



Kickapoo Visions

People of the Kickapoo Valley working together to promote good stewardship of the watershed

Planning a Future Is Everybody's Job

By Kathy Fairchild

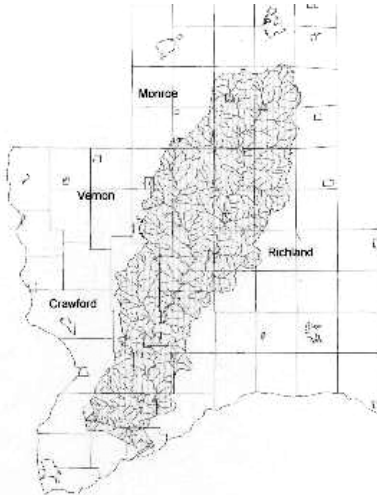
You live here; you are part of this landscape most probably through some combination of choice and circumstance. If you have traveled anywhere, you know there simply is no other Kickapoo Valley. If we value this special area and want to preserve the unique views, water quality, wildlife and indeed the rural quality of life for future generations to behold, we must take a stand on behalf of these things. Towns, cities and villages in the Kickapoo Valley are beginning work on comprehensive planning and consideration of land use regulations.

Planning responsibly for future growth is delegated to our local governments, a task that should really be everyone's job. Every citizen should have a say in this process of defining hopes and dreams for the community.

The lack of land use regulations here in the valley creates a situation of defenselessness. Combined with the very difficult times faced by farmers, historically the backbone of the local economy, we can expect the loss of productive farmland to any sort of developed use imaginable.

Think about how your rural home might change with a completely permitted use like a rendering plant next door. We have already seen residential development in the watershed that pays little mind to erosion sensitive slopes, lack of suitable soils for private septic systems, emergency services access

and other aspects of changing land use. This sort of change doesn't have to be inevitable. The economic, environmental and cultural needs of the valley call for developing alternatives that can allow farmers to somehow benefit economically from their lifelong stewardship of the land without having to sacrifice the best use of the land itself. This and other tough problems need to be addressed. Farmland preservation, natural resource conservation and stewardship must be looked at as elements of economic need, just as job creation and tax base creation are.



Evaluating the pros and cons of various approaches, making choices and providing a framework to guide the future of this most finite of resources, our land, is not easy work. However, it may well

be the most important work in these times, in this place.

Contracting the process completely to professional planners from outside the community will produce a plan—at a relatively high cost by local standards, and also one that may not at all reflect the true vision and desires of the community or group of communities. It is too easy to turn planning over to experts, make no personal investment of time and energy and then attack and refute the end result.

Many master plans and community development plans demonstrate such a departure from local reality that they are never adopted or implemented.

Community Development Aims and Goals

Economic

- Local employment opportunities that can provide a family-supporting income
- Adequate and affordable housing
- Sustainable future for family farming and other productive uses of the land
- Sufficient tax base to support public services and schools
- Viable alternatives to conversion of productive agricultural lands to developed uses
- A positive climate for business development

Environmental

- Preservation of open spaces, green spaces and vistas
- Biodiversity of species
- Water quality protection
- Valuing the unique, fragile character of all our natural resources through continued good stewardship
- Allowing a conservation ethic to be reflected in our land use decisions

Cultural

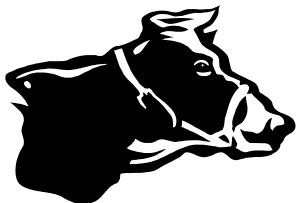
- Preservation of stable, rural community values
- Neighbor to neighbor communication, acceptance, trust and respect
- Ethical and fair treatment of individuals
- Creation of working groups across traditional community boundaries based upon common issues
- Support for rural families and businesses and the unique challenges they face

Rotational Grazing—A Win-Win Approach

By Howard Duckman

Have you heard of Managed Intensive Grazing ('MIG')? It is not new but it is increasingly used by dairy farmers and cattle ranchers. Managed grazing systems differ from conventional grazing systems by frequently moving livestock from pasture cells or divisions based on the quality of grass and livestock needs. This allows for the rest and recovery of plants and land. Improved fencing and watering systems have allowed many livestock producers to convert to a MIG system.

