



# Kickapoo Visions

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

## Vernon County to Recycle Batteries and Cell Phones

Vernon County Solid Waste Manager Gail Frie, along with VSN and several area retailers, are collaborating to add rechargeable batteries and cell phones to the existing countywide recycling program. This free program, provided by Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC), is a community effort to eliminate these hazardous materials from the local waste stream.

Residents can bring any rechargeable battery or cell phone to their nearest participating retailer or to their existing township recycling location in Vernon County. Participating retailers in Viroqua are Nelson Agri-Center, Wal-Mart and Radio Shack; in Westby, Ace Hardware; in Cashton, Lind's Home Center. VSN is currently introducing the program to retailers in La Farge and Hillsboro.

This program provides an opportunity for people to show stewardship for their local environment by helping to remove small dry cell, portable, rechargeable batteries from the waste stream. Nickel Cadmium (Ni-Cd), Nickel Metal Hydride (Ni-MH), Lithium Ion (Li-ion), and Small Sealed Lead (Pb) are commonly found in cellular and cordless phones, laptop computers, cordless power tools, two-way radios, camcorders, and a variety of other portable electronic products. Batteries that are collected are processed at a recycling facility where useful materials are reclaimed to make stainless steel products and new rechargeable batteries.

Vernon County Solid Waste Department, VSN and participating retailers are committed to making a difference in the quality of our local environment. You too

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## Fish Kill at Jersey Valley Lake Victims of Circumstance?

By Kathy Fairchild

On March 9th what appears to be a complete fish kill at Jersey Valley Lake near Westby in Vernon County was declared. When asked about the results of investigations by DNR and County Conservation staff, Vernon Co. Conservationist Jeff Hastings said, "Operators are doing everything we've told them to do. We got burnt by a bad day -- 60° weather with snow and frozen ground." No one was cited by the DNR for the introduction of manure to surface waters.

The freak circumstances contributed to a cumulative runoff from the drainage basin that reduced the oxygen level of the lake to one part per million. Fish were seen gasping at the fishing holes cut in the approximately 18" of ice covering the lake. It was reported later in the week that water bugs were jumping out in a fatal attempt for oxygen. Dave Vetrano, Fisheries Specialist with the DNR said that it could be 10 years before bluegills and other sport species will again be found in the lake. The aftermath of rotting fish will slow the recovery of the lake as their decomposition continues to rob the water of oxygen. Concerned citizens are now discussing possible methods to remove them and plow them in somewhere as fertilizer. There is also some concern about the possibility of groundwater contamination affecting nearby wells. The DNR has decided to draw the lake down to the creek bed.

Sadly, Wisconsin fish kills have not been uncommon in recent months. It begs the question, "How can this be prevented in the future?" Current state regulations prohibit spreading or stacking of manure on slopes over 8-9% (up to 12% with contour strips below) or within 300 feet of a waterway. Fields may have had a heavier than normal application in some locations, according

to Hastings, but the placement guidelines were being met.

Folks attending an informational meeting March 22 called by the West Fork Sports Club said that rented fields often have manure spread by contracted haulers from outside the watershed. An average dairy cow produces 115 lbs. of manure a day. Manure storage is part of farm planning and nutrient management for larger operations. The loss of active farms in the area results in tillable ground managed by rental operators. Cash crop renters are not required to take a long-term view of good stewardship. Yet the non-farming public counts on those who work hard producing crops and livestock to be good stewards of land and water resources that are so important to us all.

Given the steep terrain here, it seems clear that Kickapoo Watershed water quality is going to require something more than the current state manure handling requirements. This is, however, a complex issue. Producers need to get manure to the fields while the winter ground and roads are firm enough to bear the weight of equipment. Typically, a repeated freeze and thaw of early spring allows for slow absorption and everything is fine. Some folks think that additional storage that could contain manure until frost has settled out might be the answer. Manure pits are expensive, \$40-60,000 each. The cost share funding ad-

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## Hooray it's May – Time to Pull Garlic Mustard!



