



# Thinking Like a Watershed

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

Volume 6, Issue 2

Autumn 2004

## 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. If you would like to join us at our October board meeting, please contact Jill Leary for the date, time and location.

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## Wisconsin River of Words Program comes to the Black Earth Creek (BEC) Watershed

The River Alliance of Wisconsin is sponsoring The Wisconsin River of Words PEN Pilot Program. This program raises watershed awareness through poetry and will be offered at the end of September to a number of Mazomanie and Cross Plains 4th graders.

These students will be led by their teacher, a professional poet, and a naturalist in workshops focused on the BEC watershed. They will then be guided in writing

poetry about this experience. The goal of the program is to engage young people in the study and stewardship of their local environments, specifically their watershed, at an age when they are developing their own identities.

The cultural and natural history of the Black Earth Creek watershed will be discussed, as well as the importance of active involvement in the preservation of water quality and wildlife habitat for the economic

and social well-being of the watershed communities.

Through poetry, students will be encouraged to make an emotional connection to the place in which they live and share this experience with other students, adults, and the watershed community. Ultimately, the program will be available to all Wisconsin schools to incorporate watershed education into their science/language arts curriculum.

## The Railroad-Water Links in the Black Earth Creek Watershed

By Mindy Habecker, Dane County UW-Extension

The railroad symbolized progress, growth and assured prosperity in the nineteenth century. Transportation of farm commodities had long been a problem in the landlocked Black Earth Creek watershed area. Wheat and other grains had to be hauled by oxen-drawn wagons to

Milwaukee over unimproved roads. The railroad promised to connect farmers and merchants to distant cities, ports and markets. The Milwaukee & Mississippi, predecessor of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, connected the

Great Lakes shipping with the hinterland of southern Wisconsin. It reached Madison in 1854 and sent its promotional agents down the Black Earth Creek valley to determine the exact route. Some local

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## The Railroad-Water Links in the Black Earth Creek Watershed

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farmers traded land needed for the right-of-way for shares of railroad stock. However in 1855 a complex land rights dispute began. The original survey design was changed rerouting the project to the land the railroad purchased to the northwest of Black Earth. Here is located its station grounds and platted the rest of the land into a new village, an authentic "railroad boom town". Edward Brodhead who was superintendent of railroad construction named the village. He called it Mazomanie (walking iron) after the name of a Ho Chunk Indian chief.

With this changing of the route, the railroad company noticed that by maintaining a proper grade in building the railroad bed, a fine waterpower could be developed by using the grade to serve the purpose of confining the water of Black Earth Creek upon one side for about three-fourths of a mile. Thus the creek was dammed to form Lake Marion that was over one mile long and led to the creation of the Lynch & Walker flourmill. Lake Marion also supplied the engine water. The waterpower was sufficient to push the water up into the water tank (see photo). This was the only water tank for trains between Madison and Lone Rock. When the water level in Lake Marion was low, it was necessary to use a steam boiler to fill the tank. The boiler had to be run 10-12 hours per day to provide enough water for the trains. If for some reason trains ran out of water before they

reached the water tank, local fire departments had to come out with their fire hoses. The water tank was used until the advent of diesel engines.

By 1855 Mazomanie had a two-story train depot with an eating-house on the second floor. All trains stopped for 20 minutes to allow the people to eat. It was used until 1862 when Madison pulled the eating-house market away. Mazomanie became a regional rail center for rail crews and for employees completing the track to



Mazomanie Water tower 1909

Prairie Du Chien. It had a turntable, an engine house for repair work and employed engineers, firemen, conductors, brakemen, bridge crews, steel crews, section track crews, agents, operators, dispatchers, pumpmen, switchmen, and men who worked in the round house. There were also men who worked in the railroad's icehouse (ice was cut from Lake Marion), coal sheds, stockyards, wood yards, sandpits and coach yards. Mazomanie was booming. At the same time, the townspeople of Black Earth had to raise their own funds to construct a train depot so

the village was not bypassed and the English settlement of Dover, a main trading point from 1850-1855 was bypassed by the railroad and soon became a ghost town. Hard feeling led to a political redress. In 1858 Black Earth won the passage of an act in the state legislature, which divided the Town of Black Earth in half eventually creating the Towns of Black Earth and Mazomanie.

