



Kickapoo Visions

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

www.kickapoovsn.org

Spring 2007 Volume VII, Issue I

Second Edition Owning Rural Lands Available Now

By Liz Quebe

A second edition of Valley Stewardship Network's very popular publication is hot off the press. A generous grant from the Paul E. Stry Foundation allowed *Owning Rural Lands, A Guide for the Kickapoo River Watershed* to be updated and expanded. The publication offers invaluable information to those who are considering the purchase of land in the valley, and those who already own land in the Valley can find a wealth of information too.

The guide contains a checklist with helpful information on purchasing land; understanding the property; obtaining services; and building a home or other structures. It lists resources and contacts for common questions relating to woodlands, cropland, roads, streams and ponds, and permitting. In addition, information is included on the geology, forests, prairies, wetlands, river and streams, plants and wildflowers, and wildlife found in the Kickapoo Valley, along with names of publications, websites, and organizations specific to each topic.

The second edition adds four new topics, all of great importance to those who care for the land: Invasive Species, Water Quality, Land Use Resources and Community Planning, as well as Land Trusts and Conservation Easements.

Individual copies of *Owning Rural Lands* are available at no charge from VSN, though contributions of support are appreciated.



Bacteria In The Kickapoo — There's Work to be Done

By Gary Thompson

At the conclusion of three consecutive bacteria monitoring seasons, there's much work to be done. Data collected confirms that we still have land use issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the water quality in our watershed.

Thirteen volunteers collected 422 samples at nineteen different locations within the Upper Kickapoo over this three year period. It has been determined that the primary source of e-coli bacteria is livestock residing in the upper reaches of the watershed. There is evidence of greater amounts reaching the river and it's tributaries after significant rain events. The Monroe County Conservation Department, a project partner, has designed two barnyard improvement projects that should demonstrate how management of run-off can greatly improve water quality.

In January and February VSN hosted community dialog meetings with the intent of obtaining public feedback on finding workable solutions to correct manure runoff. DNR and County Land Conservation agents, and other knowledgeable individuals gave brief presentations and answered questions. Although there was a good exchange of information, there was little progress made on developing solutions. What became clear is that no one is 100 % certain about the degree of danger posed by bacteria in the water. Though the exact threat to human health continues to be debated, the general consensus is that individuals prefer not to recreate in a manure laden river.

Some present tried to down-play the significance of the presence of manure in our waters, others wanted to divert atten-



tion away from the conditions found on the Kickapoo. The fact remains that the waters of the state of Wisconsin belong to all who reside here. With this public trust doctrine comes a personal responsibility to preserve and protect this great resource, no matter how we choose to use it. As residents of the watershed and the state, you can play an important role by being an active stakeholder in the preservation of our natural resources.

The 2007 monitoring season is soon to begin. We have hopes of expanding our sampling to the lower stretches of the river, verification for the two Best Management Practice (BMP) sites in the upper watershed and we are also trying to identify landowners willing to work on managing their run-off to protect surface waters. If you have an interest in being part of this on-going project, especially as a volunteer for collecting water samples, call the VSN office.

VSN goals remains the same! We will continue to seek partners willing to make hard choices to protect water quality in the Kickapoo watershed. We will inform local health officials of any data that may reflect a threat to human health. We will work with state and local agencies and organizations to bring about needed changes in how our resources are being used. Your partnership in taking on this challenge with VSN is much appreciated.





Trees and Invasive Species

By Rosanne Boyette

The Driftless Area has been known for decades as home to the largest number of hardwood trees in the Midwest. Their spectacular fall colorations draw thousands of people to the hillsides of the Kickapoo River watershed. Now, this treasured resource is vulnerable to damage from invasive species and diseases.

Invasive foreign pests and diseases are very destructive because native trees have little or no resistance to introduced diseases or insects. Natural enemies are often rare and may not be effective in regulating infestations, and for certain types of infestations, there are no effective pesti-

cides. Species diversity, the very best defense against all tree health problems, is destroyed by invasives.

Trees in our region are at risk from Emerald ash borer, Asian longhorn beetle, hemlock woolly adelgid and sudden oak death. These and other invasive species, both insect and plant, are spread long distances through the movement of infested firewood, nursery stock or logs. As we enter the tourist season, with its campfires, hiking, boating, and other activities, we must be vigilant. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recognizes these threats to our forests and woodlots and has enacted regulations to control the use of firewood for campsites at State parks. The DNR is working with firewood dealers and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) to assure a sufficient supply of safe and affordable firewood at state-owned campgrounds.

