

# Wisconsin Rivers

A Publication of the River Alliance of Wisconsin • Fall 2004 • Volume 10 • Issue 3

*Everyone deserves healthy rivers*

## Switch on Your Monitors

### A Path to Cleaner Water

Erin O'Brien  
Local Group Assistance

One of the River Alliance's top policy priorities for the coming year is to build a statewide water quality monitoring system that merges the willingness and passion of community-based watershed organizations with the scientific expertise of water biologists. The goal is to get the data that state and federal agencies need to meaningfully protect our rivers by enforcing the Clean Water Act. This federal law is the foundation for classifying streams (e.g., cold, outstanding resource or limited aquatic life waters), getting water quality standards, creating point-source discharge permit criteria, identifying impaired waters, and developing construction site erosion control rules, among many mandates.

I made our case for such a network with my presentation to the Citizen Monitoring Conference in August, organized by the DNR and sponsored by many conservation groups. A copy of River Alliance's presentation *Community-Based Water Quality Monitoring: A Viable Path to Cleaner Water* is posted at: <http://atriweb.info/conference/proceedings.htm>.

Our push for a systematic program to make use of citizen-collected water quality data comes from our conclusion that the state has very little information about the health of most of Wisconsin's streams and rivers — meaning the Clean Water Act cannot be fully implemented. (See page 47 of our report, *Caught in a Cross Current*: <http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/policyreport.html>).

As a result, decisions that affect a water body's present and future uses are regularly made with incomplete information. And in light of shrinking budgets and the sheer magnitude of the job at hand (44,000 miles of rivers and streams, 15,000 inland lakes and five million acres of wetlands), the DNR simply does not have the resources to get the job done.



*Take time to enjoy Wisconsin's rivers this fall. The Apple River in St. Croix County.*

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Stream of Thought

# Can you Say “Totogatic?”

## Saying “Wild River” is Easier

It’s been nearly 40 years since Wisconsin created this state’s Wild Rivers Act and designated three rivers – the Pike, the Pine and the Popple, all in northeastern Wisconsin – as the state’s first official Wild Rivers. State Wild River status gives those rivers a layer of protection from development activities so they indeed remain wild and scenic, though the law cannot supersede local zoning.

There’s a group of river enthusiasts in northwestern Wisconsin with a candidate for Wild River status. You will learn more about the river in a minute, but learning the name first is essential.

Just when you think you can pronounce it – tow-TOW-gah-tek – local folks tell you that north of a certain point on the river, people drop a syllable and call the river the TOW-gah-tek. Just when you think you can spell it, it passes under State Highway 27 as it flows westward and the second “o” is replaced with an “a”, and it’s spelled Totogatic. It’s true: look at the official Wisconsin highway map and take your eye to the southwestern corner of Ashland County where you’ll see Lake Totogatic, the source of the river. Then trace a thin blue ribbon flowing south and east with your finger and you’ll see that the river is spelled “Totogatic.” Even the DNR’s official signs marking the river use both spellings.

That’s part of the mystique of the Totogatic that only adds to its appeal as a potential Wild River. Also somewhat mysterious are its origins: the Department of Natural Resources web site shows the Totogatic River flowing out of Lake Totogatic in southern Ashland County, but local legend says its origins are Nelson Lake in northern Sawyer County, which receives the tiny Totogatic from the lake of the same name a few miles to the north.

Whatever its source, and whether you spell it with an “o” or an “a”, or add or drop a syllable as you pronounce it, its real mystique is in its truly wild and picturesque nature. Last month, a flotilla of about 24 paddlers, organized by Cathie Erickson of the Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association,

floated a segment of the river east of Minong to the Totogatic’s confluence with the Namekagon River in the upper reaches of Burnett County.

It’s a gentle stream, shallow and meandering, with a sandy bottom and a few riffles – perfect for average-skill canoeists. We did hit a challenging deadfall that made for a good teamwork exercise to get around. You didn’t need the fingers of one hand to count the cabins visible along this stretch of river. Thanks to both conservancy zoning in Washburn County and the presence of some industrial and public forest lands, the Totogatic is very undeveloped, making it a fine candidate for Wisconsin’s fourth Wild River.

Local people are ready to make the case for Wild River designation for the Totogatic. They are in conversation with state and county elected officials and county forestry managers. They are excited about protecting this unique stream for what is becoming an ever rarer experience – a quiet afternoon on a river with very little human influence – as northern Wisconsin draws

more people. Though our mere presence on the river that afternoon was an act of “human influence,” and while Wild River status may draw more people to the river than may even know about it now, the Totogatic’s designation as “wild” would be a small and important victory.

The cliché “Nothing’s sacred” seems especially applicable these days in Wisconsin, as deregulate-and-develop fever has stricken both the state Capitol and many county board rooms. At some point, we have to say, “Can we leave *something* alone?”

Designating the Totogatic a Wild River would be a great move, both for practical purposes of having a wild river to paddle and fish, and for the symbolic value of leaving something as it has been for decades.



  
Denny Caneff  
Executive Director

### Nominate YOUR River Champions!

Recognize those who improve and protect Wisconsin’s rivers on page 4.



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- Diana Toledo  
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- Julia McCarthy - *Dams*

**Wisconsin Rivers** is a quarterly publication of the River Alliance of Wisconsin. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of our funders. Articles are invited for consideration.

Editor, Design & Layout – Michael “Otis” Lavitschke  
Printer – Wingra Printing Group, Madison, WI

## Dams Program

# Going with the Flow Made Easy

Helen Sarakinos  
Dams Program Manager

As of this fall, two more rivers will be running freer in Wisconsin. The City of Waterloo removed the 12-foot high Ball Park Dam this July from the Maunsha River in Jefferson County. Removal of Ball Park Dam is expected to improve migration of warmwater fish species, fish habitat and water quality in the river. Though Waterloo city officials initially opposed removal, additional information, including the River Alliance video "Taking a Second Look," convinced them that dam removal was ultimately the best option for the city.