The railroad had many profound effects on the watershed. It bound rural life and the industrial market economy while necessitating more reliable, stable forms of farming. It helped to bring about a new standard of living and tied farmers more closely into village life with its depot. It provided the farmer and small merchant the means to reach distant markets with perishable goods. However, this was also true eventually for the farmers of the northern Great Plains, a vast region vested heavily in wheat. Coupled with advances in planting, harvesting and threshing, a flood of wheat drove the commodity prices down while freight rates increased. These circumstances along with the onset of wheat disease problems in Wisconsin led farmers to explore other farming options for its future such as dairy.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation for the time and assistance in gathering information for this article to Virgil Matz, Research Historian and the Mazomanie Historical Society.

## BECWA Events

### Mark Your Calendars

#### Autumn/Spring Events

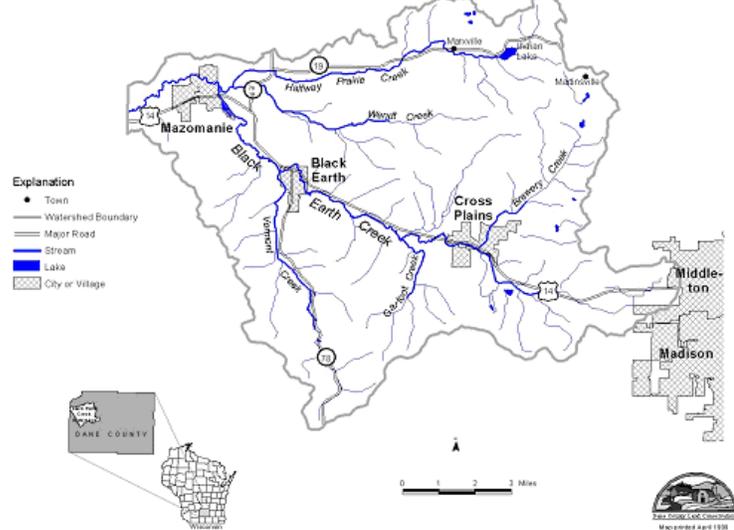
##### October 16, 2004:

BECWA board fall van tour with local elected officials in the Black Earth Creek watershed  
8:30 a.m. — 11:30 a. m.

##### November 6, 2004:

Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission workshop, "Voice of our Waters" UW-Madison Arboretum Visitor Center, 1207 Seminole Highway, Madison WI  
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Black Earth Creek Watershed



## Fall 2004: What's New in the Black Earth Creek Watershed

### By Barbara Borns, BECWA board president

Over the last few months there have been some important activities in the watershed that we believe will improve and protect the Black Earth Creek.

The first of these was an agreement reached between the Randall Swanson family, the Town of Middleton and Dane County. This fall an initial purchase of 73 acres on the south side of highway 14 will be completed and then next year the county has an option to buy over 200 acres on the north side of 14. This large parcel is east of Cleveland road and is bisected by highway 14 with both farm land and steep hilly slopes offering outstanding vistas of surrounding areas. The south side includes wetlands and stream corridors along the Black Earth Creek. Many folks worked together to accomplish this purchase

including the Swanson family, government agencies and non-profit groups but high praise must go to Mr. Joe Kuhn, President of Soleil Development Corporation. His company had a contract to develop the area but Joe saw the natural resource richness and beauty of the property and yielded his contract to see the land preserved instead of developed.

A second important conservation deal in the watershed was reached in August when the director of the Natural Heritage Land Trust, Jim Welsh, announced that the Trust had purchased the development rights on a 215-acre farm further west in the Black Earth Creek watershed. Protection of land included in this farm, part of which is in the Town of Cross Plains and part in

the Town of Berry, helps protect high-quality soils, a large infiltration area for the groundwater on which Black Earth Creek depends, and the valley's scenic views. The Land Trust purchased the development rights with financial support from the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, the State Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the Dane County Conservation Fund, and Trout Unlimited.

More Creek improvements were accomplished in a third effort led by the Southern Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited (SWTU) detailed in an article on page 4. SWTU has been busy for several years working on stream improvements on parts of the Black Earth Creek between Scherbel Road and County KP in the town of Cross Plains. Trees

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Planning Efforts Move Forward in Cross Plains

By Neil Stechshulte, MSA Professional Services, Inc.

