



# Thinking Like a Watershed

The semi-annual Newsletter of the  
Black Earth Creek Watershed Association

Volume 8, Issue 1

Spring 2006

## 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 assets of the Black Earth Creek 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.

## 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.

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## Fate of Cross Plains Water Quality Corridor in Village Board's Hand

By Barbara Borns

Nearly a year ago, citizens of the Village of Cross Plains voted strongly in favor of protecting the Black Earth Creek by establishing a buffer, (corridor) along the Creek and key tributaries. This spring a task force submitted a recommendation document to the Village defining more specifically areas of concern. They identified a four tiered approach to differentiate those areas most vulnerable from those where some development could

occur. (For more details, copies of the final report are available at the Village Office.)

A public meeting in Cross Plains on March 21 allowed interested persons to voice their reaction to the recommendations. At the conclusion of this meeting, Cross Plains Village President, Mike Schutz said that a decision about the corridor will be announced at the May 22 Village board meeting. That decision will be of critical importance to maintaining the Black

Earth Creek as a healthy resource.

BECWA first supported the concept of the Water Quality Corridor in 2005 and went on record at the meeting March 21, 2006 strongly favoring the recommendations of the Task Force. We encourage the Village Board to adopt the recommendations as submitted. The Black Earth Creek is the natural heart of our watershed communities and deserves our most careful protection to remain healthy.

## Development in Brewery Creek

By Liz Glassler, Kelsey Schwager, and Mary Smiley

Earlier this year, students from Middleton/Cross Plains High School took part in an ongoing study of the water quality of Brewery Creek, a

tributary of Black Earth Creek. Through an independent study project at MCPHS, Liz Glassler, Kelsey Schwager, and Mary Smiley obtained and analyzed water samples in the fall of 2005. They worked under the

guidance of Pete Jopke of the Dane County Land Conservation Department (LCD) and MCPHS science teacher, Debra Weitzel.

Construction of the St. Francis subdivision near  
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## Brewery Creek Article

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Brewery Creek in Cross Plains began in 1999, and was completed in 2003. The 1999-2002 study (phase one) on Brewery Creek cited contaminated storm water as the biggest threat to water quality. With the increase in impervious surfaces due to construction, the risk of storm water entering the creek is significantly higher. However, a number of precautions such as buffer zones, infiltration trenches, and silt fences, were taken by developers to reduce erosion and overall water contamination. The objective of this study was to determine if the precautions were effective in protecting water resources.

To facilitate the second phase of the study, a grant was awarded to the LCD by the Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources. The participation of the MCPHS independent study students was included in this grant.

Once a week, the students drove to Cross Plains and conducted experiments to determine water quality. They tested dissolved oxygen, temperature, and turbidity (water clarity) in the stream. They also monitored habitat, fish, and macroinvertebrates in both Black Earth Creek and Brewery Creek. The students were joined by several scientists who aided in more difficult quality assessments, such as fish shocking, to determine population and species' numbers.

In addition to conducting tests, the three students were responsible for producing a scientific report for the LCD on the results of their studies on Brewery Creek. They also

presented their findings to the BECWA at the December meeting.

The results from this study indicated no adverse effects to Brewery Creek resulting from the St. Francis development. The water quality data of Brewery Creek was found to be consistent with data taken prior to construction. After interpreting the data, the students agreed that the precautions implemented by the developers sufficiently protected against degradation to Brewery Creek.



## Blackhawk in the Watershed

*By David Lucey*

One of the more tragic events to occur in southern Wisconsin was the Blackhawk War of 1832. After losing his ancestral homeland of 50 million acres in a questionable treaty in 1804, Blackhawk decided to bring his band of 1200 back across the Mississippi River to Illinois to reclaim the lost land. This alarmed the locals, who organized a militia and chased them out of Illinois northward into Wisconsin. When he realized the futility of his efforts to regain his homeland, Blackhawk tried to get his people back to safety in Iowa. Several times he tried to surrender, but his emissaries, holding white

flags, were killed by drunken, or frightened militia members who suspected a ruse.