The restoration plan includes not only removing the dam, but restoring the former impoundment to a public park – including a bike path – and restoring privately-owned river bank. The entire restoration will cost \$158,000, compared to an estimated \$750,000 required to reconstruct the dam and dredge the sediment-choked impoundment. Ball Park Dam is the fourth dam to be removed in 2004.

Also slated for removal is the Six-Mile Creek Dam, east of Eau Claire. This small dam, owned by the Eau Claire Electric Co-op, had a notable warming effect on an otherwise coldwater stream. The DNR has recently approved a permit to abandon the dam, and removal is slated for this fall.

### Hell from High Water

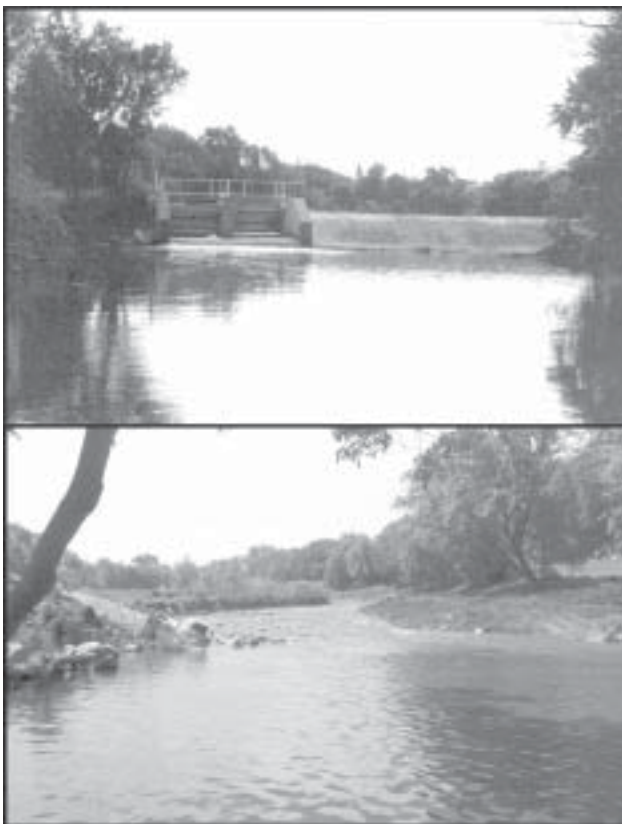
Heavy rains earlier this summer stressed many of the older dams in Wisconsin rivers. Among them was Udey's Dam on the Crawfish River in Columbus (Columbia County). Following several days of high river flow that overtopped the structure, the City of Columbus opened the gates of the dam to lower pond levels due to safety concerns. Soon after, an inspection revealed that the dam has several structural problems, including extensive erosion along its base.

Waterloo is currently debating whether to repair the structure or abandon it. The River Alliance spoke about the benefits of removing the dam at a public informational meeting in Columbus in 2002. There is a growing group of citizens who desire to see a free-flowing river run through their community again and avoid the additional tax burden of dam repair.

### Property Values and Dam Removal

For riparian property owners facing a possible dam removal, one of the greatest concerns is the potential impact of removal on their property values. With over 130 dam removals in this state since the 1950's, Wisconsin makes an ideal location to examine this issue in more detail. With funding from the Charles Stewart Mott and McKnight Foundations, River Alliance has partnered with Professor Bill Provencher of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Department of UW–Madison to look at property value changes at sites where dams have been removed in the 1990s.

The study will compare trends at dam removal sites to similar municipalities where the dams are still in place. Tanya Meyer, a UW graduate student in Urban and Regional Planning, will be collecting the data this year and the study is due out in 2005. This study is the first detailed analysis to look at this question and continues a strong River Alliance tradition of initiating rigorous scientific research to understand the impact of dams on rivers and people by partnering with university scientists.



Right: Ball Park Dam before and after removal.  
Photo: Staff

## Our Great Lakes Need Your Voice

The Great Lakes are one of the natural wonders of the world. This world-class resource deserves world class protection. Between now and October 18th is the best opportunity for Wisconsinites to express these values and comment on an important agreement that will change the way water is protected in Wisconsin and the Great Lakes region.

On Monday July 19th the Council of Great Lakes Governors (Council), led by Wisconsin's Governor Doyle, released the Draft Great Lakes Basin Water Resources Compact to enhance joint decision making about the use of Great Lakes water. The compact is designed as a contract between the eight Great Lakes states and two Canadian provinces that will protect, conserve, restore, and improve the waters and water-dependent natural resources of the Great Lakes Basin.

The Council has requested comments from the public on this Draft. Because of the nature of Compacts, this is your best opportunity to act on this issue. Please make your voice heard by submitting written comments online at <http://www.cglg.org/comments/index.asp>, or by signing on to an E-letter on our partner's website: <http://cleanwisconsin.org/campaigns/greatLakes.html>

## Opportunities

# Champions of Rivers, We Seek Ye

Denny Caneff  
Executive Director

For years, the River Alliance has honored the great work and steadfast commitment of organizations and individuals doing their part to protect and improve Wisconsin's rivers. Over the years, we have honored scores of business owners, anglers, farmers, and elected officials.

This year, we will offer our River Champion awards in three categories, and we ask YOU to find the champions:

- **Private Sector** – this Champion could come from tourism, industry or agriculture.
- **Local Guardian** – this Champion could be a single individual, a family, or an organized group or association.
- **Public Sector** – this Champion should work for government in some capacity. They can be elected (e.g. town board, village president, state legislator, county board), or they can be an employee of a state agency (e.g. agriculture, natural resources) or municipal government.