*The Village of Cross Plains is currently undergoing several planning initiatives that are intended to define the future of the community.*

### **Comprehensive Plan Update**

The Village has held two public informational meetings and presented the preliminary findings of the background report. A community survey is being drafted based on input from seven different focus groups. The survey will be produced and tabulated by the UW River Falls Survey Research Center. It is anticipated that the survey will be mailed to residents sometime in early October. Once results are tabulated and analyzed, the Village Plan Commission will actively begin crafting and revising goals, objectives, policies and maps that outline the future vision for the community through the rest of 2004.

The format of the document will be done according to Wisconsin Smart Growth Statutory requirements. "Smart Growth" is the term used to identify the comprehensive planning standards defined by the State of Wisconsin. All communities who wish to make land-use related decisions after the year 2010 must have adopted a comprehensive plan that addresses nine elements: ***Issues and Opportunities, Housing, Transportation, Utilities and Community Facilities, Land Use, Agricultural-Natural-Cultural Resources, Economic***

### ***Development, Intergovernmental Cooperation, and Implementation.***

This planning effort is being partially funded through a joint Smart Growth grant with Dane County. It is currently thought that the plan will be ready for adoption in Spring 2005. A public informational meeting is being tentatively scheduled for

The Village has applied for funds to create a detailed open space preservation and trails plan for the Black Earth Creek Corridor, in addition to an infill development and exterior design standards plan for potentially underutilized areas in proximity to Highway 14.

November 3, 2004 (location and time to be announced.) Questions regarding this effort should be directed to Mr. Daniel Rolfs, AICP at (608) 242-7779 or by e-mail at [drolfs@msa-ps.com](mailto:drolfs@msa-ps.com).

### **Dane County BUILD Grant Application Submitted**

A grant application for funds to assist the Village in detailed planning for the Highway 14/ Black Earth Creek corridor has been submitted to the Dane County BUILD Program. Selected projects will be announced around September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The Village has applied for funds to 1) create a detailed open space preservation and trails plan

for the Black Earth Creek Corridor, in addition to 2) an infill development and exterior design standards plan for potentially underutilized areas in proximity to Highway 14. Some of the main premises of this targeted planning effort will be to 1) find a way to reuse existing buildings and sites for future development to the extent possible, 2) to increase the ability for pedestrians and bicycles to move freely throughout the community, and to 3) identify a long-term plan to protect and enhance open spaces along the creek. Grant awards are anticipated to be announced at the end of September 2004. Questions regarding this effort should be directed to Neil Stechshulte at (608) 242-7779 or by e-mail at [neils@msa-ps.com](mailto:neils@msa-ps.com).

### **DNR Urban Non-Point Source Grant Awarded**

The Village of Cross Plains has been awarded a \$42,000 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Urban Non-Point Source Grant Program to conduct a stormwater utility assessment. If accepted, the Village will be able to use these funds to define their current and future stormwater management program, evaluate potential fiscal impacts on the community, and determine if a utility based system would be the most desirable means of paying for stormwater related expenses. The Village will likely refuse the current award due to current budgetary

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Planning Efforts Move Forward in Cross Plains

By Neil Stechshulte, MSA Professional Services, Inc.

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constraints, and consider re-applying next year.



Questions regarding the grant should be addressed to Jan Klock at (608) 798-3241 or by e-mail at [act112@charter.net](mailto:act112@charter.net).

### U.S. Highway 14 Planning Update

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), in cooperation with the Village of Cross Plains, has initiated an assessment of US Highway 14 traffic operations in the village.

This study will investigate traffic movement, parking, traffic signals and more. The public is

encouraged to give their input into the study. One way to do so will be at the first public informational meeting, which is tentatively scheduled in early November. Questions and comments should be addressed to the WisDOT project manager Adam Clayton. He can be reached at (608) 242-8009 or by e-mail at: [adam.clayton@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:adam.clayton@dot.state.wi.us).

## Stream Restoration Completed on Garfoot Creek

By Tom Ehlert, SWTU Project Chair and BECWA Board Member

(Excerpted from the *Southern Wisconsin Trout Unlimited Chapter Newsletter May 2004*)

After nine Saturdays--six last fall and three this spring, a long-neglected stretch of Garfoot Creek is well on the road to recovery. Thanks is owed to fifty SWTU members who dedicated in excess of 600 hours to accomplish the several project objectives. Add to that about 400 hours of travel-time, and the scope of their contribution becomes more extraordinary.

