

Wisconsin Rivers

A Publication of the River Alliance of Wisconsin • Spring 2005 • Volume 11 • Issue 2

Everyone deserves healthy rivers

Healing a River and a Community

Restoration of Big Spring Creek

Helen Sarakinos

It's an awfully small creek to have such a big reputation. When you stand on the shores of Big Spring Creek in Adams County at the headwaters of the Fox River, it appears for all the world like a little coldwater stream meandering through the central sands of Wisconsin. And yet upstream it's dammed and channelized, denuded and sedimented and a few years ago, someone tried to suck out a good part of its headwaters to make a little money. When the Perrier Corporation proposed to tap spring water from the headwaters of the creek, the ensuing debate polarized this small community, in some cases pitting neighbor against neighbor. Yet today, with the assistance of the River Alliance of Wisconsin and other partners, neighbors are coming together again around a common vision of restoring the creek that runs through the heart of the community.

A David and Goliath Story

The nature of the Central Sands Region makes it an area of high groundwater discharge to streams. This makes great habitat for brook and brown trout. This also makes good habitat for someone looking to tap springwater. In 2000, the Town of New Haven and Big Spring Creek were the focus of national attention when the Perrier Corporation proposed plunking a bottling plant in the headwaters of the creek. The plant would have withdrawn high volumes of groundwater and threatened flows to Big Spring Creek. Local citizens vociferously opposed, citing mounting evidence that what Perrier took from the ground for profit was going to affect what flowed into the river for everyone else to use. Despite Perrier's slickest marketing maneuvers, public outcry over the project didn't diminish and eventually Perrier retracted its high capacity permit request and left Wisconsin. Although the proposal had a divisive impact on the community, from the perspective of grassroots activism, Big Spring Creek looms large in the collective con-

Continues on page 6...



Evan Karow holds a Blandings Turtle like the one that inspired the formation of Friends of Allen Creek. Read more about Wisconsin's newest watershed group on page 8.

In this Issue!

Manure Maneuvers	pg. 2
Of Cabbage and Kings	pg. 3
River Champions for 2004	pg. 4
Local Groups make Top Tier	pg. 5
Acting Locally: Friends of Allen Creek Watershed	pg. 8
Dam Prioritization Expansion	pg. 9
Meet a Member Who's Paddled 240 of WI's Rivers	pg. 10
Spring Confluence Collage	pg. 12

~ Save the Date ~
Canoes and Brews on the Milwaukee River
returns July 30, 2005!



306 East Wilson, 2W
Madison, WI 53703
www.wisconsinrivers.org
wisrivers@wisconsinrivers.org
608-257-2424

Postmaster: Dated Material

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MADISON, WI
PERMIT NO.
537

Stream of Thought

Manure Maneuvers

No issue has inflamed River Alliance members and constituents in my short tenure here quite like the early March fish kill in western Dane County. The fish kill was caused when cow manure ran off into the freshly restored West Branch of the Sugar River.

It wasn't merely the loss of up to 200 fish in that stream. It was also the fact that the stream had just stepped off the pedestal of public honor. Last fall, the DNR secretary, the Dane County executive and local conservation groups celebrated the completion of nearly \$1 million and 30 years of restoration work – restoration that was largely done to repair the damage from sloppy farming practices.

The incident seemed to set off a welcomed “go get ‘em” attitude at the DNR, which pledged to prosecute three livestock farmers guilty of fish-killing manure spills elsewhere in southwestern Wisconsin last summer.



Reports from members around the state and a quick tour I conducted with River Alliance member Gary Eldred to Lafayette County – site of one of the spills DNR now plans to prosecute – uncovered more disturbing facts, revealing that manure spills are not aberrations, but routine occurrences. In a single day in February, there were three spills into public waters in Lafayette County alone. The Lafayette County farmer guilty of last summer's fish-killing spill seems to have a habit of it: that incident is at least the third one caused by that farm in the past several years.

So if these are not occasional accidents, what are the underlying causes? There are several:

- New manure, old mentality: many land conservation professionals say that when farmers expand from 60 or 80 cows to 250 or 500 cows, their mindset about manure hasn't changed, even though the quality and quantity of manure has changed dramatically. In the words of one soil scientist, “They still see it as a waste product to get rid of.”
- The role of money: When the polluted runoff rules were passed in 2001, neither farmers nor the rest of Wisconsin residents got any help from the state's most influential farm organization, the Farm Bureau. The Bureau convinced legislators

that the rules should not be implemented unless the farmers had financial assistance from the state for pollution-preventing practices and structures. Because there has never been money budgeted for “cost-sharing,” the hollow ring of unenforceable rules continues to resound around these manure spills.

The River Alliance is one of 30+ conservation organizations promoting increased “cost-share funding” for farmers in the state budget. Although we were happy to see Governor Doyle include \$2 million for the biennium, that amount could be spent in one county alone.

- Farmers' disproportionate influence on Wisconsin politics: Although, as voters, farmers are few in number, as a community they are respected for their hard work and risk-taking. Policymakers' eagerness to protect farmers translates into a level of political influence that is reflected in the oft-repeated notion of

“You wouldn't want to pass something that would drive the small farmer out of the business.”

- A question of size? Though it would be easy to jump on the “stop factory farming” crusade, the “spillers” are both big and small farms. Two tours of western Dane County in recent weeks showed me that those revered small family farms are plenty guilty of bad farming.

By the same token, one “mega dairy farm” we visited has made impressive gains managing manure by digesting it to produce methane. Kenn Buelow's Holsum Dairy in Calumet County offers what appears to be a viable option for making manure more benign, all the while generating electricity for 700 homes, and making animal bedding and dry fertilizer products.

For farms that can't justify a methane digester, a change of mindset, more cost-share funding, and prosecutions of scofflaws all need to happen to reduce or eliminate fish kills and river contamination. In the meantime, there will likely be more fish kills and the slack we have cut farmers for the reasons stated above will continue.

Denny Caneff
Executive Director

Canoecopia Saves Rivers

The River Alliance thanks Rutabaga, a paddlesport shop in Madison, for selecting our organization as one of three conservation groups to receive a portion of 2005 ticket sales. We sincerely appreciate this donation that will directly help protect and restore the flowing waters Canoecopia attendees recreate in. Thank you!



