



A Citizens' watershed conservation organization

Reading the River



Volume 20 Issue 4~ Winter 2023

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What's happening here?



For the answer to what's happening in the photo, see page 6.

President's Greetings

The dark season is here. This time of year brings a reduced amount of daylight, so we have to take advantage of the sunlight time for outdoor activities.

We've been experiencing variable-weather-delaying winter activities. While cold and snow make life more difficult, it also provides opportunities for enjoying activities in the outdoors at

Greetings, continued on page 3

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 2023

January: No monthly meeting

Wednesday, February 7: monthly meeting,
Master Naturalist program: 6:30 p.m., Lunda
Community Center

Wednesday, March 13: Topic to be determined

Wednesday, April 10: Topic to be determined

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. The community center is located at 405 State Highway 54, Black River Falls.

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 page and website, Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events, broadcasted on WWIS and WCCN Radio and published in the Banner Journal and Clark County Press.

FBR members working to form management area

FBR's former president Andy Ellingson and current board member Jeff Polzin have been working to get a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) formed in Jackson County. Efforts officially started on February 10, 2023 when interested folks from Jackson County participated in a partnership meeting with Monroe County Invasive Species Working Group (MCISWG) held at the Evergreen's Supper Club.

The meeting went well, and MCISWG decided to hold another partnership event. Andy has been working with MCISWG for several years and says it is probably the best such group in the state. He helped spearhead the August 24, 2023 MCISWG event at the Wisconsin Cranberry Research Station, serving as the spokesperson from Jackson County. It was the most-well attended meeting MCISWG has held.

Jeff attended MCISWG's October 26, 2023 meeting where one of the topics discussed was whether Jackson County should join MCISWG. Since invasive species don't stop at county lines, some CISMA's around the state are made up of multiple counties. Whether or not the multi-county partnership between Jackson and Monroe counties becomes official is to be determined. Both counties are currently weighing the pros and cons of formally joining ranks.

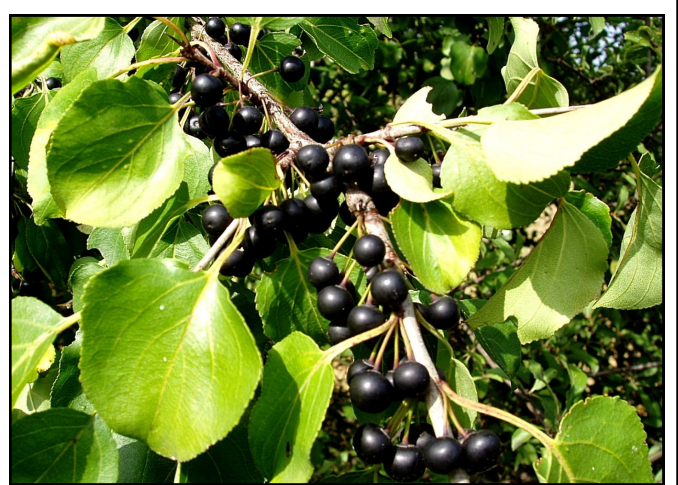
Another option for addressing invasive species in the county would be for Jackson County to form its own CISMA. Jackson County is one of only eleven Wisconsin counties not having a CISMA.

Andy says there's a need for such a group in Jackson County. As part of the effort to spread the word, Andy has been speaking to groups such as Robinson Creek Preservation Association and the

Wisconsin Town's Association of Jackson County. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin First Detector Network are among the other organizations helping with the effort to get a CISMA started in Jackson County.

Andy is optimistic Jackson County can become a CISMA, but it isn't a slam dunk. He is asking interested parties to let him or any of the groups know of their interest, ideas or ways to help make an invasive species group a reality.

Andy is also urging property owners and other concerned residents to help stop the spread of invasive species. Those concerned about the damage invasive species impose on the environment are encouraged to become informed and to – "Know it before you mow it or grow it."



Buckthorn is an invasive species of special interest in Jackson and Monroe counties.