When the work began on October 4, each step was labored in almost knee-deep silt. When the last of the 2003 project-days concluded on December 6, extensive stretches of cobble, gravel, and sand, long smothered in what had been seedbed for agricultural crops, defined the streambed. On October 4 the creek's pulse was barely perceptible, but on December 6, bubble-lines danced hundreds of yards without interruption. Between these dates the only fish we disturbed were



Tom Ehlert clearing brush on Garfoot Creek  
Photo courtesy of Sue Fey

bullhead. Within one-half hour of the end of our labors that December Saturday, Eric Christensen espied more than a dozen trout in a newly cleaned depression.

In addition, various chapter members used stones as bank stabilizers along an outside bend of Garfoot Creek in an area where we had felled two white cedars. Why did they fall victim to our chainsaws, you ask? Over time, water and wind had conspired to weaken their respective foothold in opposing stream-banks. They were already inclined toward and

entwined with one another. When they fell, and they soon would, they'd serve no positive purpose.

So what was accomplished this spring? Timber we'd already cut, mostly box elder, willow, and atrophying cedars, was stacked for burning or chipping. More tree-canopy was removed to permit sunlight infiltration and the consequent growth of in-stream and bank-side vegetation.

Garfoot Creek now purls, slips, and slides colder and cleaner than it did six months back. Who can say exactly how many years have passed since it behaved this way? And it does so in a now well defined channel or thalweg. Grasses are already colonizing formerly raw, mud banks. Other groundcover is sprouting where inches of duff blanketed dormant seed. This change should provide cover for insects, birds and fish. Are the bullhead gone? Most likely. Are there trout about? Yes, and some have even been caught.

## Standards Oversight Council (SOC) to Review Nutrient Management Guidelines

Information provided by Pete Jopke, Dane County Land Conservation Department and Sue Porter and Kevin Beckard, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection

In 2002 new rules that affect all farmers in Wisconsin went into effect. One of these rules, NR 151, establishes standards for polluted runoff control from agricultural and non-agricultural sources through erosion and sediment control, and nutrient application and storage guidelines. NR 151 establishes agricultural performance standards for non-point pollution abatement and is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). In conjunction with NR 151, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP), must develop technical standards for farmers to follow that meet the agricultural performance standards.

This month the Standards Oversight Council (SOC) is reviewing the Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Practice Standard 590, which is a technical guideline defining nutrient management and application. SOC is composed of agency staff from the NRCS, DATCP, WDNR, University of Wisconsin Extension (UWEX), WI Association of Land Conservation Employees (WALCE), and the Land & Water Conservation Association (WLWCA). This NRCS technical standard is administered by DATCP in Wisconsin to aid farmers in nutrient and soil amendment applications to minimize land and water resource pollution.

As part of understanding what this new standard will mean to farmers in Wisconsin, SNAP Plus is provided as a means of determining soil loss and phosphorus index levels. SNAP Plus and RUSLE2 can be

downloaded from:  
<http://www.soils.wisc.edu/Snap-Plus/590Test.html>

Also, the updated 590 Standard is available for review at <http://www.socwisconsin.org>. SOC would like reviewers to comment on the proposed standard and send 590 comments to:

Mike Murray, SOC Coordinator,  
One Point Place,  
Suite 101,  
Madison, WI 53719  
or by email:  
[mikemurray@wlwca.org](mailto:mikemurray@wlwca.org).

**Comments will be accepted until October 13, 2004.**

For more information about NR 151, please contact the Dane County Land Conservation Office or visit the WDNR website:  
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/nps/index.htm>.

## Fundraiser for Upper Sugar Watershed Association

By Marcia Hartwig, Dane County Land Conservation Department

Patrick Sutter of the Vermont Township has graciously donated the use of his "Forgotten Places" (acrylic on Masonite) to the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA) for their use on their holiday greeting and note cards.

Not only is Pat Sutter a director for USRWA, he is also a member of BECWA. He works at the Dane

County Land Conservation Department working extensively with landowners in the western portion of Dane County.

The cards are a fundraiser for the Association and cost \$15 for 12 cards (all cards come with envelopes), or \$25 for 24. Note cards are \$12 for 12 cards or \$20 for 24. Cards may be purchased at the USRWA office at 207 East

Main Street, Mount Horeb. They will also soon be available on their web site at [www.usrwa.org](http://www.usrwa.org) where you can view the card design and inside message.