Board of Directors

- Jake Barnes, *Amherst* (Treasurer)
- Bill Berry, *Stevens Point*
- Douglas Cox, *Keshena*
- Lindsay Wood Davis, *Monona*
- Sean Dilweg, *Madison*
- Fred Lauing, *Madison*
- Fred Madison, *Lodi*
- Catherine Neiswender, *Appleton* (Secretary)
- Jamee Peters, *White Lake*
- Rebecca Power, *Madison* (Chair)
- Melissa Scanlan, *Madison*
- Bill Schultheis, *Dousman* (Vice Chair)
- Byron Shaw, *Amherst Junction*
- David Worth, *Stevens Point*

Staff

- Denny Caneff**
Executive Director
- Michael Engleson**
Office Manager
- Lori Grant**
Policy Program Manager
- Jay Krienitz**
Local Group Assistance - Assistant Manager
- Michael Lavitschke**
Membership and Outreach Manager
- Joan Nelson**
Membership and Outreach Assistant
- Helen Sarakinos**
Dams Program Manager
- Diana Toledo**
Local Group Assistance Program Manager

Program Assistants

- Julia McCarthy** - *Dams*
- Rachel Seltzer** - *Local Groups*

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

Policy Program

Of Cabbages and Kings

Lori Grant
Policy Program Manager

“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“To talk of many things:
Of shoes — and ships — and sealing wax —
Of cabbages and kings —
And why the sea is boiling hot —
And whether pigs have wings.”
- Lewis Carroll, 1872

And so it is. Unfortunately, the machinations of our legislative process and the arcane language of proposed laws and rules can seem as nonsensical as pigs with wings. Often the true intent and impact of a proposal is hidden behind pleasant rhetoric — can anyone name a single new job created as a result of last year’s Job Creation Act? Environmental regulations are by necessity written in technical language, and for most of us, it is next to impossible to figure out how they might apply to us or to our favorite river. Then there’s the state’s 2-year budget, a bundle of policies in disguise as an impenetrable financial document.

The conservation community is working together to analyze the impacts and keep track of the rules winding their way through the Department of Natural Resource’s (DNR) rulemaking process and the bills flying through the legislature. The River Alliance has been participating in lobbying efforts, promoting adequate funding for the nonpoint pollution program and pushing for approval of “as-good-as-we’re-going-to-get” consensus-based rules developed under the above-mentioned Job Creation Act. We’ve built good relationships with many legislators, but it’s the citizens of this state with the real power to influence the outcome.

To that end, you might be hearing more from us as critical issues come up this spring and summer. The River Alliance, in concert with our sister conservation groups, will do our best to sort through the nonsense, ferret out the issues important to the river community, and alert you to when your voice is needed.

Boiling Hot

The Joint Finance Committee of the state legislature is voting on the budget **now**, setting the course

for a number of important river protection and restoration programs for the next two years. As we’ve reported in past newsletters, one of our priorities is to make sure the state budget provides funding for the nonpoint pollution program. In 2001 the state approved strict rules to control runoff from “nonpoint” sources, such as farmland and construction sites, but with the same stroke of the pen, ruled that farmers would not have to follow the rules unless the state offered to pay at least 70% of the cost of complying with the law. The rules call for farmers to build sufficient manure storage facilities, provide vegetated buffer strips along streams and change tillage techniques to limit erosion. The Governor included some funding in his proposed

Often the true intent and impact of a proposal is hidden behind pleasant rhetoric — can anyone name a single new job created as a result of last year’s Job Creation Act?

budget to help defray farmer’s costs, but it would cover just a fraction of the costs estimated to make a real difference. The numerous fish kills reported throughout the state over the past few months are in part attributable to farmers needing to empty their undersized and close to overflowing manure storage facilities.

Another important budget issue needing your attention is the proposed increase in hunting and fishing fees. The new revenue would be dedicated strictly to funding wardens, habitat restoration, fish and wildlife stocking and leasing lands for hunting. Without the fee increases, there will be continued vacancies in conservation warden positions, the elimination of fish and wildlife biologist positions, a 15% reduction in stocking of trout, musky, and walleye, and a reduction in trout habitat work. Letting your legislator know your views on nonpoint funding and hunting and fishing fee **immediately** can help make a difference.

Pigs with Wings

This summer, sights will be set on DNR’s update to rules for building on shorelands. The current rules, which are confusing and archaic, determine how close one can build to rivers and lakes and require

vegetation on the shoreline to prevent runoff. Citizens concerned about the building boom on Wisconsin lakes, especially up north, demanded an update to the rules. DNR has worked with a diverse advisory group and held well-attended listening sessions last fall but the proposal is sure to be the controversy of the summer as they hold public hearings. The proposed rules respond to growth and development never anticipated around our lakes and along our rivers, and reflect the growing body of knowledge about the impacts of shoreland development on the health of our rivers and lakes. Reasonable people will realize the proposed rules are reasonable and necessary — we’ll be asking you to lend your rational voice to offset the hysteria.

Stepping Out

As DNR’s funding and staffing levels have been cut over the years, their ability to monitor Wisconsin’s myriad rivers and streams to ensure the right water quality standards and restoration tools are applied to each has been significantly hampered. At the same time, river and watershed groups throughout the state have been enthusiastically collecting samples and getting intimately acquainted with their rivers. After much prodding on the part of the River Alliance and with local groups actively monitoring their rivers, DNR is beginning to embrace the idea of using citizen gathered data to fill in gaps in information to help accurately regulate and restore rivers and streams. We are actively working with DNR staff to plan a series of pilot projects intended to lead to the development of a statewide citizen monitoring program for rivers. The pilot projects will enlist local citizen monitoring groups and look at what changes in training, data collection and reporting need to be made to ensure the data is accurate and equivalent to that collected by DNR scientists. We’re very excited to be getting this project off the ground, and hope to be in the water this spring and summer.



River Champions 2004

Doing Good by Wisconsin's Waters

Michael Lavitschke
Membership and Outreach

The River Alliance is proud to present River Champion awards to those who have consistently worked in the best interests of Wisconsin's rivers over the last year.