By Liz Quebe

Last May we visited good friends in Michigan. They own several acres of woodlands, and we had always enjoyed hiking through them in spring. Much like our Wisconsin woods, they were full of Dutchman's breeches, trillium, jack-in-the-pulpit, and all the ephemerals that make May such a magical time. But last year was anything but magic. Our friends' woodlands had been taken over by garlic mustard; it was all you could see. A few patches of trillium, which once extended for yards, were trying valiantly to hang on in the shadow of the larger plants. You can bet that they aren't there at all this year. Our friends saw the first garlic mustard plant there only four years ago and didn't know what it was. Today they know what it is, because they lost their woods to it and struggle just to keep it out of their gardens.



Garlic mustard invading the forest floor.

We drove back to Wisconsin through Ohio and Illinois, up the Mississippi back to the Kickapoo Valley. Garlic mustard was everywhere. You couldn't drive by a stand of woods without seeing it in profusion. It was thriving all along the banks and railroad beds of the Mississippi. It has entered southern Wisconsin and is rapidly moving north, destroying our native wildflowers as it goes. Garlic mustard—not bears nor boars—is by far the scariest thing in our forests right now.

Garlic mustard—*Alleraria petiolata*—is a cool-season biennial herb that ranges from two to 40 inches in height when an adult flowering plant. It has scalloped leaves that emit a distinct garlic-like odor when crushed. Second-year

plants have numerous white flowers with four separate petals. Garlic mustard can be easily recognized in late April and early May because it is the only plant of its height in forests that produces white flowers.

The easiest and best way to control small or new areas of garlic mustard is by hand-pulling. As the plant will produce buds and send up more stalks if the top is broken off, it is very important to pull out the entire root. If the flowers have not opened, the uprooted plants can be left to dry out on the forest floor; if the flowers have opened, the plants must be removed from the woods and put in a monitored location where any spread can be controlled. Pulled plants can be dried or burned or buried. Even uprooted plants can produce seeds. Garlic mustard seeds can remain viable in the soil for seven to 10 years, so control efforts must be repeated for several years. And be extra careful not to track any seeds to an uninfested location!

The only good thing about garlic mustard is that it can be eaten—it was, after all, introduced by early settlers for use in medicines and cooking. Leaves can be used in place of spinach for soups and pasta salads, and it makes a pretty good pesto (recipe available on the VSN website). But whether you decide to bury it, burn it or boil it, get it out of the woods! Our native wildflowers are too precious to lose to this highly aggressive invader.

For more information on control of larger populations and on other invasive plants, visit the DNR website at [www.dnr.state.wi.us.org](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us.org) and the Invasive Plant Association of Wisconsin at [www.ipaw.org](http://www.ipaw.org).

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can make a difference! Remember, if it's rechargeable, it's recyclable!

For more information contact VSN, Vernon County Solid Waste at 634-2900 or RBRC at 1-800-8-BATTERY, [www.rbrc.org](http://www.rbrc.org).

## Water Quality Monitoring Corner

The Kickapoo Citizen Water Monitors (KCWM) have been active this winter. Five new members began monitoring three new sites. It is exciting to see people take an interest in the health of their stream and our Watershed.

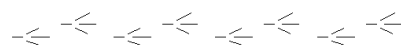
As a way to look at the health of the Watershed, VSN has compiled the data collected by the KCWM in 2004 and will make this report available. We are still working on drawing conclusions from this report.

The unfortunate recent fish kill at Jersey Valley Lake shows us how quickly our high quality of water can become unlivable for aquatic life and unsuitable for humans. If you notice pollutants in the water, please call the DNR hotline at 1-800-TIP-WDNR.

KCWM will be getting together on Tuesday May 10<sup>th</sup> at 7PM in the WWTC building in Viroqua. We will talk about the upcoming monitoring season, meet the new monitors, plan the annual spring macroinvertebrate outings and talk about last year's data. This is also a great opportunity for people interested in becoming a water monitor to get information.

KCWM will continue the bacteria testing in the Middle and Upper Kickapoo Watershed in 2005. In 2004, the project provided the DNR and the Land and Water Conservation Departments in Vernon and Monroe Counties with high quality data to assist with planning and resource allocation decisions. We need volunteers to make it happen again this year. If you are interested in being trained to collect water samples, please call VSN.

Gary and Jeremy continue to work with schools and youth groups to introduce the importance of water quality in the Kickapoo Valley. We are always looking for more opportunities to introduce kids to good stewardship of our waters.



