



FRIENDS *of the*
BLACK RIVER

A Citizens' watershed
conservation organization

Reading the River



Volume 19 Issue 1 ~ Spring 2022

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What's happening here?



Ice floes on the Black River in early March were an indicator spring weather has arrived in the Driftless Region. Photo by Pat McKnight

President's Greetings

Winter is transitioning to spring, so we will look forward to springtime activities. I don't mind the cold weather and keep busy with skiing, walking the dog and burning wood to help keep the fuel bills down. It is more work with shoveling snow and icy roads to deal but it makes the spring so enjoyable.

But first we have to get through the mud season, my

least favorable time of the year.

So, FBR will have its spring programs coming up. We will have a monthly program in April as well as our Earth Day Clean-ups in both Clark and Jackson counties. Also our paddles start in late March and continue in April.

Spring also brings yardwork and of course some of the most

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 and events for 2022

Wednesday, April 13: monthly meeting, program: Diane Cain, advocate for wolf protection, see **Advocating for Wolves** below

Tuesday, April 19 to Sunday, April 24: Celebrating the Black River Yesterday Today & Tomorrow, Clark County FBR Chapter and Clark Cultural Art Center, Inc. Earth Week event, see information page 3

Saturday, April 23: Clark County Earth Day clean-up, information on page 3

Monday, April 25: Cleanup for Adopt-A-Highway program, 8:30 a.m. at intersection of State Highway 54 east and County Highway K

Saturday, April 30: Jackson County Earth Day clean-up, see information below

Saturday, May 14: Wildflower hike, 10 a.m., participants wanting to caravan or car pool should meet at the a Chamber of Commerce parking lot at 9:30 a.m., see **Wildflower Walk** below.

Meetings subject to change. For up-to-date announcements of future events, check messages sent to your email in-box.

Announcements about FBR activities are also posted on FBR's Facebook pages and website, Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events and broadcasted on WWIS and WCCN Radio and published in the Banner Journal and Clark County Press.

Monthly meetings are free and open to the public. Programs subject to change. Unless otherwise indicated, the Wednesday evening programs are held at 6:30 p.m. in The Hub meeting room at the Lunda Community Center.

Earth Day Cleanup

The Earth Day clean-up in Jackson County will be held Saturday, April 30, beginning at 8 a.m.

Volunteers are asked to meet at Castle Mound State Park shelter parking lot in Black River Falls to receive assignments.

No park admission charged to cleanup volunteers. The cleanup will wind up around noon.

Volunteers are asked to contact Steve Rake by calling 715-284-2087 or by emailing info_fbr@yahoo.com or leaving a message on the FBR Facebook page.

Clark County will hold it's Earth Day Cleanup as part of its Celebrating the Black River Yesterday Today & Tomorrow Earth Week events. See page 3 for details.

Greetings from the president,
continued from page 1

pleasant weather of the year.

Hopefully Covid will continue to decline so we can get back to normal activities and socialize in public.

Hopefully baseball will be starting soon as well.

Steve Rake
FBR President

Advocating for wolves

Jackson County resident, Diane Cain has been advocating for wolves since May 2021, when she represented Sierra Club WI on the Department of Natural Resources Wolf Harvest Committee during its research regarding fall 2021 wolf season quota. Her advocacy has also taken her around the country to speak on behalf of wolves.

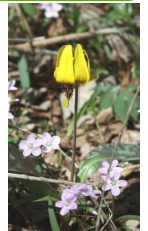


She will speak at the April FBR meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m. in The Hub at the Lunda Community Center.

In her presentation, Cain will cover wolf characteristics and habitat; the wolf population in Jackson County; the conflicts between wolves and farmers/ranchers and bear hunters using hounds; the politics and litigations concerning wolf conservation; cultural and spiritual importance of wolves to native populations; the myths and facts surrounding wolves; wolf mortality causes and wildlife extinction; human and wolf encounters; and how to distinguish between wolves and coyotes.