Although everyone could not be selected to receive an award, we salute each and every one of our nominees for the great contributions they have made protection and restoring the rivers and streams of Wisconsin.

~~~~~

### Saxon Homestead Farm

Saxon Homestead Farm is a grass-based dairy farm on the shores of Lake Michigan operated by



Executive director Denny Caneff (l) presents the Klessigs of Saxon Homestead Farm with their award.

four families, whose youngest members represent the sixth generation of Klessigs on this farm. Saxon Homestead Farm is owned and operated by Margret and Ed Klessig; their sons Robert and wife Kathleen; Karl and wife Liz; and daughter Elise and husband Gerald Heimerl.

Not only have the Klessigs and Heimerls been innovators in environmentally friendly agriculture, they have been leaders in their community to minimize polluted runoff from all farms, engaging their non-farm neighbors in understanding dairy farming. They have also become the next UW Extension Discovery Farm. As such, they are part of a large water monitoring project that measures the amount and type of runoff from their farm — monitoring that should help determine to what extent farm runoff contributes to algae blooms in Lake Michigan. This

is an almost unprecedented self-monitoring program for a dairy farm that will be watched closely by neighbors and the Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and UW Extension.

### Friends of the Jump River

A collective effort by Wisconsin's river community, the Northwoods Hundred Healthiest Rivers Petition made a splash when it arrived at the Department of Natural Resources in the summer of 2004. A year in preparation, the petition represents 44 organizations' desire to name 100 new Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters in northern Wisconsin.

The petition rose directly from efforts by the Friends of the Jump River (FOJR) to protect their river. At issue was the sewage treatment and disposal method being sought in the watershed. FOJR argued that the Jump River was a high quality stream that deserved greater protection than the low classification it got from the Dept. of Natural Resources that allowed a new sewage plant to put effluent into the Jump. Though FOJR didn't prevail against the plant, FOJR continues to engage the community in protecting and appreciating the river.

With the "Healthy One Hundred" petition, FOJR members hope that their "home river," the Jump, and



River Alliance board member Melissa Scanlan (l) presents Friends of the Jump River with their award.

other rivers in northern Wisconsin, will be better protected.

FOJR's stated mission is to "preserve the wild and natural character of the Jump River corridor.

Our goal is to form an alliance with land owners, the community and government agencies to advocate for the health of the watershed through education, monitoring, and the development of resource management techniques aimed at protecting the river for future generations."

### Mary Ellen Vollbrecht

Mary Ellen Vollbrecht is the Chief of Rivers & Habitat Protection Section in the Department of Natural Resources' Bureau of Fisheries & Habitat. Her section is responsible for policy, training and budget for many of Wisconsin's public waters laws, including Chapter 30, wetland water quality stan-



DNR Water Division Administrator Todd Ambs (l) presents Mel Vollbrecht with her award.

dards, hydropower, and new river management initiatives.

We celebrate her heroic work in developing the emergency and permanent rules for Act 118, the so-called "Job Creation Act," a contentious and controversial revision of rules governing water use and land use around water. Her Herculean task was to manage a negotiation process involving parties with very divergent views about what the rules should do. She oversaw revision of both emergency and permanent rules — a tough, detail-driven job that sought to strike a balance between less regulation and bureaucratic maneuvering for landowners, while working diligently to protect the public trust and public waters.

*Champs continues on page 6...*

## Local Group Assistance Program

# Rallies, Cleanups and New Staff

Diana Toledo  
Local Group Assistance Program Manager

With the arrival of springtime, river and watershed organizations around the state are gearing up for the busy spring/summer season. The waders come out for the new monitoring season, volunteers are drafted for river cleanups, waterfront festivals are scheduled and plans are finalized for hands-on shorebank and stream restoration projects. And all the meanwhile, members of local organizations continue the quiet, behind-the-scenes work of protecting their local streams by reaching out to farmers, working with developers and appealing to local officials to do their part.

Local Group Assistance Program staff have been busy this winter, working with a number of organizations like Friends of the Black River, Friends of the Branch River and Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers to plan their program and fundraising activities for the upcoming year.

### Meet our New Staff!

We are very excited to announce that, starting mid-April, river and watershed groups will enjoy the support of Jay Krienitz, our new Assistant Program Manager. Originally from the Twin Cities, Jay comes to us more recently from Arizona, where he was a Prescott College Graduate Fellow while serving as Regional Coordinator for the Arizona Wilderness Coalition. In that capacity, Jay promoted wilderness advocacy and stewardship and wild and scenic rivers protection for the Western Deserts region of Arizona. Jay brings to the River Alliance valuable experience and a keen understanding of grassroots organizations working for environmental protection.

Jay will work alongside Diana Toledo assisting watershed groups through organizational development and technical trainings, one-on-one consultation services and other forms of assistance.



Jay Krienitz joins our Local Group Assistance Program.



Past River Rallies have included cook-offs, spaghetti feeds and barbecues that give attendees a chance to meet and network.

We also welcome Rachel Seltzer, our new Program Assistant. Rachel will assist Program Staff with a number of projects this spring, including launching our new searchable, online directory of local watershed groups. Look for it in our web page later this spring!

### River Alliance Selects "Top Tier" Organizations

Since the Local Group Assistance Program formed in 2000, we have assisted over 60 organizations through specialized workshops and intensive one-on-one consultation. In response to a growing demand for these services, we have developed the *Top Tier Watershed Organizations Program*. Through this Program, every 1-2 years we will select a small number of groups to receive most intense support from our staff on topics determined by each group. This may include assistance developing Annual or Strategic Plans, fundraising or membership support, help planning or implementing advocacy or educational campaigns, etc.