Reasons for switching to MIG are both economic and environmental. Economic reasons are lower startup, maintenance and feed costs, and live-



stock health is increased versus confined systems. Environmental reasons are a decrease in soil erosion over cropping, weed control of the pasture without herbicides, increased soil activity of microorganisms, increasing diversity of pasture plants, and improved wildlife habitat. In addition, time savings are realized by the producer when the hours of mechanical harvesting and the number of hay feedings are reduced and there is more time for family and friends.

The Kickapoo Valley has several grazing groups within its watershed. The following counties are included in

the Kickapoo Valley with the respective contacts.

Grazing Groups:

Ocooch Graziers (Vernon, La Crosse and Richland County)

Rick Williams, Misty Ridge Farm (608) 637-8836

Coulee Graziers (Monroe County) Mary Anderson, NRCS (715) 538-4396

County Contacts:

Monroe County, Rick Zirk, NRCS (715) 834-9672

Vernon County, Jim Radke, NRCS, (608) 637-2183

Richland County, Jean Stramel, NRCS, (608) 647-8874 ext. 110

Crawford County, Vance Haugen, UW-Extension agent (608) 326-0023

Water Quality Monitoring—Know Your River

Citizen monitors, working with sampling equipment provided by VSN and with the guidance of peers and trainers, are measuring water quality in several locations around the watershed. The periodic measuring involves some simple chemistry, learning how to identify some of the little critters (insects and larvae) that tell us so much about the condition of a stream or river, and looking around for the surrounding features that might influence water quality.

Most folks adopt the stream that's out their back door, so to speak. Some do the simple chemistry and information gathering from the Kickapoo itself. This gathering of basic information about the water that flows through our lands is a very useful tool in determining the health of our streams and river. The data is

also very interesting because it tells us about the influence of storm events, surrounding vegetation, topography, geology, natural cycles and man-made influences. The data is assembled and reviewed by the monitors for indications of watershed health.

This is a fun activity that can be done by families, high school students, retired people, school groups or anyone who cares enough to help us to maintain this on-going portrait of the Kickapoo. Monitoring will teach you some things about biology, chemistry, plant identification and Mother Nature in action. It will also provide a direct interaction with your environment that will teach you a lot about your ecological address—the Kickapoo Watershed.

There will be two training sessions, May 11 in Fennimore and May 18 at the U.W. Richland Center campus. For more

information contact Paul Krahn.

Please consider joining this group of valuable volunteers. For more information contact Margaret Thielke, VSN member, 637-6742; or Paul Krahn, Conservation Technician, 637-5478.



Other Ways You Can Help...

Do you like to talk with neighbors, plan events or help with general office activities? Do you enjoy working with technology, finance or grant writing? Are you curious to learn more about water monitoring, land use planning or publication design? Do you have a helping spirit and strive to make a difference? Opportunities abound for YOU! Call us. 637-3615.

Current VSN Projects: Collaborations, Web site, Community

- Inventory and info gathering of active civic groups with an interest in conservation and natural resources
- Participation and presence at township planning meetings; resource sharing
- Informational presentations to local groups such as Boscobel Women's Club and Viroqua Economic Restructuring Committee
- Building an Advisory Board with varied professional expertise
- Interagency meetings twice a year
- Exploring projects and funding sources to expand water quality monitoring, invasive plant awareness, natural resource inventories, organizational collaborations
- Pursuing funding sources for mapping intern
- Web site design, installation and maintenance
- Annual Celebration of the Kickapoo April 20

Valley Stewardship Board of Directors

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Member: Kathy Neidert, Soldiers Grove, WI 54655
624-3281 kninwi@yahoo.com



VSN Hires Coordinator, Moves Office

Denise Buckbee of Viroqua is VSN's new project coordinator. As project coordinator, she networks with area conservation groups, staffs the VSN office, and serves the organization's board and membership. Besides hiring Denise, VSN also moved to new office space in the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Building at 220 Airport Rd. in Viroqua. We're very glad to have Denise working with us and thankful to the Conservation Department for providing office space and other assistance.

If you want to know about private and public stewardship activities within the 4-county Kickapoo area, call Denise at 637-3615.

Voices of the Valley—A Call to Poetry

VSN recently sponsored a poetry contest and invited individuals with a heartfelt connection to the Kickapoo Valley to put their feelings into words. Information about the poetry contest was published in area newspapers and sent to schools and senior citizen groups. Deadline for poems about the land,



history, peoples, or activities of the Kickapoo Valley was March 1.

