



# Thinking Like a Watershed

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

Volume 6, Issue 1

Spring 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 April board meeting, please contact Jill Leary for the date, time and location.

## Volunteer with BECWA this spring!

By Jill Leary

Looking for a way to get involved with the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association (BECWA)? BECWA is sponsoring two spring events that will help you learn more about this amazing water resource while improving its health.

On **Saturday, April 24th**, BECWA, along with the Black Earth Creek Citizens Organization, the SW Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited and local school groups, will sponsor the annual

### Black Earth Creek Spring Cleanup.

Volunteers will remove refuse from stream banks along various stretches of the creek from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. For reach assignments and meeting locations, please contact Jill



Barbara Borns and artist Virgil Beck at the 2003 Passport to Your Watersehd Event

Leary.

The following weekend on **Saturday, May 1st**, join BECWA for the second annual **Passport to Your Watershed**, as part of the **Trout Days** celebration in downtown Cross Plains.

BECWA will be hosting different environmental education booths demonstrating everything from creek flow and invertebrate populations to fly fishing casting and fly tying. For school age

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## The Ice Industry in the Black Earth Creek Watershed

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### 3 By Mindy Habecker, Dane County UW-Extension

3 The industry of selling natural ice began in  
3 America in 1807 in  
4 Boston when a merchant sent a brig-load of ice to  
5 the West Indies to help relieve a yellow fever  
6 outbreak. The industry rapidly expanded to ship  
7 cut ice to many of  
7 America's southern ports

for food preservation. By 1880 about eight million tons of ice were harvested nationally according to the Census Office. In many locations people were spending as much for ice as for fuel.

Breweries were the single largest group of consumers followed by

the meat packing industry. Lager beers, highly popular in Wisconsin needed low temperatures to age the beer and for storage. Americans, unlike the Europeans, also preferred to drink their beer icy cold. Wisconsin's lakes

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# The Ice Industry in the Black Earth Creek Watershed

*(Continued from page 1)*

were an ice-cutter's dream in that many of them were dammed impoundments to provide waterpower. This invariably raised the natural water levels that eliminated much of the marshy shore and weedy waters. Most of these lakes also had sufficient water movement to provide solid, clear ice without the inclusion of air bubbles and the ice was almost always twelve to fourteen inches thick, which is what the industry wanted.

I spoke with Norbert Kerl in Black Earth about his father, Robert's ice industry along Lake Marion. Norbert was very familiar with it having worked with his father in the business since he was thirteen. Robert Kerl bought the ice industry from his past employer, William Craney in 1932. This was a year after a motorized saw had cut off his leg mid-calf while cutting ice on Lake Marion. He was driven to Saint Mary's Hospital where he demanded that it be reattached against his doctor's opinion. The doctors followed his guidance and the reattachment was successful.

Kerl's icehouse of cabled together pole logs and board was situated on the bank of Lake Marion and his delivery territory included Spring Green, Arena, Marxville, Mazomanie, Black Earth and many rural areas. The main markets for his ice were home iceboxes, taverns, meat markets, ice refrigerated railroad cars and filling station pop coolers. The creameries and meat markets had substantial icehouses Kerl would fill in the winter so that they had convenient ice available to them for extended periods of time. The ice cutting from Lake Marion and the actual filling of the icehouse

occurred over a few week's time and required the labor of about ten employees. Once the ice was about twelve inches thick, the men would initially make a shallow crack in the ice with the motorized saw to set the cutting dimensions.

Then they would hand push the motorized saw cutting through all but the bottom inch thickness of ice. A splitting tool was used to slit off the individual blocks and long-handled pike poles employed to push the 200 plus pound blocks of ice down a channel. The floating blocks were prodded onto a ramp that had a motorized elevator to haul them into the icehouse.

Tongs were used in the icehouse to move the blocks in place where they were stacked about ten feet high. The icehouse had an earthen bottom and after the ice was all



Robert Kerl courtesy of Norbert Kerl

loaded, it was insulated on the sides and top by a layer of sawdust gotten from a Spring Green sawmill.

