



**FRIENDS of the  
BLACK RIVER**

A Citizens' watershed  
conservation organization

# Reading the River



Volume 14, Issue 3~ Fall 2017

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## What's happening here?



For the answer, see page 3. Photo by Pat McKnight

## Greetings from the president

Fall is here and cool weather activities will start soon. Good time of year for hiking, biking, hunting, fishing and so on. Now instead of just mowing the lawn, we also need to rake leaves.

This year there is a good crop of acorns which will help the wildlife through the winter. Our Friends activities will be similar to other years starting with the

roadside clean-up on Hwy K on Sept. 25th at 8:30 Monday morning.

In October, we have our annual meeting on the 11th, and it will be held at the Hub or Senior Center at the new Lunda Center.

At that meeting, we will elect board members and

*Greetings, continued on page 2*

### *Vision*

The Friends of the Black River is a citizen-led organization that is a well-informed, respected, active contributor to projects and decision-making enhancing the river and its watershed.

### *Mission*

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

## Upcoming meetings, programs and events schedule for 2017

**Monday, Sept. 25**—County Hwy K Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup, starting at 8:30 a.m. To volunteer, contact Steve Rake at 715-284-2087.

**Wednesday, Oct. 11**—Annual meeting, Coulee Region Humane Society's Wildlife Rehabilitation Program, meeting site: **The Hub in the Lunda Community Center**

**Wednesday, Nov. 8**—Monthly meeting, Nature photography by Jim Hornby

**Tuesday, Dec. 5**—Annual holiday party\*  
*Dates and programs subject to change.*

*Anyone with suggestions for future programs is encouraged to submit them by emailing [info\\_fbr@yahoo.com](mailto:info_fbr@yahoo.com)*

\* Note: This year's holiday party has been switched from Monday night to Tuesday night to allow members experiencing a conflict on Monday night to attend.

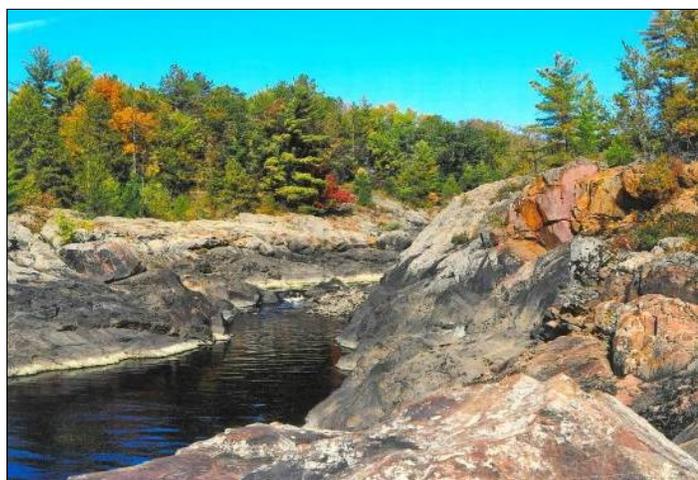
Unless otherwise noted, regular monthly meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the lower level community room of the Jackson County Bank.

## FBR holds annual Paddle in the Park



FBR gave youngsters of all ages the chance to paddle on the kids' fishing pond in Lunda Community Park June 30 as part of the activities held for the Festival in the Park celebra-

Photos by Jackson Burgau



A photo taken by Dave Meyer south of the Hatfield Dam off Clay School Road was the reserve champion of the Friends of the Black River's fair photo contest.

*Greetings, continued from page 1:*

have a brief review of the year's activities along with a program and pizza.

Our November meeting will be on the 8th and our annual movie night will be on Tuesday, December 5th.

I have noticed fewer people participating in our activities and I'm trying to figure out what we can do to increase interest in these activities. We have a wonderful organization with an active and involved board. We'd love to see more people enjoying our activities!

If anyone has any ideas for programs or activities please discuss them with a board member.

Get out and enjoy the fall!

~ Steve Rake

## Trash picked up during annual river cleanup



A group of volunteers (above) turned out August 26 to remove trash from the Black River for FBR's annual river cleanup. Organizers reported finding less trash than in past cleanups. One of the more notable items found during the search on the river was an old vehicle tire lodged in a tree (left). Photos by Tom Teeples



Brady Palmer (left) and Tom Teeples unload a dishwasher from Teeples' vehicle. The appliance was one of the larger items removed from the Black River watershed during FBR's annual river cleanup. Photo by Pat McKnight



Teresa Teeples patrolled the Black River's shoreline for trash left by river users or flooding when she participated in the annual river cleanup. Photo by Tom Teeples



A pile of garbage left by paddlers at the Melrose Landing was removed as part of FBR's annual river cleanup. Photo by Pat McKnight

**Answer to question on page 1:** Larry Casper (left) and Rollie Lee unload trash they collected while paddling the Black River for the annual river cleanup.