No such regulations are in effect for sales of firewood for other campgrounds or for home heating purposes.

The Kickapoo River watershed is home to numerous sawmill operations, which produce finished wood products and also generate sawdust, mulch materials and firewood for sale to the public. It is smart to learn the origins of the logs before purchasing mulch materials or firewood. Learning the source is the best method to insure that invasive species and diseases are not being introduced into your yard, onto your property or into your woodlot. Suppliers are generally friendly and happy to respond to customer inquiries.



The Natural Step for Communities-- the Next Step

By Kathy Fairchild

In February 2006, VSN sponsored a presentation on *The Natural Step for Communities* by Mary Rehwald of Ashland, Wisconsin. The presentation created a lot of interest as a meaningful way for local governments to walk-the-walk of environmental responsibility. Currently, several communities outside the Watershed are meeting to discuss possible implementation of these concepts, and the City of La Crosse is in the process of passing an ordinance adopting The Natural Step. The goals? Consuming less fossil fuel and chemicals, recycling more and creating less waste, instilling respect for others and their needs and lessening the impact and encroachment upon nature.

Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* certainly deserves a great deal of credit for motivating individuals and businesses to action. As it delivered the terrifying facts of climate change, it also underscored the reality that everything we do, every choice we make, directly impacts everyone else on the planet.

The world has grown very, very small.

Local communities are addressing the global climate crisis by planning for alternative energy production with wind turbines and bio-fuels. People are talking about land use planning and preservation needs. Citizens are working to learn about buy-out and conservation mechanisms that can keep land in production and open spaces in the landscape. All of these efforts have one thing in common-- individuals who see the need and are willing to take on the important work necessary to achieve goals that benefit the common good. A day has been set aside for global action in support of reducing carbon emissions; on April 14, "Step It Up" events will be held worldwide. (*See separate item in this issue about the VSN event*)

As the Valley Stewardship Network has grown and evolved in its nearly ten-year existence, I continue to hold onto a dream for the area. I believe that everyone appreciates the natural beauty here; some for purely aesthetic reasons, others from a perspective base more on economics. Those who rely upon the appeal of nature to hunters, anglers and tourists for their livelihoods certainly understand the importance of good stewardship. Artists and other creative individuals value highly the pristine scenery and peaceful, inspiring spaces. Ag producers, forestry

workers and others living off the land value the productivity of carefully-managed natural resources. In short, for reasons from the very personal to the utterly practical, all of us value the beauty and uniqueness of this area, both visual and social. It is even easier to appreciate if you spend any time away and then return.

I imagine the day that, through the intentional effort of its citizens and not simply the dictates of government or circumstance, the Kickapoo Watershed becomes widely known as a very special place that intends to stay that way. It is a place that does not beg to become another "Anywhere U.S.A." in exchange for short-term gain and long-term loss. Such a reality requires on-going contributions from all of us, and a growing number of efforts are already underway. Recognize that we all have ways to contribute and in the grand scheme of things a responsibility to do so. Find out about the efforts in your neighborhood, go to town and county meetings, ask questions, take part. Creating a local standard of self-enforcement and leading by example is the only choice left to us in the current political climate. It takes a shift in thinking to do the best we can to manage our resources. Let's help one another to make progress against invasive species, protect shoreland habitat, manage our forests and waters, foster land uses that meet our needs sustainably, and provide a wonderful place for all of us to spend our days.





Garlic Mustard— The Scariest Thing in the Woods

By Liz Quebe

My friend and co-board member Maggie Jones is fearless, except for one thing. And what make this woman who regularly walks the woods with a hawk on her arm tremble? A pretty little plant, one with heart-shaped leaves and tiny white flowers. A plant that is wreaking havoc on her treasured woodlands, displacing the Dutchman's breeches, trillium, hepatica, bloodroot, and jack-in-the-pulpit. A plant that produces thousands of seeds. A plant that can displace an entire forest floor within ten years. No wonder she's scared! Anyone who loves the woods should be.

Each May, Jerry and I walk our property, terrified that we will find the first small patch of this alien invader. Garlic mustard—*Alleriaria 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. It is easily recognized in late April and early May because it is



WQM Corner

By Gary Thompson

Welcome to Spring everyone! It's always refreshing to come into the season of new life, though I very much enjoyed the late winter snows that provided some great skiing and snow shoeing in February.