Upcoming outdoor winter hikes and activities

Sponsored by Jackson in Action and Friends of the Black River

Wazee Wonderland Snowshoe Race or Walk:
Saturday, January 6, 10 a.m., Lake Wazee

Jackson in Action Snowshoe Hikes are a series of self-paced snowshoe hikes participants can undertake anytime between Friday 10 a.m. through Sunday 4 p.m. Event registration and park admission are free.

Jackson in Action Snowshoe Hike Series: Friday, January 12 through Sunday, January 14, Skyline Golf Course

Jackson in Action Snowshoe Hike Series: Friday, January 19 through Sunday, January 21, Wazee Lake, start location - turn right at registration booth and follow signs

Jackson in Action Snowshoe Hike Series: Saturday, February 9 through Sunday February 11, Lunda Community Park, start location – west end of parking lot near pond

In the event of sub-zero temperatures, check Jackson in Action Facebook page. For registration or more information call 715-299-0870 or at www.JacksonInAction.org.



Black River State Forest Candlelight Hike

Saturday, February 3, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., the Black River State Forest's trail head at Smekar Lodge near Millston. No admission charged.

Friends of the Black River assists with trail preparations for the event. Anyone willing to help with clearing the trail and setting up the torches is encouraged to contact a board member or email info_fbr@yahoo.com.

Jackson in Action Winter Fest



Saturday, January 27, 5 – 8 p.m.
Skyline Golf Course.

Event will feature
lighted snowshoe hike, sledding,
outdoor fire with s'mores and
hot chocolate.

Greetings, continued from page 1

this time of the year.

With all the warm-weather clothing that's available, you can enjoy a variety of activities, especially if you are active. The more time spent out in the cold, the more your body adjusts to it.

Living in Wisconsin, the change in seasons keeps residents from being bored. So keep active and enjoy the Holidays.

Steve Rake
FBR President

Maple syrup production topic of October meeting

When maple syrup producers embrace their trees, they aren't just showing their appreciation for the sweet gift the trees provide; they're determining where to best place their taps to collect sap.

"Hug your tree," said Wisconsin Maple Syrup Producers Association executive director Theresa Baroun, "that's the height where you measure the diameter of the tree. The number of taps depends on the diameter of the tree. When tapping a tree, go at least three inches away from the previous year's tap hole. The tree will heal up when the tap is removed."

Baroun presented a program about the WMSPA's work to produce and promote maple syrup at the Friends of the Black River's Oct. 18 meeting held in The Hub at the Lunda Community Center.

Formed in 1964, WMSPA works to promote pure maple syrup harvested in Wisconsin. The organization also helps members make and market the maple syrup throughout North America. In addition, it assists producers with learning new technologies as well as working with the government on issues related to maple syrup production.

First made by Native Americans, maple syrup production in Wisconsin today has placed the state fourth in the nation in the amount produced. Today, around 11,000 maple syrup producers harvest about 300,000 gallons of maple syrup valued at around \$9 million.

Centuries ago, Indigenous maple producers made the sap into sugar. In its solid form, the sap was more readily stored and transported for trading.

Baroun has been making maple syrup since she was a child helping with the family's business, Maple Sweet Dairy in De Pere. She and her husband, Jon, purchased the family operation in 2020. Along with their two children and other family members, the couple installs 1,200 taps on tubing and buckets. They also have seven solar power vacuum systems.



Wisconsin Maple Syrup Producers Association executive director Theresa Baroun discusses maple syrup production with Bryce Luchterhand following Baroun's presentation October 18 at the Lunda Community Center.

"We cook on a wood fired evaporator and finish on a propane finish pan," said Baroun. "Besides making maple syrup, we make many different value-added products including maple cream, maple candy, cinnamon maple syrup, bourbon maple syrup, honey maple syrup, maple cotton candy."