Blackhawk fled to the wild area east of Portage, where his starving band sought shelter and was temporarily lost to the pursuing militia. In July of 1832, he led his group westward, toward the Mississippi, and was rediscovered by the militias, who promptly rejoined the chase. He entered eastern Dane County on July 18<sup>th</sup>, and quickly passed through the Madison area, over the isthmus, skirting the south shore of Lake Mendota, and camping for the night at Pheasant Branch. They broke camp early on July 20<sup>th</sup>, and passed into the

Town of Springfield, heading west, with the militia only an hour or so behind. They entered the Town of Berry at the present intersection of Highways P and K, and headed northwest. At this point, Blackhawk's band consisted of approximately 1200 people, mostly women, children, old men, and perhaps 300 warriors. The militia numbered between three and four thousand. The trail followed the approximate route of Highway K to Highway KP, and over the hill into the Highway 12 valley leading to the Wisconsin River. The path of this flight is well known because John Mullett, who surveyed this area for the government a year later, noted

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## Blackhawk in the Watershed

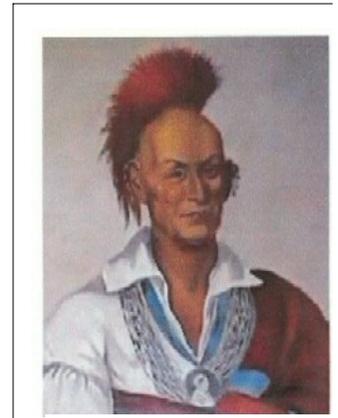
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the trampled grass as the trail crossed each section line of the Towns of Springfield, Berry, Mazomanie, and Roxbury. Area farmers in Springfield and Berry have reportedly plowed up kettles and other baggage discarded by both parties to lighten their load.

Near the Wisconsin River, the Battle of Wisconsin Heights, the main battle of the war, was fought. Blackhawk decided to engage the troops here in order to give his people a chance to cross the river, or form rafts of tree

bark and float down the river to Iowa. The battle lasted for an hour or two, then halted due to darkness. Once again, Blackhawk asked for safe passage back to Iowa, but no one in the militia camp understood the spoken language by the man on horseback from the hilltop. The battle resulted in the death of one militia member, and an estimated 30-60 warriors. The tribe was able to escape, as only fallen warriors were found the next day. Many met their fate as they floated to Prairie du Chien, where they were fired on and killed by the army, while others escaped overland to Bad Axe, where they were killed by either the waiting army or Sioux

enemies. Only around 120 members of the band survived to tell the story, including Blackhawk, who was captured and imprisoned in Missouri.



Blackhawk

## Rosemary Garfoot Public Library- LEEDing the Way

*By Pamela Bosben*

John Burroughs once wrote, "For anything worth having one must pay the price; and the price is always work, patience, self-sacrifice." Little did I know some variation of this quote would become my mantra and my catchphrase as I moved through an episodic adventure called a LEED (Leadership in Energy and

Environmental Design) building project.

Over four years ago, the Library Board and I went forward with plans to bring a new library facility to the community. After an early failed attempt over a conceptual design that was more metaphoric than practical, we knew we had to come up with a plan that would garner

community support. Enter Aaron Rittenhouse, a representative from Johnson Controls, Inc. who introduced the concept of a LEED facility. After an intensive educational process, successful promotion of the project to the community and a modest conceptual design, we were on the path to a new fully sustainable design public library.

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## BECWA Events

### Mark Your Calendars

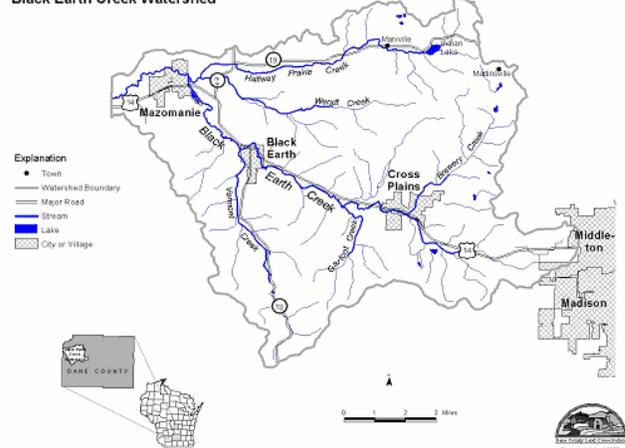
#### Spring Events

April 22nd, 2006: Earth Day Black Earth Creek Clean-Up. Meet 8:30 at Salmo Pond. Thanks to Terry's Piggly Wiggly for bag donation!