*"One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of March thaw, is the Spring." -Aldo Leopold*

## Member Spotlight

VSN is pleased to recognize outstanding rural land stewards and VSN supporters Paul and Bernadette Hayes. The Hayes's purchased a farm, along with their daughter and son-in-law Judy and Mike Nugent, in Webster Township near Bloomingdale in 2000. They immediately began the process of developing a management plan that has transformed this property into a superb model for resource management programs. The Hayes's presently reside in Illinois, where they each teach high school biology.

When asked about plans for retirement, Paul responded with, "Why retire when you love what you're doing." This love for science and how it relates to the world we live in is evident in their demonstrated stewardship of their property. Paul summarized the progression of resource management, enhancement, and restoration programs at a VSN sponsored field day, "Prairie, Trees and Trout" held at their property in August of 2004. This event allowed individuals an overview of the results that can be accomplished through these programs. Paul, along with representatives from Kickapoo Woods Co-op,

Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) and other knowledgeable individuals were present to answer related questions.

Assessment on their property began with the forested acreage being evaluated by a local forester, under the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program. Practices implemented on these roughly 70 acres included pine pruning, Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) on red oak, and a TSI practice of removal of less desirable species. Vernon County LWCD implemented a stream restoration project along a significant stretch of the West Fork of the Kickapoo River that runs through the property. This project included construction and installation of fish cribs, creation of vortex weirs, and bank stabilization. This project was funded through USFWS, USDA and Blackhawk Trout Unlimited, who also provided hands-on labor. DNR also secured an easement along this stretch of river for public access for trout fishing. CREP funding was later secured for 12 acres of further stream buffer work which included the planting of shrubs, mixed hardwood and conifer, and the establishment of a savanna prairie in an old crop field adjacent to the river. Other activities that helped to enhance the property include a field edge shrub and conifer planting of approximately 900 seedlings (supported by National Wild Turkey Federation) and a shelter belt

*Member Spotlight Continued on page 4*



Paul Hayes

Kickapoo Woods Co-op,

## Thank You to Members and Donors

We very much want to thank those who have contributed since our last newsletter and look forward to hearing from them and others in the months to come.

### *Memberships & Special Support:*

The Drift, Dahl Building, Community Conservation, Viroqua Food Coop, WWTC, Dillard Foundation, Crooked River Resort, Hirsch Clinic, Monroe Co. Land Conservation Department, Vernon Co. Land and Water Conservation Department, Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School, Burkum Milling, Solar Town Pharmacy, Hook n' Haul, Nelson Agri-Center, Organic Valley, Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Mickelson's Market.

Anonymous, David Whited-Ford, Rob Horwich, Rosanne Boyett, Glenn & Barbara Lepley, David F. Busch, Jim Barnes, Mark Katz & Janet Kruk, Laura Hewitt, Andy &

Dian Lopez, Mary & Lloyd Croatt, Dail Murray, Larry & Diana Forkash, Harriet Behar, Jack Knight, Lisa Kivirist & John Ivanko, Darlene & Gary Evans, Henry Babson, Richard Jawson, Katie & Bud Lemley, Tom Goodman, Larry & Kelly Jansen, Bill & Jean Franks, Joel & Gretchen Oines, Donald & Mary Sundberg Stirling, Mr. and Mrs. Richard A. Piehl, William Hanke, William & Melissa Hendrickson, Mia Sondreal, Joel Johnson & Ms. Evan Jones, Patti & Charles Knowler, Maggie Jones, Joan & Jim Grootemaat, Pauline & Verland Evans, Tom Wilson, Ben Logan, Jane Keeley, Don & Marlene Mason, Dr. Paul Grenier, Barbara Christie, John D. & Andrea F. Kenny, Susan Johnson & Dan Arnold, Richard & Patricia Rubasch, Sylvia & Gregg Attleson, M'Lou Wilkie & Jim Beske, Mary & Steve Christenson, Gary Thompson, Dave Hackett & Ellen Brooks.



## Calendar of Events

Updates, additional information and other events are listed at [www.kickapooovsn.org](http://www.kickapooovsn.org)

### **April 30: Kickapoo River Cleanup.**

VSN volunteers will be paddling the river and walking the banks picking up litter from Readstown to Soldiers Grove.

### **April 30: Kickapoo Valley Reserve & Vernon Co. County Parks Cleanup.**

Call the Reserve for more info at 625-2960.

