

Reading the River

Volume 15, Issue 3 ~ Fall 2018

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The Friends of the Black River
PO Box 475
Black River Falls, WI 54615
www.friendsoftheblackriver.org
Info_fbr@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor
Pat McKnight
pmcknight@centurytel.net

Board of Directors

President

Steve Rake
(715) 284-2087

Vice-President

Mitch Wester
(715) 284-9637

Secretary/Treasurer

Lucas Annear
(608) 475-1204

Members of the Board

Sue Bitter
(715) 896-1632

Jeff Polzin
(715) 896-5534

Pete Segerson
(715) 333-2033

Staffer and newsletter editor

Pat McKnight
(608) 526-9873

What's happening here?



See Page 3 to find out more about the photo. Photo by Brad Chown

Greetings from the president

Fall is coming and a variety of activities are available to enjoy the outdoors at this time. Fortunately, the heat and humidity drop and make it more enjoyable to be outside.

Take advantage of this season whether you hike, bike, fish, camp or start hunting. I enjoy the weather more as it turns cooler and results in the reduc-

tion of those pesky bugs that tend to like me.

Our organization remains strong and active. We have our annual meeting coming up in October and are looking for another board member.

Tom Teeples is leaving the board and we thank him for his role in helping our organization

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

Monday, October 1—Cleanup on County Highway K for the Adopt-A-Highway program (see more information below)

Wednesday, October 10—Annual meeting, board member elections, program—endangered insects and insect hotels

Wednesday, November 14—Monthly meeting, program—restoring sand mines

Tuesday, December 4—Annual holiday party and

movie night, site to be determined

Wednesday, January 9, 2019 - Monthly meeting, program to be determined

Wednesday, February 13 - Monthly meeting, program—Black River Falls dam

We welcome suggestions for program and anyone with an idea for a presentation for 2019 is welcome to send them to the FBR email address at info_fbr@yahoo.com.

Monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Programs subject to change. Unless indicated otherwise, the Wednesday evening programs are held at 6:30 p.m. in the lower level community room of the Jackson County Bank.

Volunteers needed to help with County Highway K cleanup

The fall cleanup of County Highway K will be Monday, October 1. FBR has adopted County Highway K from State Highway 54 to Hryz Road for litter removal. Volunteers are asked to meet at the intersection of State Highway 54 and County Highway K at 8:30 a.m.

Those willing to help with the cleanup are asked to contact Steve Rake by calling 715-284-2087 or by emailing info_fbr@yahoo.com.

Paddlers try out watercraft at annual Paddle in the Park



Youngsters tried out paddling skills in kayaks and on paddleboards during FBR's annual Paddle in the Park held June 30 on the kids' fishing pond at Lunda Community Park. The event gives youth and adults wanting to learn about paddling a chance to try the sport in a safe setting. Photos by Sue Bitter

Greetings from the president, *continued from page 1*

out. Our board meets on the first Tuesday of every month except in December to plan our activities. If you are interested please contact me for more information.

Also we are always looking for good topics and

speakers pertaining to conservation issues and any outdoor activities affecting our area.

Our meetings are always open to anyone who would like come, so feel free to bring friends along.

~ Steve Rake

Volunteers take part in annual cleanup of the Black River



A dedicated group of volunteers turned out for FBR's annual river cleanup. Teams patrolled the river's shoreline on foot as well as by paddling the river. Photo by Carson Lako

Answer to question on Page 1: A team of (left to right) Shaun Lescher, Carson Lako and Luke Annear loaded up their boat with rubbish they found on the Black River during this year's river cleanup.