May 6, 2006: "Trout Days" in Cross Plains- Opening of Trout Season

May 10, 2006: Cross Plains Fire Station, see President's column for details

Black Earth Creek Watershed



## LEEDing the Way

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The new Rosemary Garfoot Public Library, slated to open early this summer, will be a living laboratory for renewable energy and sustainable practices. The library is expected to be the first LEED certified public library in Wisconsin. The library will use at least 30% less energy and utilities when compared to national standards and guidelines and generate far fewer greenhouse gas emissions than conventional buildings.

With the emergence of a new library, comes an opportunity to form partnerships, introduce

innovative programming and develop special collections. Assistant director, Sue Freedman, with support from Barbara Borns, has been developing an environmental collection intended to provide a broad range of information on issues from sustainable design to global warming. Eventually the Rosemary Garfoot Public Library will become a clearinghouse of sorts for environmental materials and resources.

Through the hard work, patience and self-sacrifice of many people, the community of Cross Plains will have a civic structure designed to promote good environmental stewardship, serve

as an institution of life-long learning and provide a haven for all who enter. Not only is this project worth the price, but building an environmentally responsible facility is simply the right thing to do.



Assistant Director Sue Freedman  
in front of new building

## Twin Valley Road Proposal Uncovers Refuse Hideaway Debate

*By Will Hoyer*

Refuse Hideaway, the toxic landfill that was declared a federal Environmental Protection Agency Superfund site in the early 1990s, is once again the center of debate in the upper reaches of the Black Earth Creek watershed. A proposed extension of Twin Valley Road from Highway 14 to Airport Road would run near the landfill site, sparking debate over whether the benefits of building the road are worth the risks involved.

One of the Town of Middleton's long term goals is to create a better north-south connector between the north and south parts of town. Increased development and traffic have sparked safety concerns, and developments like the Joshua's Crossing development off of Airport Road will, if approved,

create more traffic. Currently Pleasant View and Evergreen Roads serve to connect Airport and Highway 14 in the eastern part of the town while Rocky Dell Road is the western connector.

Recent reports on the status of the landfill and remediation efforts show that the clean up efforts have been quite successful. Volatile organic compounds have declined dramatically from roughly 1000 ppb in 1988 when the landfill closed to 2005 levels near 40 ppb. Still, there are concerns that any road construction near the capped landfill site could disrupt the hydrology of the area and negate millions of dollars in remediation and restoration efforts.

Changes to the hydrology of the region could prove costly to the town. Once the town breaks ground on any road extension crossing the site any wells that

become contaminated or any contamination of the creek become the town's responsibility, a responsibility it, up to this point, has not held because of EPA regulations protecting responsible parties from liability for past actions. The town recently drilled shallow bore holes to determine the western limits of the landfilled areas in an attempt to help determine the exact route that the road extension could safely follow.

The debate over whether or not the town needs the road and whether or not it can afford the liability risk has proven to be a divisive one in two town supervisor races, with candidates sparring over the issue. The questions of whether or not the road is needed, exactly where to build it, if the building will impact the hydrology of the area, and how big a liability risk the

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## Refuse Hideaway Debate

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building project presents to the town are all tough questions that town supervisors, residents and

developers should find satisfactory answers to before the building begins.



## Prairie Planting at Wisconsin Heights Middle School

By Kurt Wong

Wisconsin Heights Middle School and BECWA teamed up last summer to apply for grant money from the Graham-Martin Foundation. We were delighted when the application was successful and we received \$2500



in plants and seeds from the Foundation plus receiving contributions of native plants from various local resources. This allowed us to plant a rain garden in a drainage culvert next to the school building and parking lot. A group of teachers, students and community members all joined forces to complete the project. Early in the fall 400 forbs (flowering plants) were planted in two main areas along the culvert. Later in the fall native perennial seeds were broadcast over the rest of the area. After the seeds were spread a layer of mulch was rolled out and stapled down to prevent erosion of soil and seeds.