Following a careful review, we have selected the 2005-2006 "Top Tier Organizations" from a pool of groups invited to apply. They include: Friends of Starkweather Creek (Dane Co.), Rusk County Waters Alliance, Bad River Watershed Association (Ashland Co.), and Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers. Over the next 12-18 months, the River Alliance will

work with these excellent organizations to further strengthen their watershed protection efforts.

### Sending Local Activists to National Conference

Thanks to the financial support of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the River Alliance of Wisconsin granted eight scholarships to send Wisconsin watershed activists to River Rally 2005, a national conference for members of grassroots watershed groups and a unique training and networking opportunity for river conservationists around the country. This year's River Rally will be held in May in Keystone Resort, Colorado.

Scholarship recipients include: Dan Asmus (Southeast Wisconsin Chapter of Trout Unlimited); Stacy Bogan (Bad River Watershed Association); Barbara Borns (Black Earth Creek Watershed Association), Lynn Broaddus (Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers); Frank Fetter (Upper Sugar River Watershed Association); Mike Wade (South Fork Flambeau River Watershed Association); Allison Werner (Root-Pike WIN); and Michelle Wheeler (Bad River Watershed Association).

**Lisa Goodman leaves the River Alliance after three years of dedicated commitment to the rivers of Wisconsin and the citizens who protect them.**



**We wish her well in her future endeavors.**

## Healing a River

*Continues from cover...*

science. The Perrier victory was our very own modern-day David and Goliath story.

Today, the community is coming together in different ways to improve the river. Farmers in the watershed are working cooperatively with the county to tap into cost-share programs that allow them to revegetate buffers and upgrade practices to limit runoff into the creek. Farther downstream, the Big Spring Dam is slated to be removed and a group of stakeholders including landowners, local government and the River Alliance of Wisconsin plan a restoration that goes beyond dam removal to include culvert replacement, channel restoration and enhanced recreational and educational opportunities.

Mark Knudsen knows Big Spring Creek as a riparian resident, fisherman and co-owner and operator of Big Spring Dam. As a teenager, he would make the drive from Portage just to fish its waters for trout. Later, he moved into the neighborhood. The idea of taking out a dam and letting the river flow free was the farthest thing from Mark Knudsen's mind when he bought his property on Big Spring Creek in 1996. The old hydropower dam, on the river for over a century, had generated power for years before succumbing to deterioration. Heavy rainfall in 1998 caused the dam to become clogged with debris and water overtopped the structure and roadway above it. After that incident, the gates were removed and the seven-acre pond was drained down for safety reasons.



Mark Knudsen (l) and Dams Program manager Helen Sarakinos at Big Spring Creek.

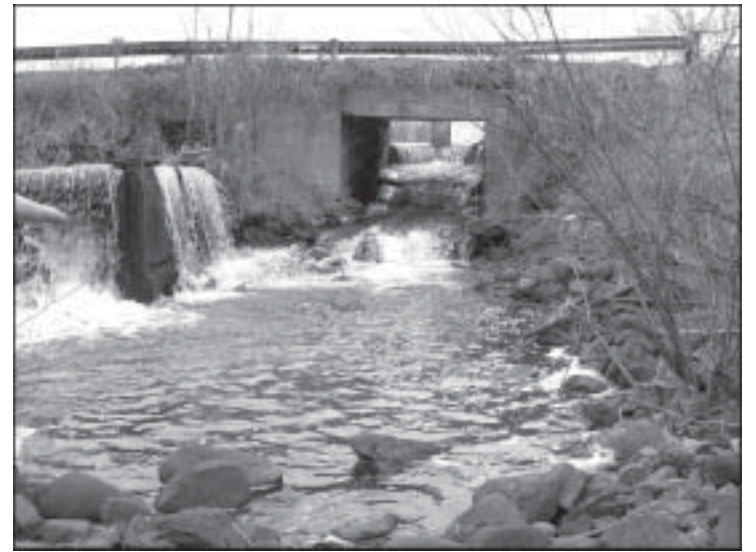
### The Calculus of Dams

As with almost any dam owner or operator, Mark's first choice as landowner was to repair the dam so it could once again generate power. But time and the relentless pressure of the river has taken its toll on the 11-foot dam and changes in ownership had mired Mark in legal wrangling about who owned the dam and whose responsibility it was to maintain it. Anxious to find resolution to the regulatory quagmire, Mark sat down last year with the local county conservationist and the River Alliance of Wisconsin to explore the economic, ecological and technical issues facing his dam as well as his options – including the potential installation of hydropower technology that did not require damming a river. It quickly became clear that the most financially and environmentally sound choice was to remove the dam and work on improving the water quality and fisheries of the stream.

There was also a strong commitment to bringing the community into the decision-making process. This past February, en route to Florida to catch the Daytona 500, Mark sealed the deal and signed the permit to abandon Big Spring Dam. And thus the first step was taken to restore Big Spring Creek to a free-flowing river - possibly for the first time since Abraham Lincoln was President.

As more and more dams are removed around the state, the question often emerges about what motivates someone like Mark Knudsen to give up his dream of generating hydropower and opt to restore Big Spring to free-flowing condition. His answer highlights the complexity behind these kinds of decisions: "The system's been downgraded and it's time to do something. I'm hoping river restoration will be productive for the community, for the environment, for aesthetics and for fishing." And Mark knows of what he speaks – he has been fishing this river for almost 30 years and remembers the "good old days" when trout were larger and more plentiful.

Truth be told, many residents, Mark included, miss the pond that has been a feature of that landscape for over 100 years. But through talking with organizations like the River Alliance of Wisconsin, Mark recognized the costs and the benefits of both repairing and removing the dam and ultimately, the balance sheet tipped in favor of removal. "The river just hasn't been usable, so that's what I'm hoping [dam removal] will change. I'm hoping to make it accessible again for the community."



Big Spring Creek looking upstream at a water control structure.

### It Takes a Village to Restore a River

When Knudsen and Chris Murphy, Adams County conservationist, brought the issue of the future of the dam and pond to a public meeting in the winter of 2003, reactions were mixed, but one thing was clear: the river, as it is right now, was an eyesore. Riparian landowners all agreed that if the pond was not going to be reinstated, they want to see the river restored to the high quality trout stream it once was. Knudsen has also invited a group of residents to help him vision what a restored river should look like and how the public wants to use the space. This Advisory Group will act as the eyes and ears of the community and offer recommendations to Mark about what people would like to see in the former impoundment in the near and more distant future such as nature trails, fishing access and even a nature center focused on the ecology of the river.

