



**FRIENDS of the
BLACK RIVER**

A Citizens' watershed
conservation organization

Reading the River



Volume 22 Issue 1 ~ Spring 2026

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What's happening here?



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

Vice President's Greetings

Outdoor Enthusiasts, Spring is officially here!

My wife and I enjoyed a couple of Brewer Spring Training Games earlier in March. That area was experiencing very

warm record high temps in the 90s. We drove home, starting in that heat, into Wisconsin's blizzard.

I like the variations of weather that we see here, but that

President's Greetings, continued on page 6

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 2026

Saturday, March 28: Paddle, Robinson Creek, 11 a.m.

Sunday, March 29: Paddle, Halls Creek, 11 a.m.

Saturday, April 25: Earth Day Cleanup, volunteers are asked to meet at 8 a.m. at Castle Mound State Park campground

Tuesday, April 28: County Highway K Adopt-A-Highway cleanup, 8:30 a.m., start at intersection of State Hwy 54 and County Hwy K

Saturday, May 9: Spring wildflower walk, walk to begin at 10 a.m., those wanting to caravan or carpool to Pettibone Pass as asked to meet at the Black River Chamber of Commerce parking lot by 9:40 a.m. The BRACC is located at 120 N. Water Street, Black River Falls

Wednesday, May 13: Monthly meeting, Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro (see additional information below)

Saturday, June 13: Robinson Creek breakfast and paddle, 9-11 a.m. at the historic Wisconsin Christian Youth Camp at Fall Hall Glen on Robinson Creek south of Black River Falls, email to robinsoncreek-pa@gmail.com for more information

Tuesday, July 14: Summer prairie flower walk, rain date: Wednesday, July 15; time and location to be determined

Saturday, August 22: Annual river cleanup, rain date: Saturday, August 29, volunteers are asked to meet at 8 a.m. at Al Young Park is at the south end of South First Street

Wednesday, September 9: Monthly meeting: Danielle Hudson, program research and work with the Xerces Society

Tuesday, September 29: County Highway K Adopt-A-Highway cleanup, 8:30 a.m., start at intersection of State Hwy 54 and County Hwy K.

Wednesday, October 14: Annual meeting, program to be determined,

Wednesday, November 11: Monthly meeting: program to be determined

Tuesday, December 1: Annual movie night, movie selection(s) pending

For more information about paddles, contact Jeff Polzin by calling or texting to 715-896-5534.

Dates and times subject to change depending on conditions.

Announcements about FBR activities and events are posted on FBR's Facebook page and website, Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events, broadcast on WWIS 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 in the Lunda Community Center. The community center is located at 405 State Highway 54, Black River Falls.

Talk about climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro to be presented

Trisha Wagner and her husband were members of a group of 10 friends from Black River Falls who climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro last August. Wagner and her husband Jim, will present a program about their adventure Wednesday, May 13, in The Hub at the Lunda Community Center starting at 6:30 p.m.

The climbers started planning the trip in January of 2025, meeting with their guide multiple times that winter and spring to prepare for the hike in August.



Anyone with suggestions for possible presentations concerning the Black River watershed, environment, outdoor activities, history or other related topics are encouraged to contact FBR.

Topic ideas can be sent to info_fbr@yahoo.com or via Facebook Messenger on the FBR Facebook page.

Foundation highlights outdoor attractions in county

Jackson County wildlife has been captured in their native habitat with the use of trail cameras organized through a partnership of Jackson County Forestry and Parks, Black River Area Chamber of Commerce and Drop Shot Foundation.

“All wildlife filming is on public land - no baiting - no camera tricks - just wildlife in their natural habitat,” said Shaun Lescher, CEO of Drop Shot Foundation.

Lescher talked about the activities the foundation has been doing over the years during a program at the March 11 Friends of the Black River public meeting. Photos from the footage of wildlife and other Jackson County outdoor attractions and activities were featured at the meeting held in The Hub at the Lunda Community Center.

Drop Shot Foundation provided the trail cams with assistance through a sponsorship from Hatfield Sports Shop.

Lescher and his wife, Carolyn, formed the foundation to finance the venture of filming Jackson County forest wildlife and to organize and hold outdoor activities.

Having access to the central forest located in Jackson County, the foundation and its partners



A wild turkey walked by the trail cam set up in the Jackson County Forest. The outdoor cameras can film in all types of weather.



A black bear scratches an itch while a trail cam catches the action. The trail cam was located in the Jackson County Forest placed there through a partnership between Drop Shot Foundation, Jackson County Forestry and Parks and Black River Area Chamber of Commerce.

were able to get a unique viewing of deer, bears, elk cows and bulls, wolves, turkeys and numerous other wildlife in their natural habitat both day and night.

Videos are saved on YouTube. The links to three of the videos can be accessed via the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ebX171zrI0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR78iYcKxco>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbhrbD8C6_I

The Leschers' foundation also organizes the youngster-focused fishing day called Cops & Bobbers. The upcoming third annual fishing outing is looking to expand on last year's success. Held on Lake Lee near Millston, the second annual Cops and Bobbers was held June 2025. Coordinating

Foundation, continued on page 5

Presenters shared stories of outdoor adventures with physically challenged people

Dreams of outdoor adventures can come true for folks with physical challenges in the tri-state area with help from nasa volunteers. Those adventures are provided to the elderly, the disabled and veterans at no charge.

Tomah branch nasa representatives, Dave Stutzman and Dan Boehm, presented a program about the organization's mission at the February 11 Friends of the Black River public meeting. Originally known as the North American Squirrel Association, the organization uses lower case letter in its name to prevent confusion with the abbreviation for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Based in Holmen, nasa started in 2001 with the objective of assisting a disabled veteran who wanted to build an accessible deer hunting blind. To raise funds for the project, the Squirrel Derby fundraiser was held. Through that event and other fundraising efforts, the blind was built in 2002.