River Champion nominees should be people, businesses or organizations that have done exceptional work on the ground and in the water, or on a policy level, to improve and restore rivers and streams.

Use the form below and send it to us, or visit our website: [www.wisconsinrivers.org](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org).

### The River Alliance of Wisconsin's River Champion Awards Nomination Form

I would like to nominate an individual, business or organization as a River Champion. I understand that I will be contacted about the status of my nomination prior to presentation of the award. **I also understand that this entry must be postmarked no later than November 19th, 2004 to be eligible for consideration.** Send to: River Alliance of Wisconsin • 306 E. Wilson St., Ste 2W • Madison, WI 53703 • FAX: 608-260-9799 • Email: [wisrivers@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:wisrivers@wisconsinrivers.org).

Nomination Category (*If you are submitting more than one nomination please copy this form and submit each nomination separately*):

\_\_\_\_\_ Private Sector      \_\_\_\_\_ Public Sector      \_\_\_\_\_ Local Guardian

**Every submission must include a brief description of the reasons for the nomination.  
Please limit your description to 100 words or less.**

Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone, Fax, E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Submitting Nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone, Fax, E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this nomination form and written description by Nov.19th, 2004**

### Why Don't You Get On Board?

Traditionally, the River Alliance has used this issue of its newsletter to seek nominations for new members to the Board of Directors, and to ask members to renew the terms of current board members whose first or second terms were up.

Over the years, the response from members was underwhelming. Members rarely used this bylaw-mandated format as their form of input into River Alliance policy or the direction of the organization.

This year the board of directors created a new process for vetting candidates for the board. They determined several criteria or attributes they seek and developed a way to fill the gaps on the current board with recruitment of new members. This new system will replace the antiquated bylaws, and the bylaws will of course reflect the changes. Existing or pending gaps that the board wants to address include a representative from the southwestern and northeastern areas of the state; someone from a highly urbanized area such as Milwaukee or Green Bay; additional legal expertise; someone who understands the legislative process; someone with stronger ties to and knowledge about agriculture; and someone that can be a voice for river-dependent businesses. This is not a comprehensive list, but you get a flavor of the process the board is undertaking.

This fall the board has already interviewed several superb candidates, and we will tell you who they are in the next newsletter. **Meanwhile, if you are interested in serving on the River Alliance's board of directors, or know someone who may fill any of the gaps listed above, we would love to hear from you.**

Contact executive director Denny Caneff at [dcaneff@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:dcaneff@wisconsinrivers.org) or 608-257-2424. He will put you in touch with board members in charge of board member recruitment and nominations.

## Local Group Assistance

# 100 Healthy Rivers, A River-Loving Governor

Lisa Goodman  
Local Group Assistance

### Over 40 Groups Support Northwoods Hundred Healthiest Rivers Campaign

Many local groups from around Wisconsin partnered with the River Alliance in submitting the petition to upgrade 100 river segments to Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Water status. The groups petitioned the Natural Resources Board, the governing body of the Department of Natural Resources, to increase protection of the top 100 of 433 river segments in northern Wisconsin for future generations. To view a list of those segments and a slide presentation, visit [www.wisconsinrivers.org](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org). We thank these groups for their support during this year-long process, and congratulate them on their many successes getting local media coverage on behalf of their home waters.

### Friends of the White River Hosts Governor Doyle

During an Up North tour in late August, Governor Doyle visited the Bad River Watershed, attending a press conference beside the White River to announce his recommendation of a 7,000 acre expansion of the White River Fishery Area in Bayfield County.

This was more good news for Myron Anderson and his group, Friends of the White River (FWR). Earlier this summer, Anderson and FWR, in collaboration with the **Bayfield Regional Conservancy**, **Bad River Watershed Association**, and **Trout Unlimited-Wild Rivers Chapter** and with assistance from the **River Alliance**, came one step closer to realizing their dream of acquiring and protecting land along an unprotected segment of the White River in the Town of Kelly. The Bayfield Regional Conservancy wrote a successful DNR River Management Grant proposal, which garnered funds needed for acquisition of the Carlson parcel.

### Workshop Alumni News

**Sauk Prairie River PAL** and the **Aldo Leopold Chapter of Trout Unlimited** are the latest Benchmarking alumni. The two organizations met September 11 in Sauk Prairie for a workshop with Diana Toledo and Lisa Goodman. Both groups developed action plans for the coming months and set dates for follow ups with program staff. The workshop also introduced the two groups for the first time.

The groups' work overlaps in Sauk County, and they hope to partner on future projects.

If you're considering a workshop for your group, contact these organizations to learn more about *their* recent benchmarking experiences:

Kathi Risley, SPR-PAL  
[risley@chorus.net](mailto:risley@chorus.net), 608-643-6892

Bill Brashear, ALC-TU  
[blbrash@netzero.com](mailto:blbrash@netzero.com), 920-696-3856

### FCLARA Completes Study of Pine and Popple River Watersheds

Members of **Florence County Lakes and Rivers Association** have completed their DNR River Planning Grant project, which involved an extensive inventory and GIS mapping effort along the Pine and Popple state Wild Rivers in Florence County, as well as strategic planning for their organization. For more information about the project, contact Jim Swanson, [swansoncaptjim@aol.com](mailto:swansoncaptjim@aol.com).