To reduce contamination or spoilage, Baroun advised it's best to collect sap every day. Collection methods can vary from using pails to sap sacks to tubing. The sap is reduced to syrup using the evaporators. While the Barouns use wood to fire their evaporator, other producers might use propane or fuel oil. The sap is heated not only to reduce the amount of water, but to prevent spoilage.

"Maple sap is perishable," said Baroun. "If it's not boiling, it's spoiling."

A hydrometer is used to measure the amount of water in the sap measured as brix. It takes more than 40 gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup. Producers need to properly handle and process the sap.

When the tree buds start to open, the sap becomes bitter tasting. Maple syrup can readily take on off-flavors.

"A lot of reasons maple syrup is good for you is because of the minerals," said Baroun. "It contains over 40 antioxidants and other nutrients as calcium, magnesium of maltic acid, potassium, zinc and riboflavin. It's considered a heart-healthy sweetener."

The various grades of maple syrup are determined by color. The grades are golden, amber, dark and very dark.

Maple trees can be harvested without damaging the forest. The trees help the environment by absorbing carbon dioxide.

See Maple syrup, continued on page 6

Using goats to combat invasive plants topic of program

Land restoration business, Diversity Landworks' motto could be, "Have goats, will travel." Business owner Kyle Johnson described at the Friends of the Black River's Nov. 15 meeting how his service rents out his goat herds to remove invasive vegetation.

The program, held in The Hub in the Lunda Community Center, informed attendees how using goat herds to combat invasive plant species has gained wider acceptance by public entities, nonprofit organizations and private landowners.

"Using goats has become an approved practice," said Johnson.

The goats eat the unwanted plants and eventually ridding the landscape of such plants as buckthorn, garlic mustard, prickly ash, Siberian elm, honeysuckle and amur maple. Buckthorn, an alien species, is a considerable concern in the Black River watershed because it out-competes native plants.

Johnson's business, based in Houston County, Minn., has been involved in native land restoration for 25 years. The land management company is the first in Minnesota to provide prescribed goat browsing services to promote ecological integrity.

Before venturing into putting goats on the land to rid landscapes of unwanted shrubs and other vegetation, Johnson used methods such as controlled fire, chemical, mechanical and hand clearing. However, none of the methods proved to develop lasting results.

"We have to figure out why these plants are here before we can get rid of them," said Johnson.

Studies show the loss of grazing and browsing animals means more plants are putting nitrogen into the soil, creating conditions that encourages plant growth.

"We decided to try something different and it went from there," said Johnson. "Goats will also eat poison ivy, yellow parsnip, garlic mustard, dame's rocket, Canada goldenrod."

Because the goats will eat invasive species seeds along with the leaves and bark, UW-Madison students researched whether the animals were reseeding the plants through their feces.

"The students put diaper on our goats and tested the droppings," said Johnson. "They found the seeds wouldn't germinate."

Diversity Landworks uses Kiko goats. That



Friends of the Black River Board member Yvonne Mair (left) shared a laugh with Kyle Johnson following Johnson's presentation at FBR's November public educational meeting. Johnson owns Diversity Landworks which rents goat herds to property owners for invasive plant species control.

breed has proven it can eat and digest plants other goat breeds can't handle. Developed in New Zealand, Kikos are able to survive different climates and conditions including temperate, subtropical, alpine and semi-arid regions.

Starting with 20 goats in 2013, Johnson and his partner Tim Taylor now maintain 700+ goats working across 1,000 acres in three states. The business manages lands in Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin for federal, state, county, city and tribal governments as well as nonprofits, land trusts and private landowners.

Johnson has found prescribed goat grazing is more effective than other eradication methods on large acreages. It takes about 60 goats to clear a 50-acre area. Having grazing and browsing animals on the land helps return lands to native conditions.