Due in large part to the assistance of the River Alliance, over \$120,000 has been applied for or secured for both the physical restoration and the public participation process. The various funding sources include hydropower settlement funds, state dam abandonment grants and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (still pending). The restoration of the stream will happen in several phases with guidance from Inter-Fluve, a river restoration consulting firm, and will involve many partners including Knudsen, Adams County, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources,

*Continues next page...*

Town of New Haven and Mason Lake District. Chris Murphy has been a tireless facilitator in the process, bringing parties together and knocking on residents' doors to get their input on the planned restoration. To date, some initial technical meetings have been held and the first Citizen Advisory Team meeting is scheduled for April.

### The Ripple Effect of Positive Actions

The restoration of Big Spring Creek has an impact that extends beyond the immediate watershed. A recent River Alliance analysis of dams on rivers that drain into Lake Michigan revealed that of the 630 permitted dams, one-third are located in the headwaters of river systems. The degradation of headwaters by dams is one of the biggest dam-related issues facing Wisconsin and the Midwest. Damming up the "birthplace" of a stream not only destroys sensitive and critical feeding and nursing habitat for fish and other species, but the degraded water is then sent downstream, impacting the river far beyond where the dam is physically located. The

Upper Fox River Basin (which contains Big Spring Creek) is a high priority for restoration because this spring-rich region is impacted by a high density of dams which can clobber the species associated with these types of streams, especially native trout. Removing these dams not only increases the available habitat above the dam, but also cools off and oxygenates the water headed downstream, further increasing the benefit to the river.

In a sense, the Big Spring dam removal is just the start of the restoration, a catalyst for change and healing of the river, and of the river community, bruised by the bitter battle over the bottling plant. Chris Murphy stated it simply, "This advisory committee will bring together people who haven't spoken to each other since the Perrier controversy." To call this a simple dam removal only scratches the surface of what's happening in the little hamlet of New Haven. Meeting by meeting, step by step, a river community is being rebuilt and a river is being reborn.



Big Spring Dam - turn of the century. Photo of old grist mill courtesy of Mark Knudsen.

### Champs continues from page 4...

Mary Ellen has been with DNR in a variety of field and central office positions for 18 years. Before joining DNR she was a staffer for the National Audubon Society's Science Division and a natural resources policy consultant to nonprofit organizations including the American Bar Association, the Coast Alliance, and the Association of State Floodplain Managers.

Mary Ellen has a Bachelor's Degree in Botany and a Master's in Water Resources Management from the University of Wisconsin – Madison.

### Brigitte Gabathuler Volunteer of the Year

If over the past year you have noticed our crisp new logo, our new, professional-quality organizational materials, or our River Alliance display, you have been enjoying the creative work of Brigitte Gabathuler, the River Alliance Volunteer of the Year.

Hailing from German-speaking Zurich, Switzerland, Brigitte had only one request when she walked into our office to offer her services, "Just don't make me speak on the phone – not in English." Brigitte had recently arrived in Madison and was looking for a way to practice her newly learned English... and are we glad she found us! It didn't take long for our staff to zero in on her keen eye for graphic design and her patience in listening to all of our ideas and translating them to marketing materials that get your attention.

Brigitte has volunteered hundreds of hours over the past two years, creating marketing materials, putting together presentations, and lending a hand whenever needed. And in the process, she's become a very dear friend to the River Alliance and to our staff. We have missed her greatly since she moved back to Switzerland this past fall, and look forward to her visit this spring.

For her dedication, commitment, and wonderful friendship to the River Alliance, we wish to recognize Brigitte Gabathuler as the River Alliance Volunteer of the Year.



## Acting Locally

# A Diamond in the Rough

## Friends of Allen Creek Watershed

Kim Karow

Allen Creek, the only exceptional surface water resource in Jefferson County, is located just south of Fort Atkinson. It runs through a complex of wetlands and springs, providing habitat to a vast array plants, animals, insects and fish that are facing growing challenges in shrinking and degraded wetland habitats. Most of this area is rural residential and agricultural, but it also runs through an industrial park and under State Highway 26 before emptying into the Rock River.

Allen Creek provides spawning habitat for Northern Pike and is home to the Blanding's Turtle and the Least Darter, a species of special concern. Although the headwaters begin in Rock County, the majority of the eight-mile stretch of this winding little jewel is in Jefferson County.

Working to protect this exceptional little creek is one of Wisconsin's newest watershed groups – the recently formed Friends of Allen Creek Watershed (FACW). The group began to take shape in December 2004 with the goal of understanding and improving the Allen Creek Watershed by gathering information, educating its membership, taking action and optimizing the potential of the creek. It is a large undertaking but these citizens understand that their unique water and soil resources need monitoring and protection. In turn, the increasingly rare wetland ecosystems in the area – a sedge meadow, fens and bogs – and the creatures that call them home will also benefit.

### Blandings' the Beginning

Dale Karow is just the type of determined individual to get such a group started. A quiet guy, Dale's passion for Allen creek has moved him into uncharacteristic activism. Dale is a furniture maker by trade, working in the shop he named after the creek overlooking an oak grove and wetlands. While he admits he is more at home working wood than organizing a group, it's perhaps that sense of place that has pushed him out of his comfort zone.

When asked how it all started, Dale will tell you about a little Blandings turtle. "My son, Evan, found a Blandings turtle. We found it was listed on the DNR website as a state threatened species so I contacted