Once the main icehouse and his customers' icehouses were full, business was slow until the weather began to warm and people needed ice delivered. The large ice blocks

were taken from the icehouse onto a platform where they were washed free of sawdust and dirt, then loaded onto a delivery truck with ice tongs. Customers purchased ice tickets for 10, 25 or 50 pounds amounts. Norbert Kerl remembers the preparation for ice delivery would begin about 4 am with the delivery run beginning at 6 am and lasting until the route was done. At each house the large ice blocks were cut to the size the icebox needed, weighed and then carried in by tongs. The ice ticket that hung by the icebox was punched with the amount delivered and people paid once their ticket was completely punched for the allotted amount.

During cooler weather the deliveries were made 2-3 times a week and in the hot summer months, deliveries occurred every other day. Robert coupled his work with delivering coal that had a seasonal complement for labor needs. One of Norbert's favorite memories of his years assisting his father in the ice trade was of the children who would run after the delivery truck hankering for a cool chip of ice to suck on during a hot day.

In 1945 Robert Kerl built another ice house still standing in the village of Mazomanie using portions of the old ice house to construct it. He moved and also changed to providing artificial ice and ice cubes purchased primarily from Oscar Meyer because of the labor shortage to cut natural ice during World War II. Finally in 1948 he quit the business and returned to his former career of being a mason. With the advent of household refrigerators and the increasing public health and sanitation concerns, the natural ice industry melted away.

## BECWA Events

### Mark Your Calendars

#### Spring Events

April 21st, 2004: **Wednesday Evening Watershed Walks** with Dane County Land Conservation at the St. Francis Subdivision in Cross Plains. Meet Pete Jopke, Watershed Project Management Coordinator, at the USGS Gaging Station on Brewery Road just past Thinnes Street at 6:30 pm.

April 24th, 2004: Join volunteers from Trout Unlimited and BECCO for the **Annual Earth Day Spring Clean Up** of Black Earth Creek. Meet at 9:00 am at Salmo Pond to receive garbage bags and creek cleanup assignments.

May 1st, 2004: Come learn about the Black Earth Creek Watershed at **Passport to Your Watershed** as part of the city of Cross Plains' Trout Days celebration. Join BECWA between 11:00 am and 3:00 pm in downtown Cross Plains across from the Mobil Station on Hwy 14.

### Black Earth Creek Watershed



## Message from the President

By Barbara Borns

Since our fall newsletter, BECWA has been involved in a number of activities that will protect the Black Earth Creek and its surrounding watershed.

### Land Stewardship

In October, we cosponsored a very successful workshop titled "Stewardship for the Land: Protecting Our Resources for the Future." Mindy Habecker of the University of Wisconsin Extension Service organized this event, and we had a beautiful day to learn about many impressive conservation practices Greg Herrling has implemented on his land in the town of Cross Plains.

### North Mendota Parkway

Exploration for an expanded route around the north and west end of Lake Mendota has been investigated for several years. BECWA supported a plan that would widen the route to 4 lanes but not reach the level of a freeway. The plan pays special

attention to access for travelers other than automobiles, and also attempts to protect natural areas such as wetlands and the headwaters of important natural resources such as the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

### Phosphate Ban

BECWA expressed its support for a ban that was introduced this fall by County Executive, Kathleen Falk on phosphates in fertilizers. Farmers in our watershed have been reducing their use of phosphates for several years and now those living in urban areas should also be responsible for making this change. Levels of phosphate in fertilizers have added to the problems of our Madison lakes and other waters. While we know it won't happen overnight, this ban will help to clean up our waters.

### Smart Growth Efforts

As Smart Growth planning moves forward in many communities,

BECWA joined with other Dane County watershed groups to form an alliance to help influence the process. We signed a letter urging the planning committees to keep water quality and protection in mind as the Smart Growth plans are made.

### New BECWA Watershed Coordinator

With a River Planning grant from the Wisconsin DNR, BECWA was again able to secure a coordinator to assist us with our activities. After reviewing over 14 outstanding applications, Jill Leary was selected for the position. As we move forward this spring with plans for both the Stream Clean-up on April 24 and the Passport to Your Watershed on May 1, we are happy to have Jill on board.

We encourage you to participate in these upcoming events that BECWA is sponsoring. Enjoy Spring.