### **May 14: Spring Migrant Bird Hike.**

Join Barb Duerksen of the WI Society for Ornithology at the Kickapoo Valley Reserve during height of the spring migration. 9-11AM. Call 625-2960 for more info.

### **May 21: Red Buffalo Prairie Walk.**

Join Greg Nessler at 10AM among the spring flowers and native cool season grasses. For directions and more info go to the VSN website or call 637-3615.

### **May 26: Driftless Dialogues - Sum of its Parts.**

Learn the unique aspects of the Reserve that make it a National Natural Landmark. Part of a special series presented by the Reserve. All Driftless Dialogue talks begin at 7PM. Call 625-2960 for more info.

### **June 22: Driftless Dialogue - Valley Politics from Past to Present.**

See May 26th.

### **July 6: Ocooch Grazers Pasture Walk.**

Organic beef farm recently converted from dairy with guest speaker Geoff Brink. 1PM near Bosstown. Call VSN for more info.

### **July 21: Driftless Dialogue - Ho-Chunk Culture.**

7PM at Reserve. See May 26th.

### **July 30: Kickapoo Country Fair.**

Come to La Farge to celebrate community and sustainability at this benefit for the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Fair features educational programs, farm tours, artisans, music, food and more. Contact Organic Valley for more info at [www.organicvalley.coop](http://www.organicvalley.coop)

### **July 30: Public Astronomy Viewing.**

Enjoy our dark skies at Wildcat Mountain State Park with the Northwest Astronomy Club. Slide show at sundown followed by star gazing. Call (608) 337-4775 for details.

### **August 17: Driftless Dialogue - Farm Forum.**

7PM at Reserve. See May 26th.

**VSN Board Meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month at WWTC, 220 S. Main Street, Viroqua - 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome.**



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*Thank You*

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### *Fish Kill* continued from page 1

ministered by counties also has to cover any number of other management practice projects and could only provide for one or two a year. One of the ideas from the West Fork Sports Club meeting about the fish kill was that state representatives (Senator Dan Kapanke and Representative Lee Nerison) be asked to take a lead in addressing manure handling issues through increased funding for storage facilities.

The State Department of Agriculture (DATCP) is supporting a trend to larger and larger operations. Representatives of the State Ag Research and Statistics Lab have stated that a minimum of 200 cows will be needed for a viable Wisconsin herd in the near future.

Lost in all the state level pushes for "bigger is better" are ideas like rotational grazing, which alleviates much of the manure distribution problems of confined animal operations, and organic production for better viability. Smaller operations don't pose the nutrient management problems of larger ones. Vernon County has responded to citizen interests in design of their conservation program and designated some funds for assistance to rotational grazing start-ups and converting to organic

operations. This should be commended.

It will take a good deal of work to clean up Jersey Valley Lake and also patience waiting for it to naturally recover. The importance of good water quality and how it is interrelated to our quality of life will probably be pretty vivid this summer when the fishing and beach area are just not there. Threats to water quality come from many sources though, not just manure. Runoff from pavements, poor erosion control practices, lawn chemicals and failing septic systems all contribute to degraded waters. Let's all do our part: keep talking to the neighbors and try to do right by our water resources. It's important.

### *Member Spotlight* from page 3

designed and installed with guidance from DNR wildlife biologist Dave Matheys. Paul has also put innumerable hours of sweat equity into restoring the old logging trails for recreational use, removing old fence rows, maintaining contour strips and crop rotation practices on active agricultural fields, and establishing a prairie planting on his dry dam near the house.

The Hayes family have certainly

demonstrated a commitment to stewardship. VSN commends their efforts.

## Kickapoo Visions

published Spring and Fall



Valley Stewardship Network encourages, promotes and helps create pro-active stewardship efforts in the Kickapoo River Watershed through education and awareness efforts and by promoting community pride, positive land use, compatible development and communication and coordination in the watershed.

### Board of Directors:

- Kathy Neidert**, Co-chair, 624-3281
- Gary Thompson**, Co-chair, 637-3650
- Liz Quebe**, Treasurer, 624-3600
- Betty Bland**, Secretary, 634-3725

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- Gary Eldred**, Prairie Enthusiasts
- Dr. Rob Horwich**, Community Conservation
- Jack Knight**, Kickapoo Woods Coop.
- Ben Logan**, Author
- Joe Rising**, Attorney in Minnesota
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- Jeremy Lopez**, Projects Coordinator