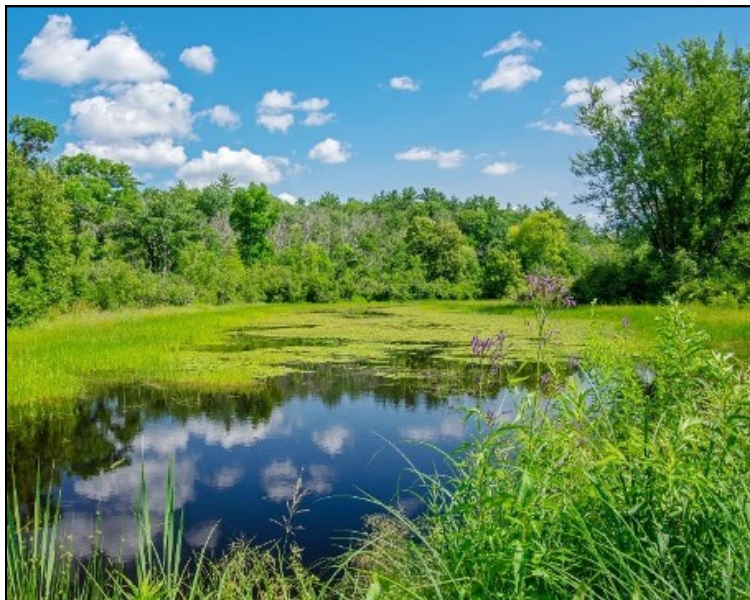
"Our native landscapes have always been managed," said Johnson. "People have always been managing the land with fire and grazing animals reduce nitrogen in the soil."

Along with being effective in clear lands of invasive plants year round, goats are highly mobile and generally get a positive reaction from the public.

The goats are equipped with GPS monitors and are contained within electric fencing and are provided water and any needed supplements.

After the land is cleared, Johnson's business reseeds the land with grasses and remnant prairie varieties.

Fair photo entries



The championship winner of the Friends of the Black River sponsored Jackson County open photography class was this color photo taken by Karla Engebretson of the pond on Hawk Island Road near the boat landing. Engebretson also received a reserve champion in the black and white photo category also on Hawk Island Road at the 2023 Jackson County Fair.



FBR sponsors photography classes at the annual county fair for both open and junior photographers. Photographs must show features of the Black River watershed and can include people and animals as well as landscapes.

Maple syrup, continued from page 4

However, climate change appears to be making the syruping season shorter because the cold night-time temperatures aren't lasting as long as in the past. Maple syrup is harvested when the day-time temperatures get above freezing and the night-time temperatures fall below freezing.

Maple syrup producers can sell their product in bulk to packers, on the farm, farm stand or at farmers' markets or using on-line through stores.

Hired as the executive director of WMSPA in December 2015, Baroun, plans WMSPA events, promotes membership, works with the state on maple issues, develops educational materials, travels around the state presenting educational seminars and attends maple events around the state along with editing the Wisconsin Maple News.

Baroun was hired in July as interim executive director of the North American Maple Syrup Council. Her duties includes editing the Maple Digest.

Thank you

Donors supporting FBR in 2023:

Jerry Poppe	Nyla Musser
Sherrill Anderson	Charles Mueller
Take a Kid Fishing	Mary Brown
Gene and Judy Ransom	Chuck and Sandy
David and Marilyn	Schwab
Hoffman	Carl Herrmann
Wayne and Lynne Clark	Cheryl and Mark Maug
Thomas Turk Jr.	Dawn and Benjamin
Joanne Adsen	Flegel
Skyline Candlelight	Cash donation
Bill and Kathy Potter	Lois Gleason

Answer to page 1 photo question:

Attendees at FBR's annual movie night served themselves pizza and other refreshments while enjoying the showing of David Attenborough's documentary Freedom to Roam. The annual movie night was held December 5 at the Lunda Community Center.

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 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 or on the FBR website at www.friendsoftheblackriver.org. It is also possible to start a membership or renew a membership on the website.

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 to preserve and care 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

To become a new member via the postal system, fill out the membership form below and mail it with dues to the address listed on the form. Renewing members do not need to submit a membership form unless there area changes .

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)

- Free Youth (up to age 18)
 \$20.00 Individual
 \$25.00 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.