A panel of local writers and educators will select poems to be published and read at VSN's 3rd annual "Celebrate the Kickapoo" which will be held April 20. This event will be held at the West Fork Sports Club in Avalanche, at County Rd. Y and S.

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While public input at every step of the way may seem cumbersome and add costs, it is absolutely vital to the creation of successful ideas and visioning of the future.

I would like to see input from all segments of the watershed, adults & children, landowners and visitors, full time and part time residents, ag and non-ag businesses, traditional dairy and alternative farmers, anglers and sportsmen.

At one level input will reflect "me and my interests"; combined with as many voices as possible they become the "we" of planning for change. Contact your mayor, council president, town chairman or county board representative and ask what they are doing to move ahead on this task of planning for the future of your community. Ask them how you can help, tell them your

ideas for the future. Tell them about the things and specific areas of the valley that are special to you.

Alternatively, the Valley Stewardship Network is prepared to accept input from anyone in the watershed that we may then compile and direct to those elected officials charged with organizing comprehensive planning in the community. Send your comments to VSN, 220 Airport Road, Viroqua, WI 54665 or phone 637-3615. Our organization is dedicated to river protection and the issues of the entire watershed—parts of Crawford, Monroe, Vernon and even some of Richland County. We would like to serve as a data gathering resource and input network for all the communities of the valley and are making progress every week in this role.



Calendar of Events

Kickapoo Woods Coop: 3/9. Chainsaw safety workshop. Registration required. Call Paul Bader 625-2515.

Private Land Timber Harvesting: 3/19 WWTC 7-9 pm. Call Stana Bleiler 637-5485

Monthly VSN meeting: 3/20

N. Crawford Land Use Disc. Group: 3/25. 7:30 p.m. Community Building, Gays Mills.

Fish Crib Building Day: 4/6. Sponsored by the West Fork Sports Club. Call Roger Widner 634-2303.

UW Extension Training for Communities: Public Participation in Planning: 4/11 -12. Call Ben Dufford 637-5479

Kickapoo Woods Coop: 4/13. 1st Annual Membership Meeting.

Monthly VSN Meeting: 4/17

The Annual Celebrate the Kickapoo: 4/20. West Fork Sports Club, Avalanche in Vernon County.

Upper Mississippi River Festival "Celebrate the River": 5/14 -15. For 8th & 9th graders at Wyalusing State Park.

Monthly VSN Meeting: 5/15.

VSN Annual Membership Meeting: 6/19.

Monthly VSN Meeting: 7/17

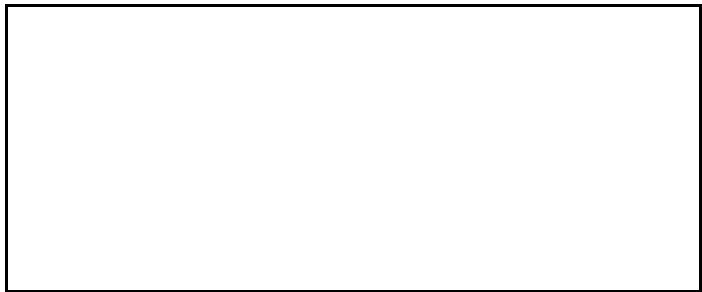
All are welcome to join us at our monthly meetings every 3rd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in the Readstown Village Hall, located in the center of town, on Highway 131.

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*People of the Kickapoo Valley
working together to promote good
stewardship of the watershed*

Please contact us with suggestions
of others to receive our literature or
any requests to be removed from
our mailing list.



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Join Valley Stewardship Network! Watershed citizenship for all who live, work & play in the Kickapoo Valley

Fill out this annual membership form and mail. Thank you!

Yes, Count Me In! I love the Kickapoo River area and support VSN's goals of promoting stewardship and sustainable living.

- VALLEY STEWARDS....\$15 - \$25 (sliding scale) *includes newsletter and other benefits of membership.*
- WATERSHED SUSTAINERS....\$60
- VISIONARIES....\$100
- I WISH TO MAKE AN ADDITIONAL DONATION \$ _____ *to support this important work.*

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Thank You

Make checks payable to Valley Stewardship Network (VSN), 220 Airport Rd. Viroqua, WI 54665