FBR member Shawn Lescher (left) and volunteer Carson Lako loaded a boat with trash they picked up along the Black River. FBR member Luke Annear was also a member of the team. The morning's work netted a few tires as well as other trash. Photo by Luke Annear

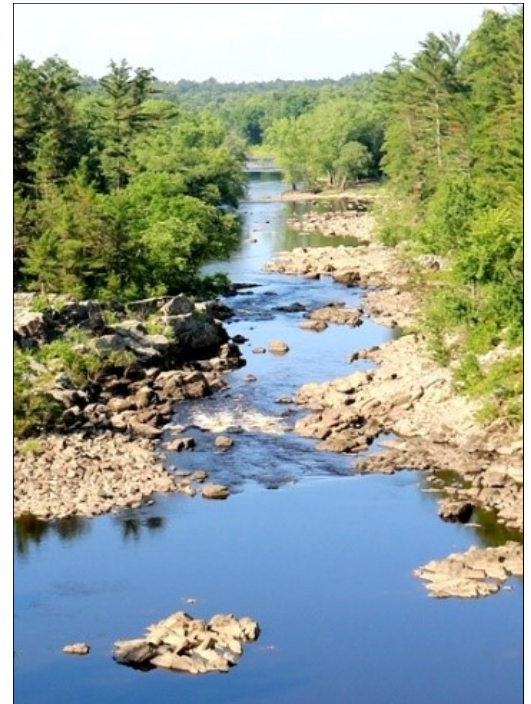
Fair entry photos win FBR prize



Dave "Woody" Meyer captured FBR board member Jeff Polzin kayaking white water on the Black River below the Hatfield Dam.

Meyer entered the photo in the FBR-sponsored photo class offered at the Jackson County Fair. His photo was awarded the grand champion placing in the open class division.

FBR sponsors the photo class each year to encourage photographers to capture the beauty of the Black River and its watershed.



A photo taken by junior exhibitor Hannah Tubbs from the high bridge in Hatfield received a top placing in her class.

Public park planned for former Rustic Mill site



Town of Albion board members presented a program about the town's efforts to create a park on the site of the former Rustic Mill restaurant. The board members giving the presentation are (left to right) Supervisor Dan Hannan, Town Chair Leonard Olson and Supervisor Tom Tomter. Photo by Pat McKnight

Creating a green space and gathering place out of the ashes of a restaurant destroyed in an arson fire in 2011 was the topic of the Sept. 12 Friends of the Black River meeting.

Town of Albion Chair Leonard Olson and supervisors Tom Tomter and Dan Hannan presented an update of the park project planned for the former Rustic Mill restaurant site located on State Hwy 54, south of Black River Falls.

Before being remodeled in the 1960s, the Rustic Mill was the Charter Oak Mill. Built in the mid-19th century, the grist mill ground grain for area farmers.

"A lot of us have good memories of the Rustic Mill," said FBR member Grady Gutknecht.

Following the fire, charred wreckage remained piled on the site until this year. Acting on complaints the wreckage was a public nuisance and an eyesore, the town pressed the county to allow it to remove the debris.

After the county took possession of the property through tax deed, the property was transferred to the town and the town

undertook the cleanup of the rubble.

Since getting oversight of the land, the town has also been clearing out the underbrush with help from the Black River Correctional Camp inmates. Some of the trees on the land have also been harvested.

"We want to get it back to the way it used to be," said Olson. "It can be used for taking photos and having parties. A month from now, you should see a nice shiny building. We've already had people ask us when it will be ready."

Olson said local businesses and agencies have supported the creation of the wayside park.

"It's a community project," said Olson. "The feedback has all been positive. Everyone we talked to have been so good to us. It's amazing how they've all come together."

The footings for the 24-foot by 40-foot shelter have been poured and Nordstrom Construction and Lumber has been contracted to build the shelter that will have power and plumbing. The handicap accessible building will be constructed so three of its sides

can be opened and have an enclosed ceiling to prevent birds nesting in exposed rafters.

The area around the shelter and along the creek will be landscaped with a hiking trail. Other suggested amenities include benches and planters made by student groups such as the NEX-US program and the FFA club.

"It will be a special spot for people for years," said ATB Supervisor Tom Tomter. "There's a flat area above where the dam was where we could have a viewing spot."