Darcy Kind in the DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources." After an initial on-site investigation of a 20-acre wetland parcel and the stretch of Allen Creek running through the Karow property, Darcy determined this was an intact remnant prairie.

"DNR experts would come and get so excited about what they were finding. Watching their excitement made us feel excited!" Dale says. "They referred to it as 'a Diamond in the rough,' and that all it needed was a little polish." With Darcy Kind's help and encouragement, Dale and Kim Karow applied for and received a USDA Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program grant for a habitat restoration project that has just begun. "I can't wait to see what it will become," Dale says.

The Karow's began wondering, "If this remnant prairie is on our property, it is possible that more of it exists in this wetland corridor?" Wonder became worry as the threat of the proposed Highway 12 bypass coming through these wetlands became more real and imminent. Although the creek is the common thread in this corridor, nobody was talking about it at the DOT informational meetings.

"I called every landowner on the creek and told them about the idea of forming a group. Nobody hung up on me and many were interested about what a group might do. The Koshkonong Town Board voted to give us free use of the town hall and that's where we met," Dale explained. Suzanne Wade, UW-Extension Basin Educator, facilitated the first meetings, where neighbors and concerned citizens voiced a variety of reasons for wanting to improve this creek, bound by a common goal of preserving something they all value.

Andy Selle, a Fort Atkinson resident who doesn't own land on Allen Creek, is FACW's President. A river restoration professional, Andy brings a unique interdisciplinary background in fisheries biology, fluvial geomorphology, and hydraulic engineering.

"Rivers and streams are the rainforests of the Midwest, harboring incredible diversity of habitats and species. Groups like FACW are organizing around the country and having a tremendous impact toward protecting and improving areas that have



*The Amachers and Paysons beside Allen Creek about 1/4 mile upstream from where it empties into the Rock River. From left: Charles (FACW secretary) and Evelyn Payson, Rena and Dale (FACW Board member) Amacher.*

gone unnoticed for years. It is particularly exciting to work with folks in my own backyard, the passion of the group coupled with my experience creates an exciting and successful dynamic."

FACW's first job will be to gather scientific as well as current and historical land use data to help them select future projects. FACW's Treasurer Doug Bleeker and Secretary Charles Payson were already monitoring the creek before the group's formation through the Rock River Coalition. Dale Amacher, also a member of the group and a history buff, has been busy gathering historical information about the creek.

In the meantime, they are busy with hosting educational speakers, grantwriting and building FACW's membership. "There is always room for another friend in this 'Friends' group!" says Dale Karow. To get involved, please contact him at [dkarow@gdinet.com](mailto:dkarow@gdinet.com) or (920) 563-8438.

## Dams Program

# Expanding our Dam Prioritization Reach

## Over 350 Dams Included in Lake Superior and Lower Chippewa River Basins

Helen Sarakinos  
Dams Program Manager

As the first tender buds of spring burst forth, and I watch the last of the ice melt away from the lake behind my house, I'm eager to dive into a productive and exciting season for river restoration in Wisconsin.

This March, thanks to assistance from the C.S. Mott Foundation and Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, our dam prioritization work expanded to the Lake Superior Basin and its almost 80 dams. Furthermore, we've jumped the 'continental divide' and added our first major Mississippi watershed to the analysis – the Lower Chippewa River Basin and its 300-plus permitted dams – with the financial support of the McKnight Foundation. By the fall of 2005, we should have a GIS-based comprehensive assessment of the relative ecological impact of the dams in both of these watersheds.

We simultaneously launched dam owner awareness campaigns in both watersheds to educate owners on their responsibilities and inform them about the option of dam removal. The outreach effort has received tremendous support from DNR, UW Extension, county conservationists and elected leaders from both sides of the bench. And the responses have already started rolling in from interested landowners. Stay tuned for updates!

In the meantime, we are starting to see the fruits of our labors in the Lake Michigan Basin. The first phase of work is underway for the restoration and dam removal on Big Spring Creek in Adams County – one of many in the portfolio of potential removals identified from the Lake Michigan Basin Prioritization Project. The River Alliance is proud to be part of this restoration effort and we've helped raise almost \$60,000 to date towards the removal of Big Spring Dam. This newsletter's cover is dedicated to this story, so be sure to read up on the wonderful community-based restoration project taking place there.

### Out in Left Delafield?

The City of Delafield has been seeing its own homegrown controversy over the fate of the Nemahbin Roller Mill Dam on the Bark River. The

dam's owner, 83-year-old Margaret Zerwekh, filed a permit to abandon the structure last fall. The City Council, prompted by concern from a half-dozen homeowners who live on the impoundment, decided in a closed session to use eminent domain to seize the property from the Margaret, an amateur historian and milldam aficionado, and take ownership of the



*Good process is needed when discussing the fate of dams like the deteriorating Nemahbin Roller Mill Dam on the Bark River.*

deteriorating structure. Not only was this an overly aggressive and legally questionable route to resolving a local conflict, but also fiscally irresponsible, since the City didn't even obtain estimates for the costs of repair, operation and insurance of the dam nor did they invite any other public comment prior to passing this motion.

The River Alliance has been assisting the owner and was invited to speak to the Upper Nemahbin Lake District about the benefits of removing the dam, which is situated just upstream of the lake. Recognizing that this river issue is complex and that there are no easy answers to whether the dam should stay or go, the River Alliance firmly believes that decisions involving natural resources should be carried out honestly and with full access to information. Full access to the costs and benefits of all the options will result in actions that