### Comings and Goings

We are pleased to welcome back Local Groups Program Manager **Diana Toledo**. She has been on maternity leave, getting better acquainted with daughter Paloma, born in February. We wish a fond farewell to Local Groups Program staffer **Erin O'Brien**. Erin has been ably filling in at Diana's desk, and helping the River Alliance with a number of policy related projects. Erin has accepted a position at the Wisconsin Wetlands Association. Intern **Hilary Manske** will continue sharing her talents with the Local Groups Program this fall. **Lisa Goodman** remains the Northern Coordinator.

*Myron Anderson, Friends of the White River (FWR), Governor Doyle and friends on the banks of the White River in Bayfield County.*

### Schedule a Workshop for Your River or Watershed Group!

#### **Grassroots Fundraising**

Tame your fear of asking for money and learn effective ways to ask. Develop a fundraising plan for your group.

#### **Benchmarking:**

#### **An Organizational Assessment**

Bring your board members, and identify your group's strengths and challenges. Then create an action plan for your priorities.

#### **Using the Clean Water Act to Protect Your Watershed**

Learn the basic river protection tools available under the Clean Water Act. Address and develop an action plan for issues specific to your watershed.

Contact Lisa Goodman  
at the River Alliance for details.  
608-257-2424 ext. 110  
[goodman@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:goodman@wisconsinrivers.org)



## Dams Program

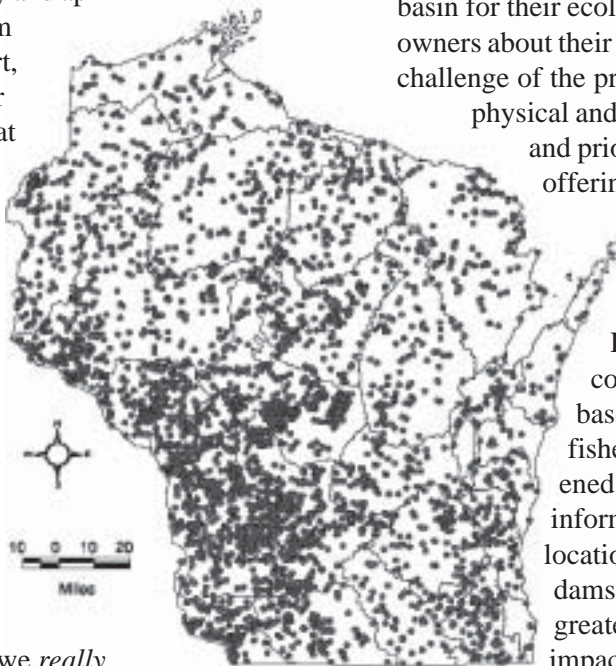
# Dam Nation

## Does Wisconsin Really Need All Those Old Dams!?

Helen Sarakinos  
Dams Program Manager

*“The public must retain the control of the great waterways. It is essential that any permit to obstruct them for reasons and on conditions that seem good at the moment should be subject to revision when changed conditions demand.”* - President Theodore Roosevelt, 1908

The spirit of Roosevelt’s words is alive and strong almost a century later in the River Alliance of Wisconsin’s philosophy and approach to selective dam removal. From our start, we have advocated for informed discussion that considers selectively removing dams that are old, unsafe and obsolete; dams that are not serving the greater good, yet causing significant harm. One look at the map of all the dams in Wisconsin [inset, right], and it’s easy to see how a group of committed river-lovers began to ask the question, “Do we *really* need all those dams?”



ecological impact for purposes of inspection, management and, if appropriate, potential removal.

### Prioritizing Dams for Ecological Impact in the Great Lakes Basin of Wisconsin

With the support of the Charle Stewart Mott Foundation and the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the River Alliance has developed an approach to evaluate dams in the Lake Michigan basin for their ecological impact and to educate dam owners about their ownership responsibilities. One challenge of the project was to select a set of physical and ecological variables used to rank and prioritize dam removals in terms of offering the greatest ecological “bang for the buck” within the Lake Michigan basin.

With the assistance of Patrick Engineering, a planning and consulting firm, we created a GIS-based dataset that incorporated fisheries and endangered and threatened species data, water quality information and various land use and locational features to determine which dams have the greatest ecological impact on rivers. We asked:

1. Which rivers have highest and lowest density of dams?
2. Which dams affect fisheries habitat?
3. Which dams impact the habitat of species of concern?
4. How much river connectivity would be restored with a given removal?
5. Which dams impact headwater areas?

### Safety First!

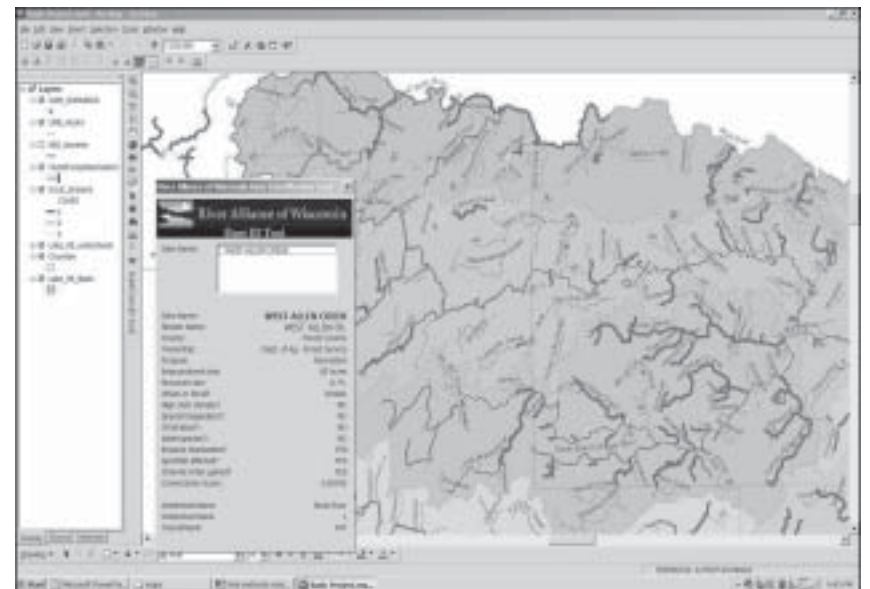
Not all dams are created equal. Some dams do more harm to rivers than others, either because of their size, location on a river, proximity to species at risk, or because they are exacerbating other river problems (nutrients, contaminants). It is the responsibility of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to regulate dams as to protect both “interest of the public rights in navigable waters” and “life, health and property.” DNR is required to inspect all large dams in the state once every 10 years to ensure they are structurally sound and don’t pose a safety threat. However, if we want to manage dams in a way that is sensible for both people and rivers, we need to evaluate dams in terms of their