Other ideas for developing the site include erecting a historical marker with information about the former grist mill and putting in a replica water wheel. Tomter said that while the water wheel can't go into the stream, it could be set up nearby.

In keeping with the historic aspect of the site, Olson said one wall of the shelter will be used to display memorabilia about the mill and restaurant. A town employee told Olson he might know where the grind stone is. One item that could be part of the display is a hand-hewn timber found in the charred remains of the restaurant. He mentioned the site could be a used for field trips by students studying local history.

The town is using the funds it received from the American Transmission Company for the project. The power line company has been erecting high-voltage power lines across the state and awards funds to municipalities through which the line passes to compensate for its use of the land.

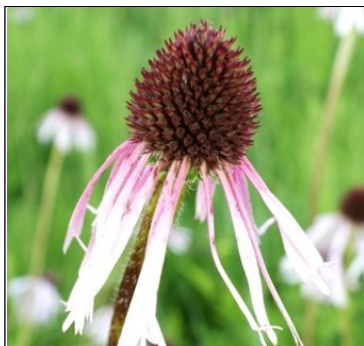
Hikers learn about prairie wildflowers during annual walk



Prairie flower enthusiasts took part in a walk July 17 at the Ron Cork farm just east of Black River Falls. Steve Humphrey (left) led the walk informing hikers of the various native plants found on Cork's restored prairie.



Blazing star (*Liatris spicata*) is one of the plants in bloom during the prairie walk.



Drooping cone flower (*Echinacea simulata*) is one of the varieties of *Echinacea* growing on Cork's prairie.



Bee balm (*Monarda fistulosa*) also known as bergamot, is fairly common in the Coulee Region.

Fair photo entry winner captures fun in the river



Mary Cooley was a winner with this photo taken in front of her place, about one mile above the Black River Falls dam and just around the bend above the I-94 bridge.

Cooley entered the photo in the open class FBR photo competition at the Jackson County Fair.

FBR sponsors photography classes at the fair in junior as well as open classes.

Water Action Volunteer report

As the stream monitoring season draws to a close, WAV coordinator Pete Segerson would like to thank those who volunteered this past season.

Stream monitoring provides data on long-term trends in water quality in the Black River basin. Data collected is entered by the monitors into the statewide water quality database.

The teams go to their selected streams about two hours a month from May through October to collect information about the stream. Training and sampling gear are provided.

The water-monitoring program is interested in new monitors. Anyone interested in helping next year is encouraged to contact Pete Segerson at 715-333-2033 for further information.

FBR member makes fish line recycle bins



FBR member Shaun Lescher has been making bins for recycling fishing line and installing them at local landings. He has one at the landing by the dam and one at Lake Arbutus.

At the September 12 FBR meeting, Lescher related how he makes the bins from scrap PVC piping and other parts he purchases.

The bins give anglers a place to dispose of their monofilament fishing line for recycling. The high density fish line can harm wildlife when they become entangled in it or ingest it if left in the water or on shore. The string can also endanger swimmers and divers and get entangled in boat propellers.

Throwing it in the trash can pose a problem for birds that might take it from open receptacles and become entangled in the line. It could also do the same to animals visiting landfills.

The line can last as long as 600 years in fresh water. However, when recycled, the line can be made into plastic pellets and used to make products such as tackle boxes, spools for fishing line, toys and fish habitat structures.

Charitable contributions assist 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 organizations
- 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.

Ways to support FBR's mission

Donations received to assist FBR with its mission since the summer newsletter was published:
FBR received an anonymous \$500 donation made through the Black River Area Foundation
A \$20 donation at the Wazee paddle instruction event
A \$20 donation made in addition to a new membership

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

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:

**Memberships are being gratefully
accepted for 2018!**

We depend on your support to keep Friends
of the Black River a strong effective
protector of the watershed.

We want to keep this newsletter coming to
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