Wildflower Walk

The annual spring wildflower hike will be held on a trail off Pettibone Pass near Dickey Creek. A guided walk will be held May 14. Those not able to take in the guided walk, will be able to do a self-guided walk Thursday, May 12 through Sunday, May 15. Wildflowers of special interest will be marked along the trail.



CART and Clark County FBR Chapter Earth Week activities

Celebrating the Black River Yesterday Today & Tomorrow

Events and Activities Schedule

Unless indicated otherwise, events are held at Clark Cultural ART Center located at 201 E. 4th Street, Neillsville.

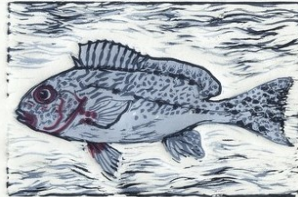
Arts and Crafts

Gyotaku, Japanese Fish Printing:

Tuesday, April 19, 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., CART

Paint-A-Fish garden decoration:

Wednesday, April 20: 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m., CART



Paint 'n Sip

with Shawn Ganther: Thursday, April 21, 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m., CART, \$20

Trash Transformation Challenge:

Sunday, April 24, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., CART, sculpture making with recycled materials

Earth Day Cleanup



Spring Clean Up & Youth Graffiti

Sweep: Saturday, April 23, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., meet at Listeman Park. Cleanup to be done in Neillsville and surrounding areas.

Crafting a Catch, handmade lures and flies by local artisans display

River of Memory, Former Days, photographic exhibit, courtesy of Jail Museum

Open for viewing when other events are happening at CART



Family activities

Family Story Hour, Wednesday, April 20: 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., Listeman Arboretum, Hwy 10 entrance

Water Action Volunteers & Fish of the River slide show,

Wednesday, April 20: 7 p.m. to 8:15 p.m., CART



Padding classes



Thursday, April 21, two sessions: Youth 8-18, 4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. and for adults 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., Neillsville High School swimming pool.

Pre-register by calling Judy at 715-743-2400 or email reclady@hotmail.com.

Entertainment



Fish Fry with music by Allen Brothers:

Friday, April 22, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., CART (seating limited and reservations required, call 715-429-0486, \$25

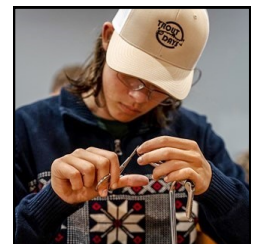
River Ramblings, Voices of the River;

Saturday, April 23, 2:30 p.m., an original play, CART, reception to follow, suggested donation \$10

Demo and Workshop

Fly Casting & Tying Workshop and casting demo, Sunday, April 24, 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.; CART

Tying Workshop, Sunday, April 24, 4:15 p.m. to 5 p.m., at CART



For more information contact Barb Petkovsek at info@ccartcenter.org or Adam Marciniak at ccfbrinfo@gmail.com

Wild rice steward speaks at March meeting

Wisconsin and Minnesota indigenous tribes consider wild rice to be medicine. That was the message Great Lake Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission wild rice steward Kathy Smith presented at the Friends of the Black River's March 9 meeting.

Smith, the gaa ganawendang manoomin or "she who takes care of the wild rice," says her position is that of steward rather than manager.

"It's not a management plan but stewardship; management is one-sided," said Smith.

Known by native peoples as manoomin, the "food that grows on water," the grain has long been a staple food for the tribes populating the northern part of Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota.

"Wild rice is the most nutritious single food Indians of North America consumed," said Smith.

Zizania plaustrarius is the Latin name for the northern variety of the wetland plant. Another variety can be found in the southern wetland of Wisconsin.

"Wild rice likes to get its feet wet and it grows in one half to three feet of water," said Smith. "It can stand two to six feet tall. Lake-grown wild rice seeds tend to grow bigger than the river variety."

An annual grass, wild rice can also be a food source for water fowl such as geese and swans. It also provides habitat for other wildlife including muskrats who use the vegetation to construct their nests. Unfortunately, the water fowl and other wildlife can damage a crop of wild rice, creating conditions for a poor harvest. Wild rice stands can also be impacted by worms and a disease called brown spot.