## Paddler talks about his journey on the Wisconsin River

Jesse Hieb's standup paddle board adventure on the Wisconsin River led him to not only find the sanctuary he was seeking; it led him to become an advocate for the state's longest river.

Hieb shared how the impulsive idea of stand-up paddle boarding the entire length of the river in 2016 started him on a journey to tell the story of how one of the most polluted rivers in the country was cleaned up through a collaboration of its users.

Hieb shared the story of his trip and his work to document the effort to restore the health and beauty of the river at the Friends of the Black River's Sept. 13 meeting.

Initially, Hieb's decision to make the trip was based on a search for a place away from the "noise and stress" of his life and to "ground" him.

Hieb took 21 days to complete the 430-mile journey down the Wisconsin River. He believes he is the only person to paddle the length of the river on a stand-up paddle board.

"When I started this adventure, I didn't know much about the river," said Hieb. "It has 26 dams, 14 paper mills and 43 municipalities located on the river; it was also one of the country's most polluted waterways."

Since the mid-19th century, paper mills and municipalities sent their untreated waste into the river.

"In the 50s and 60s, people referred to it (the river) as a sewage pipeline," said Hieb. "The river was so bad years ago there were no eagles. The sludge on the river would bake and harden and there are pictures of animals walking across on top of the sludge."

In the decades since the 1960s, the work of concerned citizens and the paper mills, energy companies and municipalities has reduced pollution in the river by 93 percent.

"People came together to take care of a resource that takes care of us," said Hieb. "The story of the Wisconsin River is the story of paper mills and energy companies that could have left but stuck around and cleaned up the river."

Hieb said representatives from Alliant Energy told him a clean river allowed them to run more efficiently because the power company didn't have to spend time and resources removing trash from their hydro plants.



Stand-up board paddler Jesse Hieb (left) replies to a question posed by Charlie Meyer at the September 13 meeting. Photo by Pat McKnight

The regional public affairs manager for Domtar, a paper making company in Nekoosa, Craig Timm shared how clean water is essential to the process.

During his historic paddle, Hieb started meeting people who told stories about the river.

"I didn't know there was a need for community groups on the river," said Hieb, "and I realized the story about the river was more than a five-minute video."

His film production company is making a documentary about the river and the people, companies and municipalities connected with it. The film is being self-funded by Hieb's company and has received support through a crowd-funding campaign. Among the financial supporters are Alliant Energy and Domtar. The company has also created an education program about the river that's been approved for use in school curriculums.

One story Hieb is still trying to get for the film is the conversion of one paper mill owner who went from being opposed to environmental regulations to being a staunch advocate.

Hieb's documentary is titled, "Gone Paddling" and information about the video and his trip can be found on his website at <http://gonepaddlingthefilm.com>.

As he was gaining greater knowledge about the river, Hieb believes he found his sanctuary. At one point on the lower Wisconsin, a strong headwind creating hazardous paddling conditions caused him to take refuge. During that hiatus, he realized the river had provided him with a place free of stress and noise.

## Program presented about Black River fish and fisheries

Anglers looking for diverse fishing experiences would do well to consider the Black River and its tributaries. The Black River watershed has a wide variety of fish species to entice fishermen and women of any age.

“The Black River corridor in Komensky and Adams (towns) have some of the highest biological diversity in the region,” said Pete Segerson, former fisheries technician and fisheries operations supervisor with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. “There are more than 70 species of fish in the Black. The Black River drainage also has many tributaries that are high quality brook trout streams.”

Segerson presented a program about the fish and fisheries found in the Black River and its watershed at the Friends of the Black River’s June 14 meeting.

The Black River is one of the state’s waterways that connect areas of the state formerly covered by glaciers in prehistoric times with the Driftless Region. The waterway serves as a corridor for the spread of a variety of fish species.

“Walleye are the most sought after game fish on the river,” said Segerson. “A 10- to 15-year-old walleye can reach six or seven pounds or even larger when full of eggs.”

The DNR has tagged Black River walleye and found they can travel as far away as the St. Croix River. That walleye would have navigated several lock and dam structures on the Mississippi River. Among the fish reported were a 15-year-old, 48-inch muskellunge. Muskellunge are native to the Black River and there are also fall fingerling musky stocked in the Black River to enhance fishing for Wisconsin’s state fish.

In addition to walleye and musky, other game fish found in the Black and its streams include small-mouth bass, crappies, flathead catfish, northern pike, lake sturgeon, channel catfish and sauger. Segerson said the sauger have been known to cross with walleye to produce a hybrid known as the saugeye.

The common carp, an introduced species, is also found in the Black River.