Over the years, the organization has expanded with a branch in Tomah. Around 200 volunteers help raise funds to provide the free outdoor events and activities, and the group continues to welcome anyone who wants to get involved.

When asked why the organization took its name from the common rodent, Stutzman explains, "Because all the other names (of wild game animals) were already taken."

The organization's mission continues to grow with local deer and bear hunts as well as elk hunts out west. To provide



Friends of the Black River President Steve Rake (center) presented a donation to Dan Boehm (left) and Dave Stutzman (right), representatives from nasa Tomah following the February 11 presentation. Boehm and Stutzman talked about nasa's mission to provide outdoor outings without charge for physically challenged folks.

the means for physically challenged hunters to get into rugged terrain, nasa raises funds to purchase all-terrain track chairs. The mechanized chairs have rubber treads instead of two wheels; the chairs can more easily maneuver over rough terrain than the standard wheel chair.

Hunters dreaming of going on elk hunts in Wyoming were granted their wish through the use of a modified utility terrain vehicle dubbed "The Chipmunk." The multi-passenger transport was extended to allow wheel-chair bound passengers to stay inside the vehicle and shoot.

Other equipment nasa provides the physically challenged includes tandem bicycles, modified kayaks, specialized water and snow skis, where those unable to stand can sit while enjoying the ride across a lake or down hills.

In addition to the skiing, bicycling and kayaking, nasa offers pontoon rides on local waterways, fishing, both open water and ice; hunting; archery; golfing; kayaking; bicycling; and water and snow skiing.

The elderly and other clients are transported to pontoon rides and other destinations in the Ground Squirrel, a 12-passenger bus. One of the more memorable outings has been a trip to take woman who wanted to revisit the homestead where she grew up. Other destinations have been to cemeteries and the holiday lights as well as other tours around the tri-state area.

"When they (elderly) are out of the home (facility), they get emo-

nasa, continued on page 5

nasa, continued from page 4

tional,” said Stutzman. “That’s why we do this.”

The outdoor offerings can have a significant impact on special needs persons. Boehm recounted how one at-risk youth was on a fishing trip with fellow students. The youth kept insisting she wanted nothing to do with fishing. However when one of the youth excused herself briefly, the resistant participant was recruited to hold the pole. As she was holding the pole, she got a bite and pulled in a large crappie, the largest catch of the day. Her excitement was shared with the staff and other students.

“You couldn’t scrape that smile off with a two-by-four,” said Boehm.

As the Tomah Track Chair chairman, Boehm schedules and delivers the organization’s four Action Track Chairs to disabled folks, and he also the Large Game Committee chair.

The organization also has the Flying Squirrel, a light sport aircraft. Participants wanting to take flight over Monroe County must complete a pre-flight training session.

Events held to raise funds include the Tomah branch’s annual Fundraising Banquet. The group also raises funds through raffles held in conjunction with Tomah’s Downtown Thursday Night held in July and August.

Through those fundraisers and the generosity

of sponsors, nasa has spearheaded the construction of all-abilities parks in Holmen and Tomah.

To thank the Tomah community for its support of its mission, the nasa Tomah holds Squirreelfest, a free family festival held in Tomah in July.

More information about nasa’s Tomah branch can be found on its website at www.tomahsquirrels.com, by emailing tomahsquirrels@gmail.com or by calling 608-567-4582.



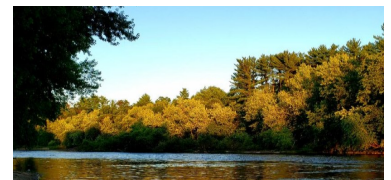
Foundation, continued from page 3



A bull elk was captured at night on a trail cam installed in the Jackson County Forest. The trail cam filming is part of a venture financed by Drop Shot Foundation.

with Vong Xiong, Jackson County game warden, about 54 youngsters were matched up with area first responders to learn how to cast, safely unhook and release a fish.

The Leschers’ presentation was part of FBR’s ongoing mission to bring educational programs about the environment and conservation issues to the community.



FBR members join Jackson In Action at Frostival event



Those venturing out to Lunda Community Park February 14, enjoyed a magical landscape for hiking along the park's wooded trail. About 60 trekkers enjoyed the more than 150 tiki torches set up on the trail.

Organized and hosted by Jackson in Action, the day's activities included sledding, face painting, hot chocolate and concessions.

While skating had been planned, ice conditions on the fishing pond weren't favorable for the activity, so the more than 50 loaner skates went unused.

Landscape photo courtesy of Jamie Polzin

Sledding photo courtesy of JIA website



Answer to page 1 photo question:

Hikers participating in Jackson In Action's Frostival enjoyed the lighted trail in the wooded area of Lunda Community Park.

The event encouraged folks to get outdoors to take in the scenery of the Black River area and to keep active during the winter months.

Vice President's Greetings, continued from page 1

was a very quick change to adjust to. That snow (hopefully, our last) reminded us that winter was still here. I'm listening to the weather forecast for 60-70 degrees in the next few days followed by 30-50 degree temperatures. This way we get to see spring's gradual changes and the plants green up and the flowers bloom.

Jeff Polzin and his wife will organize our Moth-

er's Day Weekend Wildflower Hike on May 9th. It is a short hike and identifies wild flowers especially for people like me who can't identify many of them.

Enjoy our great outdoors! The fishermen as well as tennis, baseball and softball players will get to be back in action.

Mitch Wester, Vice President of the FBR

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 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**

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. Renewing members do not need to submit a membership form unless to update contact information.

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.