The plantings were done by Life Science teacher Laura Cominetti's

classes (see photo). She and other science teachers plan to use the prairie to assist them in units dealing with biodiversity and erosion and creek health. Ms. Cominetti also hopes to eventually create a monarch butterfly way station by adding more plants for them to feed on. The site is located near the entrance to the school parking lot so it should add a very pleasing view for those first coming in to the school. The students, staff and community members are all anxiously awaiting the first signs of spring growth

We thank the Graham-Martin Foundation for their support of this effort.

## ATC

By Will Hoyer

A proposed 345 kV transmission line intended to upgrade the electrical grid across southern Dane County would likely have some environmental impact on the Black Earth Creek watershed. The American Transmission Company (ATC) is looking at proposed routes for the line, to run from the West Middleton substation to Rockdale in far eastern Dane County.

Whether or not the new

transmission lines would have a major impact on Black Earth Creek is unclear at this point. Before the project could be approved Wisconsin law requires that an Environmental Impact Statement be prepared to analyze the impacts. Certainly the building of new power lines would have an aesthetic impact upon the region. Typically the new poles are 90 to 120 feet tall and require rights-of-way that are 75 to 150 feet wide. Other concerns include the potential for more sediments running off down the

corridors and habitat fragmentation and loss.

This summer ATC will be performing engineering and environmental analyses on several proposed routes. By the fall they intend to narrow their choice down to two routes – a preferred and an alternate. This choice will take into account costs, environmental impacts, and public comments and will then be submitted to the Public Service Commission for approval and the

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## ATC

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DNR for the necessary permits. The PSC can either approve or reject the construction application or can suggest alternative routes.



Many times new transmission lines follow existing corridors such as power lines, roads, or recreation trails. Sometimes, however, the existing corridors are not suitable due to surrounding development or minimal widths of the rights-of-way. Some of the preliminary corridor options proposed by ATC that run through the eastern portion of the Black Earth Creek watershed follow existing roads, but there are two north-south options that run roughly parallel to Cleveland and Twin Valley Roads south of Highway 14 that would require the cutting of new corridors. These potential routes also would impact the Blackhawk Ski Club and the new Pope Farm Park in the Town of Middleton.

Katie Nekola, Energy Program Director for Clean Wisconsin, says “The law states that new or upgraded transmission lines should follow existing right-of-way whenever possible, whether its highways, recreational trails or gas pipeline routes. It makes little sense to cut new corridors when there are better, simpler alternatives.”

Hopefully ATC’s choice of routes will be based upon sound science, careful consideration of public comments and common sense. For more information see <http://www.atcllc.com/>

## BECWA Hires Two New Students

BECWA recently hired two graduate students to work on various projects in the watershed. Both Will Hoyer and Evan Murdock are students in the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at UW-Madison.

Will Hoyer is in his second semester in the Water Resources Management program and is focusing on policy and planning issues related to watershed management. He also works as a Water Specialist for Clean Wisconsin (formerly Wisconsin’s Environmental Decade), one of the state’s largest environmental advocacy organizations and focuses on groundwater and Great Lakes issues. He will be focusing his efforts for BECWA on the newsletter and coordinating educational efforts in the watershed.

Will graduated from Luther College in Decorah, IA, in 2002

with degrees in Biology and Environmental Studies. While there he worked on research projects related to native brook trout genetics and conservation in northeastern Iowa trout streams and swallow-tailed kite re-introduction to the Midwest with the Raptor Resource Project. He has worked for the Iowa DNR on water monitoring and GIS projects and spent a summer performing field research at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory near Crested Butte, CO.

Will is an avid cyclist and runner and has ridden his bike up and down just about every hill in the Black Earth Creek watershed. He also enjoys gardening, reading and playing. His wife, Kate, is in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of a PhD program in Cellular and Molecular Biology at the UW-Madison.

Evan Murdock is a recent graduate of the Water Resources

Engineering program at the UW Madison, and is currently in the first semester of a PhD in the Land Resources program at the Nelson Institute. He will be compiling an assessment tool to assist local planners and developers in evaluating the impact of developments on the Black Earth Creek watershed.

Evan graduated from Macalester College in St Paul, MN in 1996 with a BA in physics. After 6 years of working in the Madison Children’s Museum’s exhibits department, he decided to return to school in a field that allows him to get into the aquatic environments he enjoys.

In addition to his studies, Evan plays mandolin with a local bluegrass band, is the president of the Four Lakes Traditional Music Collective, and enjoys canoeing and sailing when time and weather allow.