Shipping costs will be added to the total cost if not purchased in person. Proceeds from the sale go to support USRWA's projects including streambank restoration and habitat enhancement.

## Fall 2004: What's New in the Black Earth Creek Watershed By Barbara Borns, BECWA board president

(Continued from page 3)

have been cleared, dead limbs pulled out of the creek and stabilization of the banks has resulted in much clearer water and improved fish habitat. Over 2000 person hours have been contributed to making the creek a healthier and more attractive asset to our community. BECWA salutes SWTU for their efforts in the Black Earth Creek watershed!

Finally, on October 16, BECWA plans to sponsor a tour of the watershed highlighting these and other sites by offering a bus tour of the watershed. Local officials from the city, and town of Middleton, village and town of Cross Plains, village and town of Black Earth, village and town of Mazomanie, towns of Berry and Roxbury, Springfield and

Vermont have been invited to participate in the tour. Refreshments will be provided by the Vermont Family Farm at the end of the tour. If others are interested in participating, and if space is available in the bus, we welcome others to join us.

Please contact me at [blborns@wisc.edu](mailto:blborns@wisc.edu) or 767 3325 if you are interested.

## Watershed Coordinator's Report

### Happy Fall BECWA supporters!

It was an exciting past few months for environmental education in the watershed and I want to share some of the highlights :

### Passport to Your Watershed and Stream Clean-up A Big Success!

This past spring, with the help of many of you, our annual Creek Clean-up and Passport to Your Watershed were great opportunities for interested community members to become more familiar with Black Earth Creek (BEC) and learn how to protect this important resource.

### UW Madison Students write children's book about BEC

Three students at UW-Madison, Gregory Mueller, Jackie Hanzal and Angela Stepan authored a book titled, "*Environmental Literature: Speaking for Nature.*" It is a wonderful story about a boy discovering his natural surroundings. The students donated the book to BECWA so



BECWA volunteers show off their efforts to clean up Black Earth Creek near Salmo Pond

that we could distribute it to local elementary schools and libraries in the watershed. The original book is located in the Black Earth Library so if you get a chance, please check it out! If you would like a copy on CD, please contact Jill Leary at (608) 265-6712 or [becwa\\_coordinator@yahoo.com](mailto:becwa_coordinator@yahoo.com)

### BECWA supports Wisconsin River of Words PEN Pilot Program in BEC

BECWA is a financial supporter of

the Wisconsin River of Words PEN Pilot Program in the watershed because we hope this program will instill land and water resource stewardship in these students and help protect BEC in future generations.

Finally to continue supporting environmental education and promoting the wise management of the land and water resources in the Black Earth Creek watershed, BECWA would like to remind you to **renew your membership!** Memberships for 2003 expire this month so if you are a current 2003 member, we would really appreciate your continued support. If you are not a member, please consider joining us in our efforts to ensure the integrity of our watershed. You can join by mailing in the membership form on p. 8 or by answering the membership renewal letter that will be sent in October. **With your support, we can increase our efforts to protect BEC!**

**BLACK EARTH CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION**

c/o UW-Madison, Gaylord Nelson Institute for  
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Black Earth, WI 53515

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**Black Earth Creek  
Watershed Association**

Established 1987

**Board of Directors:**

Barbara Borns, President  
Jim Troupis, Vice-President  
Tom Ehler, Secretary  
David Lucey, Treasurer  
Steve Born                      Barbara Fess  
Jeff Postle                      Carl Jones Jr.

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Fax: 608-262-2273  
Email: becwa\_coordinator@yahoo.com  
Website: www.madison.com/communities/becwa/

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

**Please remember to renew your membership  
this month! BECWA depends on  
contributions from members like you to  
support our efforts in the Black Earth Creek  
watershed. Please consider a gift today!**



**Join BECWA Today!**

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

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:

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

Please lend your support to protecting this outstanding creek which runs through the heart of our community!

*Note: If you are already a member, check your address label on this newsletter for your membership expiration date.*

**Membership:**

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

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

*\* Donations are tax deductible as allowed by the law*

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone: 608-265-6712  
Fax: 608-262-2273

Email: becwa\_coordinator@yahoo.com  
Website: www.madison.com/communities/becwa/