best balance the needs of people with the health of our streams and rivers. Involving the public in these decisions and collecting and presenting all the relevant information is a critical part of informed decision-making. The recent news that the City backed down from its original plan in order to discuss options with the owner and obtain cost estimates was a good sign.

### Be Free, Genesee!

As reported in the previous issue of Wisconsin Rivers, the Genesee Roller Mill Dam was officially removed in late February, 2005 from Genesee Creek, Waukesha County. The removal of the 160-year old dam will restore the connectivity of the system and water quality and temperatures required for the return of trout to this cold water stream. Carroll College, Trout Unlimited and the Wisconsin Wetland Association worked with the DNR to remove the



1847 dam and raise the estimated \$50,000 needed for restoration. Because of the extraordinary amount of sediment behind the dam, the river channel was diverted around the impoundment and separated from it by an earthen berm, avoiding the need to remove the five or six feet of sediment contained in the 5-acre impoundment.

## Member Profile

# 254 and Counting

## Rick Kark Sets His Sights for Paddling 300 Wisconsin Streams

Denny Caneff  
Executive Director

You can imagine Rick Kark quietly examining a river like he might diagnose a patient. This soft-spoken medical doctor is also an accomplished canoeist who has paddled over 250 different streams in Wisconsin, a feat we're not aware of anyone else achieving.

"I'm a river paddler, not a lake paddler, because I've had an ongoing fascination for what's around the next bend," he says.

Now that he's semi-retired from his position as a university health services doctor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Rick will have more time to spend in his solo canoe exploring Wisconsin streams. But the list of navigable streams he can launch his boat into is getting ever shorter.

"I suspect there are 300 streams that I can paddle in," Rick surmises.

The notion that he might be able to paddle every navigable stream in the state occurred to him in the early 1990s, when he realized he'd paddled in 100 streams. He then set goals to paddle 200 rivers and paddle in every Wisconsin county – goals he hit in 1997.

The 200<sup>th</sup> river was the Mukwanago River in Walworth County, which was my 72<sup>nd</sup> county," he recalls.

Rick's love of rivers began with his childhood in a state known more for corn and soybeans than water. His home river was the Cedar River, near Osage, Iowa, where he paddled and fished. His first major paddling excursion was a Boundary Waters Canoe Area expedition. That lake-speckled wilderness was beautiful, he recalls, but there a mystique about paddling rivers – that "next bend" phenomenon — that even wilderness lake paddling couldn't match.

### Braking for Bridges

If you ever see a bumper sticker that says, "I brake for bridges," it was designed to describe someone like Rick Kark. He can't cross over a river, he says, without slowing down and "always looking at its potential for exploration. I assess their quality and beauty as well as their navigability. I've done a fair number of impulse paddles, where I just

stop the car, unload the boat and start paddling, even if it's late in the day."

A memorable example of an "impulse paddle" was a few years ago on Bean Brook, a small stream that flows into the Namekagon, near Hayward.

"It was late afternoon, a gorgeous day, and I couldn't resist. It's a crystal clear stream with beautiful flora, ducks were exploding off the water. It was a late-day gift."

Just as fascinating as Rick's 250-some rivers paddled are the many creative ways he has conveyed himself back upstream to his put-in spot.

"I've shuttled every way imaginable – hitchhiking, bicycling, running. I have a 49cc motorcycle I use to get back sometimes. My most interesting shuttle was on the Red Cedar river in winter. I took my cross country skis to the take-out spot in Downsville, and put my canoe in at Menominee. I paddled down to Downsville, then skied back to my car on the bike trail that parallels the river."

### Geology Student and Teacher

When Rick showed his slide show to River Alliance staff a few months back, we were impressed with his rock-solid knowledge of Wisconsin's geology. He says if you paddle, you will learn about rocks, and not merely by running into them in the stream.

"Just driving all over the state, I got to wondering why things were, and it drove my curiosity" to learn what geological forces shaped the state. "And there's all that exposed bedrock, like at the Wisconsin Dells, and the boulders you find in various streams. How did they get there? What moved them? Why is there quiet water in this place, but white water there? Paddling, and driving to paddling, inspired those questions," he says.

Rick has paddled the large majority of those 250 rivers (and counting) alone, in his solo canoe. Exploring rivers alone "is especially thrilling – it's that curiosity about the next bend, but it's also nice



Rivers like the Totogatic in Washburn and Burnett counties call Kark to paddle. Photo: Sheri Snowbank, WIDNR

because your attention is not diverted. I like the quiet reflective time of being alone. I do enjoy social times paddling, and I never do whitewater alone, for safety reasons. But being alone you observe more; there's more time to be immersed in beautiful places."

Rick has offered to bring his story to river enthusiasts around the state under the auspices of the River Alliance. His story is compelling and his knowledge of Wisconsin's watery and rocky surfaces is impressive. Though a reserved and diffident man who likes spending time alone, Rick's ready to share his story.

"I'm not a man of tremendous words, but rivers make me eloquent," he says.

If you would like Rick to tell his story to your watershed organization, neighborhood association, or biology class, contact the River Alliance.

### 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.*

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

**Thank You!**

We are truly indebted to our individual, business and organizational members. The names listed here are representative of donations received 1/1/05 thru 3/31/05. We regret we cannot list everyone.

**\$3,000+**

Rutabaga Paddlesports

**\$1,000+**

Scott Froehlke  
Terry Hiltz  
Organic Valley

**\$500 - \$999**

Econoprint  
Johnson Outdoors, Inc  
Patrick Engineering

**\$250 - \$499**

Todd Ambs  
Michael Cockrem  
DeWitt Ross and Stevens S.C.  
Entercom Radio  
Froehlke Governmental Relations  
George Kraft and Susan Wurzer  
Walter and Stacey Meanwell  
Tom Miller  
Sarah Remley  
Sequin Properties  
Trout Unlimited - Marinette County  
Waukesha Physical Therapy Clinics  
Willow Publications  
Willy Street Co-op  
Worth Company Inc.  
Zeppos and Associates, Inc.

**\$100 - \$249**

Tony Andersen  
Helen Baldwin  
Ann Bardeen-Henschel, M.D.  
Jake and Kris Barnes  
Scott Barnwell and Diana Toledo  
Michael B Bean  
Bill Berry  
Denny Caneff  
Virginia and James Coburn  
Fox - Wolf Watershed Alliance  
Friends of the Black River, Inc.  
Bob and Nancy Froehlke  
Jane Froehlke  
Kenneth and Mary Gaines

Gathering Waters Conservancy  
Brad and Barbara Glass  
Gordon and GERALYN Grieshaber  
Heartland Credit Union  
Lee and Tamara Hughes  
Margaret Humleker  
John and Judith Hutchinson  
David Johnson  
Ed Judge  
Elizabeth and Dave Kluesner  
Barb Kneer and Alice Holbrow  
Richard Knitter  
Edie Kraus  
James T Krohelski  
Annette Larson and Janet Ady  
Lauderdale Lakes Improvement Association  
Don Lintner and Becky Jorgensen  
Fred and Tracy Madison  
Patricia McConnell and Montgomery Elmer  
Helene Nelson and Jim Arts  
Erik and Annrenee Nielsen  
Gary Oltmans and Lori Moss  
William O'Neill  
Lew and Vicki Posekany  
Rebecca Power  
Janis Reek  
John Robinson  
Rock River Coalition  
Ron Rosner  
Richard and Carol Siegel  
South Fork Flambeau River  
Watershed Association  
Trout Unlimited - Oakbrook Chapter  
Trout Unlimited - Shaw - Paca  
Upper Sugar River Watershed Assoc  
Margaret H. Van Alstyne  
Michael Vann  
Wisconsin Council Federation of Fly Fishers  
David Worth

**\$50 - \$99**

Joan M. Amundson Dolgner  
Richard and Elizabeth Auchter  
Roger and Jane Bannerman  
Scott and Katherine Beduhn  
Peter and Linda Bertoncini

Jim and Sharon Bertrand  
Ed Biddick  
Walter and Patricia Bock  
Bruce A Bohlken  
Thomas V Booth, Jr.  
Bill Brashear  
Lynn Brinkman  
Judith A Bromberek  
Dr. Robert J Brooks  
Barbara J Butt  
Gerald Campbell  
Rick Chenoweth  
Robie Cherek  
Paul Christensen  
Jan and Guerdon Coombs  
Robert G. Coplan  
Deb and Al Nemeth  
Fred and Rosanna Deboe  
Patricia Diemer  
John C Dixon  
Deborah A Dryer  
Gary Edinger  
Eric Eggers  
Joyce and Jack Elbe  
Greg Ericson  
Hon. Kathleen Falk  
Virginia and Arthur Fish  
Bob Frater  
Roger P. Genske  
Cliff Gidlund  
James Granum  
Steve Greb  
Debra Haddad  
Kent and Suzanne Hall  
Patrick and Dianne Halligan  
James and Phyllis Hamann  
James Harris  
Kristi Hart  
Cliff and Jeanne Haskins  
Thomas J Healy  
Heartland Credit Union  
Robert Helminiak, MD  
Carole and Leo Henikoff  
Dolores M. Henken  
Joe and Anne Hennessy  
David Henning  
Laura Hewitt and Amy Sloane  
Mike and Lara Higgins  
Richard J Hoch  
Harold J. Hoops, Jr.  
Denise and Wendell Hottmann  
Ms. Marie R Houteff  
Barbara Irvin and Peter Thum

Izaak Walton League - WI Division  
Bruce Jamison  
Jean Jelacic  
Joan Christopherson Schmidt and  
Frederick Schmidt  
Robert M. Jostes  
John Kabot  
John Klem  
Joyce Clark Knutson  
Lawrie Kobza and Peter Oppeneer  
Chris Kowalski  
Michael J Kuzanza  
James Kurtz  
Margaret Larabell and R Watson  
Lisa and Anil Lartius  
Lt Gov Barbara Lawton  
Robert and Mary Lobermeier  
David and Mary Lonzarich  
Jim Lorman and Anne Forbes  
David Lundberg  
Lisa MacKinnon and Eric Rambo  
Jack Marlette  
Bob and Kathy Martini  
Cathy Mauer and Gordy Ruesch  
Marty and Donna Melchior  
Margie Moeller  
Mark Musial  
Harvey A Nathan  
Ray Nawrocki  
Catherine Neiswender  
Heidi Oliverson  
Janet B. Peksa  
Judith Perlman  
Bill and Kathy Pielsticker  
Thomas Prebble  
Anne Pryor and Steve Ackerman  
Rebecca Randall and Dana Vincent  
Elizabeth M. Rather  
Doug Robinson  
Michael and Cecilia Rohrer  
David Rosenberg  
Robert P Rusch  
Thomas and Elizabeth Ryan  
Kevin Savage  
Cheryl Schuh  
Byron and Margaret Shaw  
Mark and Kathleen Sherry  
Robin and Lew Silva  
Matt Singer  
William C Slight  
Jeffrey Smith and Kathy O'Connor  
Scott W Stieg  
Marilyn and Steve Stone  
Sarah Streed  
Ralph Suechting  
David and Kathy Sundstedt  
Gordy Sussman  
Mitchell L Taylor  
John and Gerianne Thielemann  
Tri County Power Boat Alliance  
Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs and John Tubbs  
Maria Van Cleve  
Gail and William Van Haren  
Steven and Laura Waldron  
Donald M Waller  
Scott and Susan Watson  
Wayne Weishaar  
Tom and Ellen Wermuth  
Michael D Wolff  
Paul and Norina Wood  
Barbara Woodriff  
Helen Ziegler

**Yes!**

**You, too, can support Wisconsin's rivers!**  
Please sign me up as a member of the River Alliance.

- \$100 ..... River Patron
- \$50 ..... Household
- \$35 ..... Basic membership
- \$\_\_ ..... Other
- \$100 ... Organizational membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I am paying by credit card! River or County of interest: \_\_\_\_\_

Visa MC \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Funds Provided By:**

American Rivers  
The Beldon Fund  
Environmental Support Center  
ESRI  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Hydropower Reform Coalition  
Joyce Foundation  
Lake Michigan Federation  
Lux Foundation  
George and Miriam Martin Foundation  
McKnight Foundation  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Patagonia  
River Network  
State of Wisconsin  
Steve J. Miller Foundation

# Wisconsin Rivers



Special guest speaker, author Victoria Houston, jokes with the crowd.

Images from our *Spring Confluence*, March 19th, 2005  
Overture Center for the Arts  
Photos: Jeff Soellner



Former Board member Terry Hiltz (l), George Kraft and Board member Fred Lauing (r).



Looking down from the Overture Lobby into the Rotunda Stage - a great venue.



Celebrating our rivers. Lower left: Board Chair Rebecca Power, Stephanie and Darren Bush.



Thanks to generous donations we raffled off nearly \$4,000 in prizes.



The Rotunda Stage looking up into the Overture Center Lobby.



Board Chair Rebecca Power welcoming Spring Confluence attendees.



Left: Margaret Shaw wins the bamboo fly rod.  
Right: Mel Vollbrecht speaks after receiving a River Champion Award.



Program assistant Julia McCarthy and auctioneer/Board member Lindsay Wood Davis



Thanks to these donors for making our raffle a success!

|                                   |                        |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jake Barnes and George Kraft      | Eagle Optics           | Nova Bamboo Fly Rods - Gene Novak |
| Bear Paw Outdoor Adventure Resort | Joe Bikeler's          | Patagonia                         |
| Bell Canoe Works                  | Johnson Outdoors       | Organic Valley                    |
| Bending Branches Paddles          | Tony Kubek             | REI Inc.                          |
| Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin   | Madison Mallards       | Rutabaga Paddlesport Shop         |
| Budget Bicycle Center             | Mudbrook Woods Paddles | Gordy Sussman                     |