## Spring, 2006 President's Column

By Barbara Borns

Since the first of my crocuses is now blooming, it seems reasonable to assume that winter is "mostly" over. So now we can turn our attention to a variety of upcoming events about which BECWA members will want information.

**On April 22**, Earth Day, we will join forces with Trout Unlimited, BECCO, local schools and other volunteers to pursue our annual Creek Clean Up. We will meet at Salmo Pond at 8:30 AM to divide up the watershed into segments and distribute garbage bags to collect the accumulated litter.

**May 6** is the opening date of the trout fishing season and Cross Plains will again offer "TROUT DAYS" activities. BECWA will be represented at this event with information about our activities and upcoming Annual Public Meeting.

**May 10**, Annual BECWA Public Meeting 7:30 PM Cross Plains Fire Station, Bourbon Road.

At a recent meeting to discuss the proposed Water Quality Corridor in Cross Plains, a speaker scoffed at the notion that the Village would consider shaping land use planning decisions to "help the trout." My immediate reaction was to want to point out the too narrow scope of his view but then I realized I should be grateful as it gave me a title for our Spring BECWA Public Meeting:

**"MORE THAN TROUT: THE ROLE OF THE BLACK EARTH CREEK IN THE WATERSHED IN THE NEXT DECADE"**

You are invited to join us on Wednesday, May 10 at 7:30 PM in the meeting room of the new Cross Plains Fire Station on Bourbon Road. Refreshments will be served at 7:15 PM before the presentations by the speakers listed below.

\*\* Have you observed the work



Casey Ellarson, 8th grade student at Wisconsin Heights Middle School working with his Mom, Joanne, at setting prairie plants.

being done at Salmo Pond?? **Kurt Welke: DNR fisheries biologist**—will discuss long term fisheries management of the Creek as well as the work at Salmo Pond.

\*\* Are you a trout fisher wondering if the fishery has rebounded after the fish kill in 2001?? **Scot Stewart, DNR Natural Resources Regional Program manager**, will report on how the trout fishery looks today and into the future.

\*\* How will the new regulations on animal waste management affect our area farmers?? **Pat Sutter, Dane County Conservationist** will update us on how he sees the future of Farming in the Watershed given new county rules on animal waste management.

\*\* Did you drive by the new Cross Plains library currently under construction on the corner of Caesar and Julius Streets?? **Pam Bosben, Cross Plains Head Librarian** will describe how the new building became a LEED qualified structure as well as the role of the new library in the watershed and environmental education initiatives.

\*\* Was your home or land affected by the flooding in 2001?? **Pete Jopke, Dane County Land and Water Resources Department** will describe how good development can help the Creek using the St Francis model.

After 10-12 minute presentations by each person, there will be a chance for discussion. Join us for an interesting evening, meet your neighbors and learn more about the many roles the Black Earth Creek plays in our lives.

Finally, this spring we hope to see the first products of our prairie/raingarden planting at the Wisconsin Heights School. (see related article)

See you this spring.

**BLACK EARTH CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION**

c/o UW-Madison, Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies  
550 N. Park Street, 70 Science Hall  
Madison, WI 53706-1491



**Black Earth Creek Watershed Association**

Established 1987

**Board of Directors:**

Barbara Borns, President  
Porter Martin, Vice-President  
Jeff Postle, Secretary  
David Lucey, Treasurer  
Richard Anderson      Steve Born  
Carl Jones Jr.          John Mulligan  
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*For the wise management of the land and water resources in the Black Earth Creek Watershed*

**BECWA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME**

Much of what BECWA accomplishes each year is dependent on your membership in the organization. Your dues money makes possible the education and advocacy efforts that is BECWA's mission. Membership in BECWA runs from January to December, which means your membership expires soon. Please consider renewing your membership by filling out and sending in the membership enrollment form found in this newsletter. Thank you for your continuing support.

Dave Lucey, Treasurer



By joining BECWA today you become part of a dedicated community of people who recognize this gem we have in our midst.

Your membership will support BECWA's:

- Membership:
  - Watershed Patron      \$25.00
  - Household                \$15.00
  - Basic                         \$10.00

Yes! I'm interested in volunteering my time to BECWA.

\*All donations are tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

BECWA--Treasurer  
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