# Bold Land use Planning for Dane County: Attain Dane

## By Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk



Dane County is an extraordinary county, in so many ways. Our combination of natural and cultural assets, productive farmland and communities is seldom equaled anywhere.

But in an incredibly short time, our impact has been dramatic. Our county added more people in the past 10 years than any county in the state. We're adding 60,000 people a decade; that's adding a Mount Horeb every year, a Sun Prairie every three years.

Each year we lose about 5,000 acres of farmland, about half to scattered rural development and half at the growing edges of urban areas. In our county, the average price of a new home in the unincorporated areas is over \$250,000.

The most common concerns I hear from Dane County citizens are the issues of sprawl -- increasing traffic congestion, loss of farmland and special natural areas, one community growing into another, and intergovernmental conflict arising. If we continue on our current path, we will lose forever much of what makes Dane County so special, and we will have substantially lessened the quality of life for our children and future generations.

This will happen because the system we have in place now rewards this type of development behavior. Thousands of incremental decisions, most with small individual impact, cumulatively

have profound and virtually irreversible impacts.

During my nearly two terms as County Executive, I released two major reports addressing land use and growth issues: "**Design Dane!**" and "**Farms and Neighborhoods**". From these reports

Not a day goes by, as I walk to work, stand in line at the grocery store, and meet citizens at a range of events, without someone telling me that we've got to stop sprawl in this county.

have come many positive initiatives. One, the 1999 Conservation Fund referendum, supported by more than 75% of Dane County voters, provided the consensus for acquiring parks and open space land.

There is a huge amount of work being done by citizens, local governments, the development community, and others across Dane County, but it is insufficient to address the underlying ills in the basic system. I've come to believe that a bold initiative is needed, or we will simply sprawl to death.

I see three choices: We can try to stop Dane County from growing, but that has not worked anywhere. Or, we can watch the current trends continue and we will slowly but surely lose the quality of life we treasure. Or, we can take an approach to have efficient, attractive growth in the right places, while preserving farmland and precious natural areas.

My proposal to meet these challenges

is called "**Attain Dane!**." While still a work in progress, it is a bold plan that addresses the kinds of basic system flaws that seem certain to destroy much of what we love about Dane County.

Here are the major points:

**Shared vision.** County citizens and units of government would create a "build out plan" approach to identify the best long-term pattern of development, including integration of land use, infrastructure, environmental protection and community character. This plan will take the form of a map, to be incorporated into the county's comprehensive plan.

**Fair, new land use tools.** The areas designated for preservation (for example, farmland and natural areas) would be protected through a transfer of development rights (TDR) and/or purchase of development rights (PDR) program. A system of tax base sharing could be implemented to share the benefits of development and to reduce competition for development among municipalities that often results in poor planning. Or, the plan could operate through intergovernmental agreements.

The advantages of this approach are many.

**For taxpayers:** A more efficient development pattern that will reduce costs of providing public services.

**For rural landowners:** A fair way to preserve rural land that provides payments much sooner than waiting for the approach of urban development.

**For agriculture:** Protection for large, intact agricultural areas.

## Bold Land use Planning for Dane County: Attain Dane

(Continued from page 4)

**For environmentalists:** Permanent protection of sensitive natural features, endangered habitats, and large-scale eco-systems.

**For developers:** Improved predictability where development can occur and shouldn't occur.

**For commuters:** Less traffic congestion, and improved prospects for a rail transit system.  
For affordable housing advocates: incentives for diverse housing opportunities in all new neighborhoods.

**For economic development interests:** Protecting the county's high quality of life, so vital to attracting new business and keeping our young people here.

Not a day goes by, as I walk to work, stand in line at the grocery store, and meet citizens at a range of events, without someone telling me that we've got to stop sprawl in this county.

Madison is exploding on every boundary. Subdivisions are multiplying like rabbits around most of our cities and villages. More landowners are cashing in their

residential splits and scattered rural residential construction is proceeding apace. Sadly, most of this is occurring as planned; this development is almost always in accord with some municipal or town plan.

We must change these plans or they will change us by hurting our quality of life. Working together, we can save what we love about Dane County for ourselves and our children's children.