6. Which dams are located on water-quality impaired rivers?

7. Which dams are on specially designated (high quality) rivers?

### Combining Data and Professional Expertise

While “number crunching” was an essential step in this project, we needed to ground-truth our approach by talking to regional DNR biologists and water management specialists who are intimately familiar with their rivers and the impacts to them. These professionals have walked these streams; they have site-specific knowledge that transcends databases and reports. We quizzed them to get to their knowledge of the river, the wildlife there, and how dams, agriculture, development and industrial activity may impact the river. These professionals often knew which dams were ownerless or not maintained, as well as where additional dams were located that didn’t appear on the state inventory: *many* do not appear. This information is invaluable, particularly in areas where existing data is patchy, old or incomplete.



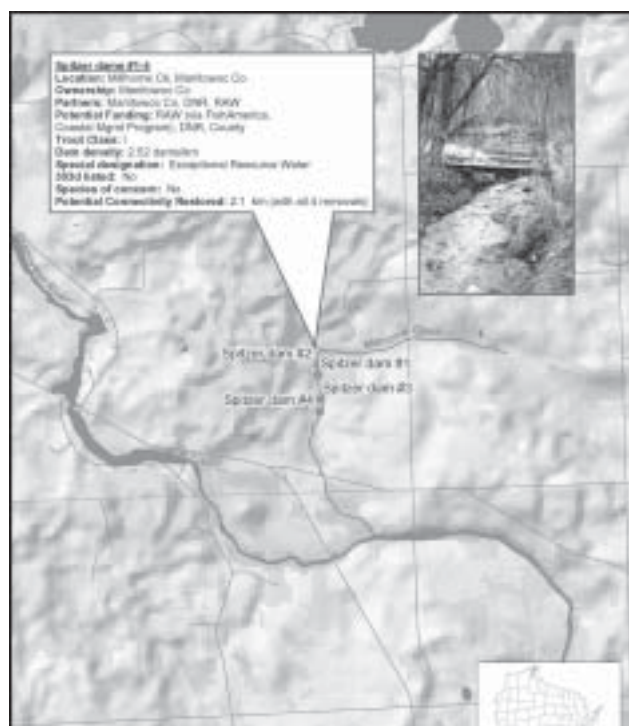
River Alliance created an easy-to-use GIS-based tool to summarize site specific ecological information for every dam in the Lake Michigan basin.

Continues next page...

## Dam Nation

*Continues from previous page...*

All together, this gives us a pretty good snapshot of the relative ecological impact of a given dam on a watershed. When this kind information is combined with logistical considerations such as date of last inspection, whether the dam has an owner and is actively maintained, and whether the dam is located in an area that is a management priority, specific watersheds or rivers can be identified that would benefit greatly from selective dam removal. Even if they are not candidates for removal, dams that have a high ecological impact should be priorities for inspection to ensure that they are operating efficiently and with minimal adverse impact to rivers and water quality.



*An example of one site where voluntary dam removal will result in returning a Class I brook trout stream to free-flowing condition through the removal of four remnant dams, Milhome Creek, Manitowoc/Sheboygan Counties.*

“This data from the River Alliance will help the agency to better understand the environmental impacts of dams in the Lake Michigan basin,” says Todd Ambs, Administrator of the DNR’s Division of Water. “Selective dam removal, where appropriate, is one of our best river restoration tools.”

### Working with Willing Dam Owners

Another important goal of this project was to reach out to dam owners directly and engage those willing to consider removal. We sent a mailing to all dam owners of record in the Lake Michigan basin,

outlining potential financial and legal responsibilities associated with owning a dam and the benefit of selective removal of old, uneconomical, unsafe dams.

We invited those interested in learning more to contact us. This one-time letter generated a response from over 30 owners looking for more information about their options. Though many are not prepared to take out their dams right now, honest dialogue about the cost and benefits of their dams in a friendly, non-contentious context can lead to more thoughtful decision-making by these dam owners in the future.

For example, I met with one community about the potential to remove an ownerless dam from a nearby river. While volunteer firefighters opposed removing the dam because they use the impoundment as a water source, the village doesn’t want to own the dam: it is derelict and falling apart. But the meeting served as an opportunity to gather in a friendly atmosphere to discuss the issues around the dam. In the end it was agreed that while there are good public safety reasons to keep the dam in for now (water source for firefighting), it is in the best interests of both people and the river to look for better alternatives for water (e.g. dry hydrants, wells, etc.).

Our effort has definitely borne fruit. There are currently eight dams whose owners are voluntarily considering removal in the Lake Michigan basin. As the circumstances around each site are very different, so is the role played by the River Alliance. From leading the effort, to raising money, to community outreach, we partner with the owners, agency staff, local citizens and other non-profit organizations to restore rivers and grow the constituency of people who care about our rivers. We have recently received grants from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the McKnight Foundation to expand our dam prioritization work into the Lake Superior and Lower Chippewa basins and to continue working with individual dam owners to advocate for the option of dam removal to restore rivers.