Another monitoring season is here, and as always there is much in the way of opportunities for involvement.

The spring gathering of the Kickapoo Citizen Water Monitors was held at Viroqua WTC campus 3/20/07. Monitors had a chance to once again connect with one another and share stories of past monitoring feats. Supplies were available to restock our "buckets", and opportunities for further education were discussed. Fellowship among members was enjoyed over refreshments that were provided by VSN. An enjoyable time was had by all!



the only forest plant of its height in that produces white flowers.

You can control small or new areas of garlic mustard by hand-pulling. This evil plant will produce buds and send up more stalks if the top is broken off, so 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 location that could be monitored and where any spread can be controlled. Pulled plants can be dried or burned or buried. To convince you of how diabolical this plant is, you should know that even uprooted plants can produce seeds and that seeds can remain viable in the soil for seven to ten years. One more thing--be very careful not to track any seeds to an un-infested location. Brush off your shoes!

Garlic mustard has no significant natural enemies. This May, Maggie and I are trying to change that. We hope you will too.

For more information, visit the DNR at www.dnr.wi.gov/invasives/fact/garlic.htm or the Invasive Plant Association of Wisconsin at www.ipaw.org.

Eight members of the KCWMs will once again be involved in a special monitoring project sponsored by DNR and River Alliance of Wisconsin. This is the second season that monitors will measure four parameters, (DO, Ph, turbidity, and temperature), using the same instruments used by DNR staff. Participants learn how to calibrate, operate, and maintain this equipment, as well as enter the data into the DNR SWMS database for further reference. Refresher training with Chris Clayton, this year's project coordinator, will begin in April with stream monitoring beginning in May.

Family level macro invertebrate identification training will once again be offered to the KCWMs through a fall workshop (to be announced). The workshop will be provided once again by Kris Stepenuck, UW-Ext. WAV coordinator. Training will include the use of microscopes, identification keys, collection of

Calendar of Events

Find the most current information at:
www.kickapoovsn.org

APRIL 14: STEP IT UP. National rally against climate change. From 10 - 11 AM at Eckhart Park, Viroqua.

April 21: Earth day Celebration and Road-side Clean-up
Kickapoo Valley Reserve, Call 625-2960 for more information.

Birding Your Way Through the Month of May. Saturdays in May offer guided birding opportunities at Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

MAY 5: KICKAPOO RIVER CLEAN UP. Between Soldiers Grove and Gays Mills, volunteer, it's fun! Watch press for details.

May 12: Chainsaw Safety Workshop
Presented by the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative and the Reserve. Call 625-2515 to register.

July 28 & 29: Kickapoo Country Fair
Visit our booth, "It's All About Water." Fair features educational programs, farm tours, artisans, music, food and more. Contact Organic Valley at 625-2666 for info.

Oct. 6: KVR Dam Challenge Triathlon
Challenge yourself on the rugged hills of the Reserve & support education programs.

VSN Board Meetings are on the third Wednesday of each month at the VSN office, 124 1/2 S. Main Street, Viroqua - 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome.

stream samples, and extended lab application time for developing needed skills. Watch for more details later this summer.

We will soon be starting our fourth year of bacteria monitoring in the Kickapoo watershed. As mentioned in the article about e-coli monitoring also in this newsletter, (page 1) we are moving ahead with determination to continue work to improving water quality in the Kickapoo watershed. This years focus will be expanded monitoring of the lower stretches of the river, monitoring at BMP project sites in the upper watershed, and continuing to build relationships with landowners. Anyone interested in volunteering or learning to monitor a nearby stream should contact the VSN office at 637-3615 or vsn@frontiernet.net.



Valley Stewardship Network, Inc.
124½ S. Main St.
Viroqua, WI 54665
608-637-3615

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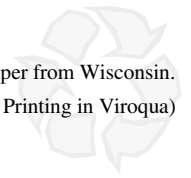
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Thank You Members and Donors

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.

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Thank You Christy

A special thanks from all of us at VSN to Christy Stellner who stepped in as Project Coordinator with great enthusiasm and skill to keep us afloat. She will continue as a VSN volunteer after April when she moves on to full-time work elsewhere. We carry on.



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.

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