"Geese and swan populations are going up," said Smith, "Beaver can sometimes be good for wild rice and other times, not so good. Brown spot is becoming a bigger problem, and climate change and flooding can result in poor harvests."

The traditional method for harvesting the grain is by canoeing through the stands. Usually, one person sits in the canoe and knocks the grains off the stem and into the boat using a pair of smooth round wooden sticks each about a yard long. The canoe is propelled by a second person using a long push pole. The push pole can be about 7 feet or as long as 17 feet.

After harvesting, the seed heads are spread out to dry for several days. When



Great Lake Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission wild rice steward Kathy Smith (left) discusses her work with Friends of the Black River President Steve Rake. Photo by Pat McKnight

the grain reaches the desired dryness, it is parched in a metal container over an open fire. The husks are removed from the kernels by jogging, a method where the grains are jostled in an open basket to loosen the hulls. When loosened, the husks are light enough to be blown away in a breeze.

"A hundred pounds of wild rice knocked from stalks will produce between 40 to 45 pounds of finished rice," said Smith. "The traditional method of parching over an open fire gives a more smoky flavor."

GLIFWC is a natural resource agency assisting 11 Ojibwe member tribes in overseeing resources in the territories the tribes ceded to the U.S. government. Under the various treaties drawn up in the 19th century, Ojibwe tribes have hunting, fishing and gathering rights on ceded lands located in northern Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. While treaties signed between the tribes and the federal government guarantee those rights, Smith says the privilege to engage in those activities are, "rights given to tribes by natural law."

The tribal natural resources agency supports the tribes' exercise of treaty rights through natural resource management expertise, conservation enforcement, legal and policy analysis and public information services. GLIFWC partners with the state's Department of Natural Resources as well as local communities and state and federal agencies as well as universities to enhance the production of wild rice in ceded territory lakes.

Stewardship of wild rice includes monitoring water levels and invasive plant species. GLIFWC conducts aerial surveys of wild rice beds and will inform the tribal rice chiefs of the year's crop status.

Non-tribal people are allowed to harvest wild rice on public lands but a permit is needed to do so. However, harvesting wild rice using mechanical equipment is illegal.

Cranberry research topic of February program

With a nearly \$1 billion annual economic impact for the state, cranberries are an important crop in Wisconsin. To assist growers, the Wisconsin Cranberry Research and Education Foundation recently purchased a cranberry operation near Millston and built a research center at the site.

Tom Lochner, Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association executive director, presented a program about the developments at the Feb. 9 Friends of the Black River meeting. The meeting was held at The Hub in the Lunda Community Center.

WSCGA started out as an all-volunteer organization. In the 1970s and 1980s, the group became more structured, and in 1989, hired Lochner as its executive director. His duties include leading WSCGA and the Wisconsin Cranberry Board, Inc. as well as overseeing the Wisconsin Cranberry Research and Education Foundation.

A Prairie du Chien native, Lochner has a BS in agricultural economics from the UW-Madison. Over the past 33 years, he's worked with volunteer organizations to support and promote the state's largest fruit crop.

About 10 years ago, the cranberry foundation began looking for land to build a research center. The search resulted in purchase of the Bible family cranberry operation in 2017.

WSCGA represents 250 producer members who raise the native fruit on 21,000 acres in marshes located in the state's central and northern counties. Wisconsin is the largest cranberry producer in the country, and along with the economic



Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association executive director, Tom Lochner, presented the February program about the cranberry industry.

Photo by Pat McKnight

impact, the industry provides thousands of jobs for state residents.

Partnering with UW-Madison and the U.S. Department of Agricultural Research Service, the cranberry research center is dedicated to improving production in the largest cranberry growing region in the world. This unique public-private partnership is devoted to assisting Wisconsin cranberry growers to continue to farm in a sustainable manner.

The cranberry, formerly known as the crane berry because of the protrusion grown on the fragrant blossoms, is a low-growing evergreen vine. Vines can live as long as 100 years. It doesn't like being flooded during the growing season and thrives on sandy soil. However, growers still irrigate the plots during the growing season as needed.