In coming issues, we will feature these sites in the pages of *Wisconsin Rivers* and will share the wonderful stories of how people around the state strongly believe in leaving their world (and rivers!) in a little better shape than they found it.

## Monitoring

*Continues from cover...*

There is, however, a competent workforce of volunteer-based watershed organizations eager to help bridge this gap. They are frustrated by the agency’s historic reluctance to embrace them as equal partners in the effort to assess and protect the health of our waters.

For many years, DNR implied it didn’t trust citizen-collected data for management purposes, but that attitude may be changing. At the Citizen Monitoring Conference, DNR Water Division Administrator Todd Ambs said the agency was committed to develop a “tiered approach” to citizen-based water monitoring, including a tier that could be used by the DNR for regulatory purposes.

A tiered approach lets a watershed or river friends group decide how sophisticated a level of monitoring they want to do – from simple educational purposes (Tier 1) to more sophisticated and systematic monitoring, carefully developed with biologists and regulators, to ensure the citizens’ data meets the agency’s quality assurance requirements for management decisions (Tier 4). Conference-goers heard about a good example of this kind of system in place in New Jersey.

In the coming months, the River Alliance will actively work with DNR to ensure they follow through on their commitment, while we work our side of the street to help build the network of local groups interested in more serious monitoring. A few examples of Clean Water Act-related outcomes we’d like this program to support include using citizen collected data to designate unclassified waters, watch-dog permit discharges, monitor polluted runoff, and identify impaired waters. (e.g. waters that don’t meet water quality standards).

River Alliance member input and participation will be essential to the success of this initiative. To share your group’s ideas and concerns for how to build an effective watershed protection monitoring program, contact [goodman@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:goodman@wisconsinrivers.org) or call 608-257-2424 (Lisa Goodman, ext. 110).

For more information on the Clean Water Act, see *Using the Clean Water Act to Protect Wisconsin’s Waters*: <http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/LocalGroups/pubspage.html>.

## Acting Locally

# Taking Back the Black

## Legendary River has New Friends

Lisa Goodman

Local Group Assistance - Northern Region

Though still a young organization, Friends of the Black River (FBR) is establishing a reputation of making things happen in the Black River Basin, including its most recent River Clean-up and Festival. FBR president Geoff Alford estimates that more than 200 people took part in both events. The silent auction raised more than \$800 (more than twice what they earned last year) thanks to the work of the

***The Friends of the Black River will foster community appreciation, understanding, and sustainable use of the river and its watershed by hosting educational and enjoyable programs, events, and conservation projects and by promoting sound decision-making when issues affect the health of the Black River Basin.***

board, including Cheryl Gabrielson, a local teacher by day and diligent pavement pounder/fundraiser for FBR in her spare time.

The entire board pitched in to solicit the support of contributors. They included dozens of local businesses which donated to the silent auction, and provided support for the Clean-up and Festival, evidence of strong community support for the river, and its river organization.

The event is becoming a group trademark. In past years, the festival happened under the umbrella of the University of Wisconsin Basin Partner Team, and the capable hands of Basin Educator Deb Beringer Yarmark, Yarmark, and DNR Water Team Leader, Dan Helsel, have been mentors and guiding forces behind the formation of FBR. Thanks to some temporary funding, DNR staffer Kyle Niedfelt is working with FBR part time to help them get their feet on the ground. To an observer at a monthly meeting, it's clear that this organization's present and future rest securely in the hands of the eight citizens on its board, and its members.

President Geoff Alford, a Black River Falls and Millston native, knows the river well. He joined the organization last January after seeing a meeting invitation in the newspaper. Alford says, "Resources belong to *all* of us, and we have to take a proactive role in their protection, rather than leave it all to the DNR."

### Budging a Fridge

The river clean-up is one example of Alford's willingness to take river stewardship into his own hands. Since the early 1970s, he recalls, there has been an old refrigerator by the river, long ago dumped over an embankment and forgotten, but not by Alford. The old fridge has served as a constant eyesore in an otherwise beautiful place on the river.

On September 11, Alford and board member Butch McCumber put their minds and backs to it, and the fridge was on its way to the dump.

McCumber offers his insights about the Black River and FBR. "I joined the group because I've always been a guy who wants to make a difference. I wanted to meet other people like me who enjoyed the outdoors and I wanted to get involved in community activities," he said.

FBR vice president Andy Ellingson, a 2003 UW-Lacrosse college graduate, has recently returned home to Black River Falls. He says, "The main reason I joined FBR is because I am extremely concerned about unsustainable land use in the Black River watershed."

Adds McCumber, "I'm retired military and what I bring to the table other than a great deal of life experience is a strong background in small team leadership/outdoor leadership. I'm a guide on the

river, teach adventure training, and am an avid hunter. It's important to me to have a clean environment to enjoy my life. I focus my attention on the Jackson and Clark County areas of the upper Black River."

### A Promising Future

Alford hopes the group's focus will expand farther up and down the river, and include partnerships with other local organizations along Black River tributaries. Robinson Creek Preservation Association is one such organization and Alford hopes there will be more. He also hopes to establish relationships with other partners, including local cranberry growers.

The group is currently working with a local business owner and the city and county to help establish a public access point upstream of the dam in Black River Falls. "We see our group as a catalyst, a force to get interest going, and to act as a watchdog where needed," Alford said.

FBR looks forward to unveiling the winner of its logo design contest. Community members responded creatively and in number, submitting more than a dozen contest entries. Stay tuned to [www.friendsoftheblackriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheblackriver.org) for news about the winning design.