For more information about **Attain Dane**, please visit:  
<http://www.countyofdane.com/exec>

## Volunteer with BECWA this spring!

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children, have your passport stamped at each station and receive a prize. For adults, this series of fun and educational activities provides watershed information for people of all ages.

Also at the event, you can design your own BECWA T-Shirt by

using painted fish prints. Visit **Student project displays** from around the watershed to learn more about creek monitoring. Also, local organizations working in the watershed like the Natural Heritage Land Trust will be on hand to explain their conservation work in the basin. Finally, music

and ice cream will be on site, along with a Lions Club food stand, so come and have lunch, while learning about Black Earth Creek!

Our booths will be located in the park, across from the Mobil station on Hwy 14 in downtown Cross Plains from 11:00 to 3:00 pm.

## Welcome from new watershed coordinator

By Jill Leary

Hello BECWA members and supporters! I am the new watershed coordinator and I am so happy to be working for the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association. As

many of you know, Juniper Garver-Hume is graduating this semester, so late last fall I was hired to replace her.



Currently, I am in the Water Resources Management Program at the University of Wisconsin. The position with BECWA is a perfect fit of my educational and professional goals. I moved to Wisconsin from Portland, Oregon where I worked as a volunteer coordinator for The Nature Conservancy. Before that, I worked as an AmeriCorps member for the Tualatin Riverkeepers, so I am familiar

with working for environmental non-profits.

Hopefully I can meet you at one of our spring events, or while I am tabling at a summer event in the watershed. I would love to get to know the BECWA members so please come up and introduce yourself! I look forward to working with you in the future and thank you in advance for continued support of the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association.

# Groundwater Protection Act becomes law

## By Denny Caneff, Executive Director, River Alliance of Wisconsin



Eat a french fry, flush your toilet, top off your radiator, grill your tofu, watch the hockey Badgers skate. None of these

acts would be possible without groundwater. It is so plentiful, so readily available, so automatically there, that we never think about it. Farmers joke about kids who think that milk comes from a store. Most of us may be no wiser than those kids in thinking that water comes from a faucet.

Most of the water that flows out of taps in Wisconsin comes from vast underground sources. But if there's so much groundwater, why should we worry about how much we're using? And why are people working hard, right now, to make a law that would control the amount of water drawn out of the ground?

There are two big, and urgent, reasons. One is the steady, inexorable "chronic" drawing down of groundwater from heavy (mostly urban) use. The urgency of this problem is illustrated in Waukesha County, where communities are drawing water out of the ground faster than it can be recharged. Not only that, the wells are drawing water from so deep underground that they're pulling up water tainted with radium. Radium is not uncommon in water from deep wells.

Waukesha (and many Chicago suburbs) are looking to the east for the answer – the liquid (and radium-free) vastnesses of Lake Michigan. But tapping Lake Michigan does not solve the groundwater problem. It runs afoul of water use treaties with

Canada, puts a new strain on an already compromised water body, and leaves us off the hook for meeting the groundwater challenge.

The other urgent reason for addressing groundwater use with can be summed up in three words: "Polar Ice," and "Perrier." Both companies want to draw hundreds of thousands

Still, we believe the bill that passed both houses of the Legislature on **March 11** is an important first step to monitoring groundwater use in Wisconsin

of gallons of water from underground, bottle it, and ship it out of state. Perrier was virtually run out of Wisconsin, and Polar Ice wants permission to put up a controversial plant in Langlade County.

These "acute" uses of groundwater may seem benign, given the quadrillions of gallons of water underneath the state. But drawing water from underground directly affects water on the surface. As large amounts of water are pulled from the ground, the springs and rivers that groundwater feeds will dry up. It works not unlike drinking a milkshake with a straw: the straw may be drawing from the bottom the glass, but the "top" of the milkshake is dropping as you suck.

Two years ago, the River Alliance of Wisconsin began discussions with the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association to draw up broad principles for groundwater protection legislation. The potato and vegetable growers need groundwater to irrigate their crops. Our interest was to keep the rivers and streams, whose very origins are groundwater, flowing and healthy, and for the pure sake of wise use and

conservation of water.