Flooding the marshes in the spring helps with pest control as part of integrated pest management, helping to reduce the level of pesti-

cides needed to protect the crop. The reduction in chemical use also benefits insect pollinators needed to produce berries.

"Water is the life blood of the industry," said Lochner. "It's recycled for conservation and quality control. Water is sprayed over the vines to protect them from frostbite. The ice creates warmth near the plants and can protect them down to 15 degrees Fahrenheit."

The marshes are flooded in the fall to facilitate harvesting. The berries have four hollow compartments which lets them float. The air-filled berries help the vines stand upright in the water so harvesting equipment can jostle the berries off the plants. They are gathered using floating booms, which draws them toward the waiting trucks for transport to processing plants.

Developments in technology since the berries were first cultivated have improved the processing as well as the growing phase.

"We've gone from sticking our fingers in the ground or picking up a handful of soil to using some high-tech stuff," said Lochner. "Some operations use optical sorters to remove unwanted berries. The berries go from marsh to freezer in 48 hours."

In addition to the whole berries, innovations in cranberry products include dried cranberries, sauce and juice. The overseas market has expanded and more countries are being introduced to cranberry products with more starting to import the commodities.

Spring and Summer Paddles

Robinson Creek paddle, March 26, 10 a.m. with put-in at Old County Highway I

Halls Creek paddle, March 27, 9 a.m. with put-in at Lower Lake beach in Merrillan

Black River paddle, April 10, 10 a.m., put-in at West Clay School Road to Halls Creek

Robinson Creek paddle, Saturday, June 4, 11 a.m. with put-in at Old County Highway I

Paddle in the Park, Saturday, July 2, kids' fishing pond, Lunda Community Park, 4 p.m.—6 p.m.

Wazee Beach kayaking instruction, Saturday, July 16, 11 a.m.—1:30 p.m.

Whitewater Paddling

The Hatfield Dam conducts releases four times during the summer for whitewater paddling experience. The releases begin at 11 a.m. and run until 2 p.m. Group paddle starts at 12:30 p.m. at West Clay School Road with paddle to Halls Creek.



The dates are:

Saturday, June 11,

Saturday, July 9,

Saturday, August 13

Saturday, September 10

For more information and directions, contact Jeff at 715-896-5534.

Water Action Volunteers needed

Volunteers are needed to monitor streams in Jackson and Clark counties as part of the Water Action Volunteers program.

Stream monitors collect data on the long-term trends of water quality in the Black River watershed.

Volunteers work in pairs to collect data about the water quality of streams in the watershed. Data collected by volunteers is then entered into the statewide water-quality database.

Monitoring takes about two hours per month from May through October. Training and sampling equipment are provided.

The activity is a family-friendly project that benefits the environment.

Anyone interested in volunteering in the program is encouraged to contact Pete Segerson at 715-333-2033 or email ps205v@hotmail.com.



Supporting FBR's mission

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

Those 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 offi-

cial 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

Donations

The following are contributions made to FBR since the winter newsletter was sent out:

Michael and Tina Mahan \$100

Gebhardt Family Foundation Inc. \$1,500

Support of our mission is greatly appreciated

Ways to support FBR's mission

You can help support the mission of the Friends of the Black River by remembering FBR in your will and 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.

FBR sincerely thanks our members and other supporters for their continued dedication to FBR's mission to preserve and enhance the sustainable use of the Black River and its watershed.

New and renewing 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's 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
 I would like to give this membership as a gift
(Card will be sent to recipient)

Occasion _____

Your name _____

Membership Categories (check one)

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

I would like to make an additional contribution in the amount of \$ _____

I'm interested in serving on a committee:

- Land Preservation and Advocacy
 Fundraising and Membership Recruitment
 Programming
 Clean ups and Special Events
 Landings
 I am interested in becoming a board member

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

___ Jackson County Chapter

___ Clark County Chapter

Return registration form and checks payable to:

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

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