Some lesser known fish species found in the water shed are the hognose sucker, river redhorse, blue sucker, Iowa and banded darters and about a dozen minnow species.



FBR Steve Rake (left) discusses fishing in the Black River with FBR member and former DNR fisheries technician Pete Segerson at the June meeting. Photo by Pat McKnight

“The banded darter is one of the creatures worth hanging on to,” said Segerson. “The stretch of the river from Hatfield to Black River Falls is some of the best habitat. Rocks, riffles, rapids, deep pools and some high quality tributaries including Morrison and Halls creeks provide a variety of high quality fish habitat.”

In his presentation, Segerson discussed the importance of taking care of the watershed and some of the challenges encountered in managing fisheries in a flash-flood prone river.

“It seems like 100-year floods are now happening a couple times a summer,” said Segerson. “The Black gets its color from tannic acid from the plants and manganese and iron. Runoff from farm fields causes the chocolate milk appearance to the water and limits light penetration.”

*Fish and fisheries program, continued on page 6*

## Cornerstone members support FBR mission

Cornerstone members support FBR's mission with a \$50 annual membership.

This year's Cornerstone members are:

Wayne and Lynn Clark  
Joan Higgins and Carl Herrmann  
Richard Hilliker  
Monica and Brad Lobenstein  
Peter and Jone Hoffman  
Co-op Credit Union

Garcon Growth Projects, Bradly Garcon  
Gross Motors  
Gil Homstad  
Margaret Legois  
Dan and Virginia Hesel  
Richard Jaeger  
Scott and Lillian McManners  
Melrose Express Black River Canoe  
Tom Turk

## Charitable contributions assist in FBR's mission

Charitable contributions received by the Friends of the Black River will be used solely to support the goals outlined in the FBR bylaws.

The goals are:

- Educate members and the public about the ecology of the Black River watershed and threats to its health
- Promote sustainable use and recreation on the Black River and its watershed
- Increase public awareness and membership
- Promote sound decision-making when issues affect the health of the river and watershed
- Support the protection and improvement of the Black River and its watershed for the benefit of the general public
- Develop a working relationship with local officials and collaborate with conservation organiza-

tions

- Promote improved health of the river and watershed through conservation projects and education
- Purchase land or easements for conservation purposes

Information about how to help FBR with its mission can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.



A special thank-you goes to Dave McCullough of McCullough Services and Repair for donating maintenance work on the canoe trailer owned by FBR.

### *Fish and fisheries program, continued from page 5*

Segerson worked in the DNR fisheries program for more than 35 years. Before retiring in 2014, he worked with trout habitat, river and lake sport fisheries as well as wetland restoration and conservation.

In his presentation, Segerson showed examples of fish habitat created by fallen trees and woody debris jams. He recommended that stream clearing efforts include leaving part of the fallen trees and debris jams in the waterways.

He also urged getting the younger generation interested in nature through fishing.

"One of the big problems is nature deficit," said Segerson. "We need to take kids into the outdoors. We need to ensure there's no child left inside."



## Ways to support FBR's mission

Donations made since the summer newsletter to assist FBR with its mission:

A \$100 anonymous donation

A \$50 donation from the Christianson family in honor of Jeff Polzin's retirement.

You can help support the mission of the Friends of the Black River by remembering FBR in your will or with memorials or honorariums.

Checks can be made out to Friends of the Black River and contributions should be sent to PO Box 475, Black River Falls, WI 54615. Thank you.

## Memberships always welcome

Memberships help Friends of the Black River continue its mission of preserving and caring for the Black River.

Show your support for that mission by renewing your membership.

If you are renewing your membership, you do not need to send in a membership form unless there has been a change in your contact information.

### Please help us stay current

**Please help us keep in touch by letting us know your new e-mail and/or postal addresses when they change.**

**Send your e-mail address changes to [info\\_fbr@yahoo.com](mailto:info_fbr@yahoo.com)**

Become a new member by filling out the membership form below and mailing it with your membership dues to the mailing address listed on the form.

## Support your watershed - Join the Friends of the Black River

### Enroll me as a member

Membership Categories (check one)

- \$1.00 Youth (up to age 18)
- \$15.00 Individual
- \$20.00 Family
- \$30.00 Organization or Business
- \$50.00 Cornerstone Member

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to give an additional contribution in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to give this membership as a gift  
(Card will be sent to recipient)

Occasion \_\_\_\_\_

Name of recipient \_\_\_\_\_

Please check here \_\_\_ if you would like to receive a receipt.

Return registration and checks payable to:

**Friends of the Black River**  
PO Box 475  
Black River Falls, WI 54615

I'm interested in serving on a committee:

- Land Preservation and Advocacy
- Fundraising and Membership Recruitment
- Programming
- Cleanups and Special Events
- Landings
- I am Interested in becoming a board member

Comments/Questions:

