually so that long term responses can be measured.

Direct questions to: Kurt.welke@wisconsin.gov.



Photo: John Donaldson



Photo: Steve Born

Ron Endres - Friend of the Watershed

Dave Lucey, BECWA Board Member

Prairies once covered over 2,000,000 acres of Wisconsin, with fewer than 5,000 acres remaining today. There is a movement among many to increase this acreage number in order to establish wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion, and restore our ecological heritage. In the Black Earth Creek Watershed, prairies have been recently planted at Indian Lake County Park, the Ice Age Trail, Hickory Hill above Cross Plains, Swamplovers along Hwy KP, at Festge County Park, at Salmo Pond and along the banks of the Black Earth Creek. One thing that all of these prairies have in common is that the seed was made available through the efforts of Ron Endres.



Ron, a resident of the Town of Middleton, has been involved in seed collecting for Dane County on a large scale for many years. He first needs to scout areas where prairie flowers exist, as the plants often wither and become hard to find at collecting time. Then, either alone, or working with school children or adult volunteers, seeds are collected over a several month period. In a typical season, over 100 species of prairie seeds are gathered, valued commercially at over \$120,000. Next, Ron dries the seed heads in containers in his garage, then he puts them through a hammer mill to remove the seed from the seed heads. A hand screening process further clears the seeds, often smaller than a poppy seed, from the chaff. Seeds are then packaged, labelled, and given to volunteers to plant in newly cleared and prepared areas. Recently five acres of old corn field along Hwy 14, in Festge Park, was planted with over 40 species of prairie flowers, valued at \$35,000. Ron provided this seed and planting directions to the 20 volunteers who showed up to help establish the newest prairie in the watershed. It will soon be a joy for all to see, whether you are one of thousands who travel Hwy 14 each day, or anyone taking a relaxing walk through the prairie on a footpath that will be created next year.

Stream Monitoring Training Held on BEC

Deb Weitzel

Recently area teachers and naturalists gathered at the Mazomanie Science Outreach Outpost with Black Earth Creek literally just outside the door. They were attending a training to learn how to implement “Exploring Streams, An In-Class and Field Curriculum for Middle and High School Students”. Instructor, Kris Stepenuck is UW-Extension and DNR’s Water Action Volunteers’ Stream Monitoring Program coordinator.

The new, hands-on activities are designed to help students:

- understand how our uses of the land affect water quality
- take action to share their results in their local community

Why is including outdoor based learning activities important in the lives of students?

- American children ages 3 -12 spend 27 percent of their time each week watching television, and only 1 percent outdoors (Hofferth & Sadberg, 2001).

- Children ages 8 – 18 engaged in over seven hours of media time (e.g., watching TV, listening to music, using the Internet/computer, playing video games) each day (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010).
- In 2000 two-thirds of the public failed a basic environmental quiz and 88 percent failed a basic energy quiz (Coyle, 2005).
- Some benefits of environmental education are reduced stress, increased attention and focus, better test scores, improved cognition and health benefits such as kids are more physically active, more aware of good nutrition, more creative, and more civil to one another.

Participants in the training spent the afternoon in hands-on field training learning the protocols for physical and biological testing of streams. The good news was finding

Continued next page ⇨ ⇨ ⇨

Expanded Accessible Fishing Opportunities

New Accessible Stations in Cross Plains and at Salmo Pond

Tom Krauskopf

New fishing opportunities for anglers with physical disabilities will become available this year on Black Earth Creek as a result of a partnership among several nonprofit and government organizations. Three stations are being constructed on the stream at the Salmo Pond property. In addition, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is including accessible fishing stations within its stream improvement project at Cross Plains.

Last year the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) asked members of the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited (SWTU) for conservation improvement project ideas. The land trust had recently begun a partnership with Operation Fresh Start, an organization that provides employment training, education and independent living skill instruction to youth and young adults. A goal of the partnership is to make lasting improvements to protected land in Dane county while at the same time providing an opportunity for at-risk young people to build job skills as well as gain an understanding and an appreciation for the conservation of natural resources.

NHLT successfully obtained a grant from Dane County's Partners for Recreation and Conservation (PARC) Program, and the Madison Community Foundation followed with additional financial support. The Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited pointed to the need for accessible fishing opportunities on Black Earth Creek and NHLT followed through by including fishing stations as part of its application for funding. SWTU and

the Madison Fishing Expo also added funds to the project. The design drew upon the success of the fishing stations located in the community park in the Village of Coon Valley in Vernon County. That project, initiated by the DNR more than twenty years ago, contains simple pads constructed at the riverbank. A path leads to each pad. The pads have no structures that would interfere with fishing motions, but a stop at the end of the pad protects wheelchairs from rolling.



DNR fish managers helped SWTU identify and evaluate several potential locations for fishing stations along Black Earth Creek. Availability of handicapped parking, site accessibility, fish populations and construction feasibility led to selection of sites on the Salmo Pond property. DNR owns Salmo Pond but Dane County manages the property. The Dane County Parks Division joined the partnership and agreed to design the project.

The design provides for three fishing stations on the stream that will allow anglers to reach good fish habitat with their casts. Two barrier free stations will be placed close to the parking lot and one station will be constructed at the west end of the path that runs between the creek and the pond.

Stream Monitoring Training - *continued*



water snipes, organisms near the bottom of the food chain that need clean water to survive.

Water monitoring of streams is citizen action that can help protect Wisconsin's waterways and teach students the importance of the environment that supports and protects all life. Classroom sets of equipment are available for loan and volunteers to help with field trips can be arranged by contacting kstepenuck@wisc.edu

** QUIZ answer: C

What has UW-Madison Done for the Black Earth Creek Watershed? Well it turns out - quite a bit.

Barbara Borns, BECWA Board/Nelson Emerita Staff

The Water Resources Management (WRM) program administered by the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at UW-Madison, requires students to complete a team practicum as part of their Master of Science degree curriculum. And the Black Earth Creek watershed has been the focus of 3 such efforts.

Beginning with a study done in 1977, the WRM Summer Practicum focused on Brewery Creek and flooding issues that were becoming more frequent and adversely affecting the water quality of the Black Earth Creek. Four faculty members and 14 students spent summer and fall of 1977 reviewing incidences of flooding along Brewery Creek in Cross Plains above where it flows into Black Earth Creek. Remediation techniques to alleviate flooding were suggested both within the Village of Cross Plains and upstream from the village.

In 1984 Professor Steve Born (URPL/Environmental Studies) led the second workshop with 14 students. The scope of this workshop was the area from the headwaters near Middleton to just east of the Village of Black Earth. The Black Earth Creek is a heavily used resource and in an area of rapid urbanization. This workshop focused on resource protection and prevention of future problems. Copies of the final reports from these workshops are available at the Cross Plains Library.

The most recent WRM workshop on Black Earth Creek was completed during the summer and fall of 2010. Professor Ken Potter, (CEE/Environmental Studies) provides a summary of that workshop on the next page. ⇌⇌

Trail Rebuilt by Operation Fresh Start

Dan Buckland, BECWA Board Member

During the first week of June, I had a wonderful experience working with Operation Fresh Start (OFS) students and their crew leader, Mike deGraf. Our collaboration started about a year ago when Jim Welsh from the Natural Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) contacted me, asking if the Cross Plains Conservancy Group had any projects for OFS. After much thought, I asked if the OFS students could help remove a large number of rocks (trip hazards) from some long stretches of our local trails.

In preparation, I went up the hill to identify exactly where the trip hazards were located. While marking the trail, I discovered a nesting turkey. I roped off the nesting area to protect the turkey and continued on.

OFS crew leader, Mike deGraf, came out to Cross Plains a few days prior to the start date to tour the trails and gain a better idea of what to expect on the first day of work. When June 3rd arrived, I stopped by to introduce myself on behalf of the Village to the crew of six students and escorted the group to the rebuild site. Before heading up the trail, Mike explained to the crew the name of each hand tool and the proper use of each.

Before leaving the trail that first morning and heading back to the car, I told the OFS crew I would return at the end of their first workday to see what they had accomplished. What I found was far above what I had expected. They were in the process of not just removing trip hazards but completely rebuilding the entire trail tread. In addition, they moved three huge, flat stones, creating safe steps to connect two trails on the slippery hillside. Over the next four days, I greeted the students every morning at the trailhead and returned at the end of the day to check their progress.

Over a period of six days, the OFS crew continued to work on Village trails. They rebuilt approximately 1000+ feet of trail, moving tons of rock and improving the trail tread to very high standards. While they were working, the turkeys hatched and left the area, so the crew was even able to rebuild the segment of trail near the nesting site. All of this work came about as a result from funding from NHLT, Dane County Parks, Madison Community Foundation and Dane County Partners for Recreation.

The Village of Cross Plains extends many thanks to these organizations for their help improving our trails!

2010 Water Resources Management Practicum

Ken Potter

Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering

The 2010 Water Resources Management Practicum focused on Lake Marion in the Village of Mazomanie, WI, and the portion of Black Earth Creek above the lake. The project was motivated by the Village's need to either renovate or remove the dam that enabled diversion of water from the creek to Lake Marion and two smaller water bodies.

The practicum students conducted hydrologic, geomorphic, and biological investigations of Lake Marion and the smaller water bodies. In addition, the students held several stakeholder meetings to obtain information about the lake and surrounding area and to elicit ideas and preferences regarding potential enhancements. Based on the results of these activities, the students made specific recommendations regarding a replacement water source, outlined a restoration plan for improving the lake habitat and reducing the amount of water required to maintain the lake, and developed alternative scenarios for the smaller water bodies.

The practicum students also conducted a geomorphic investigation of Black Earth Creek floodplain above the dam. Based on the results and stakeholder input, they developed a conceptual design for restoration of the stream channel above the dam.

Funding for the project was provided by the University of



Wisconsin Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and by a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources grant acquired by the Wolf Run Association of Mazomanie.

Subsequent to the completion of the practicum the Dam on Black Earth Creek was decommissioned. For historical reasons (as well as saving money), the main structure of the dam has been retained. Bank stabilization and habitat improvements from below the dam to north of highway 14 will be completed this fall. And the trail section from Mazomanie to the Wisconsin Heights School should be constructed this fall. The roughly 60 acres of trail and Black Earth Creek easements were generously made by Fred Wolf and facilitated by Natural Heritage Land Trust.

This Summer the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited presented Professor Ken Potter with its Gold Trout Award and presented the Water Resources Management Program an Award of Merit.

Welcome New Board Member

Kathy Haig

Kathy grew up in the Town of Vermont and has been teaching English and humanities at Wisconsin Heights High School for 16 years. Her interests include traveling, hiking, snowshoeing, eating, reading, playing ultimate frisbee, and trail running with her husband and two dogs. A current resident of the Town of Berry, she welcomes the opportunity to contribute to conservation efforts in the Black Earth Creek Watershed.





Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

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

BECWA MEMBERSHIP

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**.

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.