In the past month, industrial, agricultural, municipal and conservation interests, joined by regulators and working with the valuable guidance of Rep. Dwayne Johnsrud and Senator Neal Kedzie, worked out details of groundwater protection legislation. In our view, a good groundwater law has to:

Place a bright line around high quality surface waters and headwaters. Inside that line, regulators will have the authority to strictly regulate groundwater use.

Give communities with acute groundwater challenges the authority and tools to regulate groundwater use, and impose conservation measures if they see fit.

Provide enough resources to improve data-gathering on groundwater use and to run an effective groundwater management program.

Create a "relocation fund" for a landowner or industry whose groundwater use threatens surface water.

Many of these important principles were lost or watered down in the inevitable give-and-take and compromise that is law-making. Still, we believe the bill that passed both houses of the Legislature on **March 11** is an important first step to monitoring groundwater use in Wisconsin, and ultimately managing that use.

We will all have to stay vigilant. Watch the springs, and watch your taps, because we all depend on this resource.

## Jeff Postle—a BECWA Board Member Profile

Jeff Postle is the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association's newest board member. He has lived in the Town of Berry for 17 years and joined the BECWA board in September 2003.

After serving a term on the Town of Berry Board and working on the town's land use plan, Jeff was looking for another opportunity to be involved in the community and natural resource issues. When he was invited to be on the BECWA board, it seemed like a the perfect fit for his interests.

Jeff has worked as a hydrologist for 17 years and recognizes the importance of Black Earth Creek as an amazing water

resource. He sees this watershed as a great place to pursue his interests in land use and its impacts on surface water and groundwater.

As a BECWA board member, Jeff hopes

“Let's remember that in the final analysis preserving our natural resources will make a better community in which to live.”

to see an increased awareness that land use activities in the watershed have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of the water in Black Earth Creek. He also wants to help residents recognize

what a great resource they have in their backyard so they will participate in protecting it.

Jeff views unplanned residential growth and poor agricultural practices as the two top two threats to Black Earth Creek's land and water resources. He believes these threats can be reduced through education, planning and good conservation practices.

Jeff urges residents of Black Earth Creek to remember that in the final analysis preserving our natural resources will make a better community in which to live.

## Yahara Lakes Week 2004

By Marcia Hartwig

It's become a tradition in June: a week long celebration of Dane County's water resources and a time to reflect on their importance to our quality of life and what each of us can do to protect them and use them responsibly.

The **10th annual Yahara Lakes Week**, sponsored by the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission, will highlight events happening in and around Dane County's lakes, streams and rivers. Over the years, dozens of organizations and

thousands of individuals have taken part in Yahara Lakes Week. A **full schedule** for the week's events will be available sometime in May on the Commission's website [www.countyofdane.com/commissions/lakes](http://www.countyofdane.com/commissions/lakes).

Highlights of this year's Yahara Lakes Week include the annual Paddle to Work Day June 17; Dane County Waters Champion Awards Friday, June 18; and the Better Lawns and Gutters Tour Sunday, June 20. In addition to the

recreational and educational activities highlighted during the annual weeklong celebration, there is also an emphasis on what citizens can do to protect our lakes and streams.

Volunteers are needed to hang posters in late May and early June. Contact Marcia Hartwig at 224-3746 or [hartwig@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:hartwig@co.dane.wi.us) to volunteer or visit [www.countyofdane.com/commissions/lakes/yaharalakes.htm](http://www.countyofdane.com/commissions/lakes/yaharalakes.htm) for more information.

## 2003-04 BECWA Donor List

### Major Donors:

Badger Fly Fishers  
Black Earth State Bank  
Dane County Conservation League  
Gaylord Nelson IES  
Michael, Best and Friedrich LLP  
Natural Heritage Land Trust  
Southern WI Trout Unlimited  
Trails Media Group, Inc.  
Wisconsin DNR

### BECWA Annual Supporters:

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**BLACK EARTH CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION**

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Environmental Studies  
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**Black Earth Creek  
Watershed Association**  
Established 1987

**Board of Directors:**

Barbara Borns, President  
Jim Troupis, Vice-President  
Tom Ehlert, Secretary  
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Steve Born                      Carl Jones Jr.  
Jeff Postle                      Wendy Sterne

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

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# Join BECWA Today!

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

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.

\* All donations are tax deductible.

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