McCumber sums up their work: "The joys are that this group is doing great things, has done great things, and is going to do more great things and I want to be part of it and help make it happen."

For more information, contact Geoff Alford, 608-781-5939, [www.friendsoftheblackriver.org](http://www.friendsoftheblackriver.org).



*River clean-ups are a great way for communities to organize around their river. Friends of the Black River pose with their haul of garbage. Photo: FBR*

## Know Your River

# Black Gold

## The Black River Provides First Rate Fishing, Paddling Experiences

By Butch McCumber and Jeff Polzin

Beginning in Taylor County, the Black River runs for nearly 200 miles through forests, farmland, pastures and wetlands to its confluence with the mighty Mississippi just outside Onalaska. This choice body of water has been included on Wisconsin's Land Legacy list because of its unique, pristine condition.

The Black River provides a first rate experience for anglers and canoeists as well as whitewater enthusiasts. It also holds a deep history in logging where, battling harsh winters and risking injury, men cut and floated a portion of the four billion board feet of lumber taken during the timber boom in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mormon Rapids, below Hatfield, is named for the Mormons who settled and logged the area.

### Split Personality

The upper and lower sections of the river have two very distinct personalities. Upstream, the Black River is rocky and sometimes boulder laden and Class I or II rapids are common. Below Black River Falls, the river assumes a much slower, easygoing flow, with boulders and rapids being replaced by easy turns, sand bars, steep banks and deep pools. For the most part, man made structures are few and far between. The Black River has three dams, one at the lower end of Lake Arbutus, one in downtown Black River Falls, and one at Onalaska.

When the ice first breaks up in the spring, or after big rains early in the year, the river swells to as much as 20,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and paddlers from throughout the region gather in Hatfield, one of the closest, early season whitewater destinations. Throughout the summer and fall, water levels can drop to as low as 65 cfs, exposing the rocks and boulders responsible for the springtime fun. The dam holds back enough water to support a six-mile stretch of slow, easy floating all summer long. Without adequate rainfall, paddling the river also requires some dragging during late summer and fall, but it's much easier to drag over shallow sandbars than to pick your way through boulders and slippery rocks.

It would be unusual to travel seven miles on the Black River without passing a suitable access point. The lower river is much more popular for canoeing because there are several canoe outfitters and it's

much easier to negotiate. You're liable to see almost any kind of wildlife Wisconsin has to offer, even occasional black bears ambling along the banks. A favorite attraction is a large eagle nest perched high in a pine tree a couple miles north of Black River Falls, easily visible on river right.

The upper Black River flows through mostly private property and camping opportunities are almost non-existent without permission until you get into Clark and Jackson Counties camping requires a permit. Occasional suitable gravel bars show themselves between Hatfield and Melrose and camping opportunities are especially good on the numerous sandbars between Melrose and North Bend.

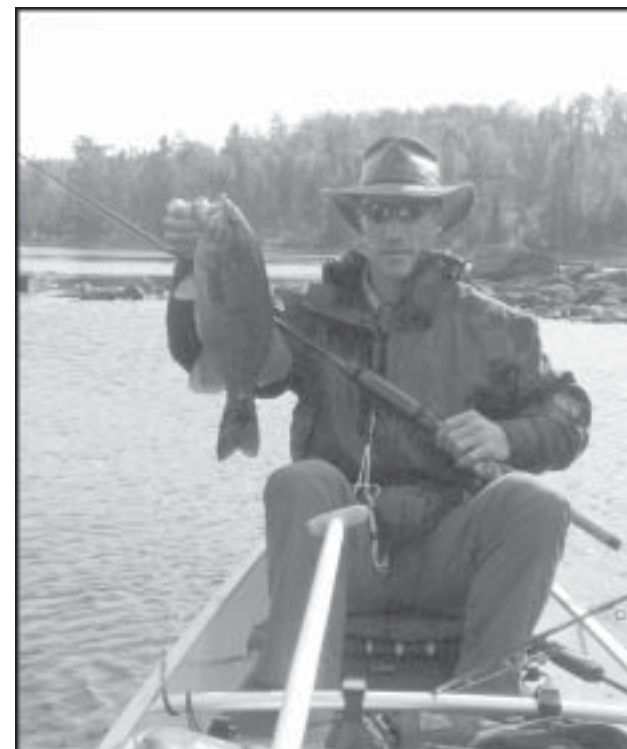
Approaching the Mississippi below Hwy. 53, the river begins to slow into bottomlands turning into multiple delta channels before widening into Lake Onalaska.

### Here for the Fishing?

Although the entire river harbors good fishing for smallmouth bass, muskie, northern pike and walleyes, the upper section of this pristine river provides better smallmouth and muskie action than anything else. This isn't easy fishing and if you want to do it right a good wading staff, felt bottom shoes and a sturdy canoe or raft are prerequisites. There are surprisingly large fish cruising the current, eddies and quiet pools of this small, rocky part of the river, often surprising and thrashing light tackle buffs. Don't be afraid to beef up your tackle if you decide to try a cast or two. Effort pays its own dividends though, and you'll enjoy some awesome fishing along the lonely stretches of the upper Black River, which at times will seem like a remote northern river. Below the dam in Black River Falls, concentrate your efforts in the deeper pools and log jams along the shoreline.

*Butch McCumber is a retired Air Force Pararescueman, now owner-operator of Black River Outfitters LLC, specializing in fishing the upper Black River and teaching outdoor adventure skills, 715-333-2117. He lives in Merrilan.*

*Jeff Polzin is a family physician in Black River Falls and an avid kayaker who enjoys introducing people to the joy of paddling.*



*The fishing is great for bass, pike, walleye and muskie in the Black. Butch McCumber reels one in. Photo: B. McCumber*

## River Alliance Wish List

*Any donations of items, time or skills will help our organization immensely! Our list does not need to end here, either. If you have an idea for a donation, please contact us at 608.257.2424 or wisrivers@wisconsinrivers.org.*

- **Computer Monitors -Flat Screen**
- **LCD Projector**
- **Laptops**
- **Office Supplies**
  
- **Large Portfolio Case**
- **Publication Design**
- **Web Design**
- **General Volunteer Help**

News

# Lew Posekany, Sr.

Long-time DNR employee, River Alliance supporter  
Lew Posekany passed away September 14, 2004

Lew retired from the DNR in December 1984 after more than 45 years of dedicated service to the people of Wisconsin. His career began with the first comprehensive survey of wetland resources in the state. He was among the first



*Lew shaped Wisconsin's environmental history in a 45-year career with the DNR.*

to recognize the adverse effects of wetland losses on water quality and quantity and fisheries and wildlife.

As chief of the River Survey in the Wisconsin Conservation Commission and later as Chief of the Biological Investigation Section in the New Department of Natural Resources, Lew helped shape many of the legal decisions that form the basis of the public's right to use and enjoy our water resources.

Lew realized that poorly designed and constructed highway projects could be devastating to the environment. In 1952 he began coordination with the Department of Transportation to reduce the environmental impacts of highway construction. These efforts led to the current environmental liaison agreement between DNR and DOT.

With the enactment of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, Buzz Besadny and Lew formed the Bureau of Environmental Impact. Even with the new responsibility, Lew remained a shaker, a mover and an advisor on water and other environmental issues.

Lew Posekany, Sr. was a long time supporter of the River Alliance and also was reputed to be the first bureaucrat in Wisconsin (then with the Conservation Commission in the early 50's) to lead an effort to remove a dam! Memorials may be sent to the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

**Thank You!**

The River Alliance recently received a bequest from the estate of W. Jon Fahrner of Wisconsin Rapids. All funds received will go to our Second Decade Fund supporting our work in Northern Wisconsin.

**As you are making your estate plans, please keep the River Alliance in mind. Contact Mike Engleson for more information about leaving a legacy for rivers with the River Alliance. Our full legal address is River Alliance of Wisconsin • 306 East Wilson Street, 2W • Madison, WI 53703**

Volunteer Profile

# Terry Anderson

River Alliance PC Guru

In our organization, it's easy to find someone who knows something about removing dams, how to start a fundraising program, or when and how to tackle bad legislation. But when it comes to building a new website that's easy to use and has all the bells and whistles we've wanted for years, finding someone with that knowledge isn't so easy. Enter Terry Anderson.

Terry has been involved with the River Alliance two years helping mostly with web design and planning. He has also been an invaluable resource for other networking and server issues. He hails from LaCrosse and lives in Middleton, pursuing a career in programming and database administration.



The Mississippi is Terry's favorite river and some of his favorite memories are of "fly fishing on the rivers and streams around Coon & Bohemian Valleys. I love the water," says Anderson.

When asked why he volunteers, Terry replies, "Because I can. I like working on websites and I'd rather spend my free time doing something worthwhile. I like volunteering at the River Alliance because I feel that I'm helping a noble cause and hopefully making the lives of those who work there a little bit easier." It's not just hope Terry. You are!

## Think of Wisconsin's Rivers During this Year's Payroll Deduction Campaign!

This is a great way to support the River Alliance! We don't send you mail and you don't have to send us your donation; you're payroll department does it all for you!

For more information about Community Shares of Wisconsin or to see if your workplace participates, visit [www.communityshares.com](http://www.communityshares.com).



**RIVER ALLIANCE**  
of Wisconsin

# Thank You!

*We are truly indebted to our individual, business and organizational members. Without their contributions, we would not be able to fight so strongly for Wisconsin's rivers! The names listed here are representative of donations received June 1 - September 30, 2004. We regret we cannot list everyone.*

## River Heros- \$1,000+

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## In Memory Of

• Lew Posekany

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**Yes!** You, too, can support Wisconsin's rivers!  
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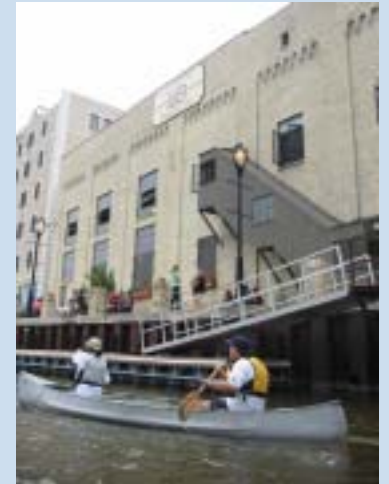
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 608-257-2424

# Canoes and Brews

Summer fun on the Milwaukee River! Thanks to all who attended, braved the North Avenue rapids, and supported Wisconsin's rivers. Special thanks to Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers!



## We've got a NEW look!



An updated logo, fact sheets about our program work, a new brochure and a swanky new website coming soon! Thanks to Johnson Outdoors Inc. for printing our new publications.

To receive copies of any of our publications, simply email [jnelson@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:jnelson@wisconsinrivers.org) or call 608.257.2424

## Congratulations!

### Our 2004 Raffle Winners

Madelyn Scheer (pictured here with friend Mal Jones) won our grand prize, a Perception Sonoma kayak donated by Rutabaga and Perception.



Dan Postelnick of Chicago won our first prize of a St. Croix fly rod combo from St. Croix Rods.

Other winners include: Ricky Melms, Ron Rosner, Janet Kolze, Willie Visparer Kunert, Scott Kolbeck, Robert Schroeder, Brian Ward, Anne Forbes, Joette Heckenbach, David Seligman.