



**FRIENDS of the
BLACK RIVER**

A Citizens' watershed
conservation organization

Reading the River



Volume 14, Issue 2~ Summer 2017

In this Issue

President's message	1
Upcoming events	2
Paddling calendar	2
President's message (continued)	2
Earth Day Cleanup	3
WAV update	3
Fish and fisheries of BR program	4
Wolves and wildcats program	5
Spring wildflower walk	6
Supporting FBR's mission	7
Membership form	7

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

Jackson Burgau
(715) 299-8686

Members of the Board

Sue Bitter
(715) 896-1632

Deane Chase
(715) 964-1067

Jeff Polzin
(715) 896-5534

Pete Segerson
(715) 333-2033

Tom Teeples
(715) 284-4680

Recording Secretary

Pat McKnight
(608) 797-9167

What's happening here?



A group of volunteers turned out for an annual event this spring. For more about the event see page 3. Photo by Tom Teeples

Greetings from the president

Welcome to summer. Sure seems to me that our climate is getting warmer and wetter as we've experienced this spring. And I'm not necessarily happy with that, since I prefer cooler and drier weather myself.

It seems to me that we're hearing about floods and /or tornados somewhere in the

country about every other day. Storms are getting more common and their intensity is getting stronger. I don't think that we can keep ignoring this trend.

Friends' activities have been similar to previous years:

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

Wednesday, July 19—Prairie wildflower walk, Ron Cork property on County Hwy C, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 26 - Annual river cleanup, 8:30 a.m., meet at Al Young Park

Wednesday, Sept. 13—Monthly meeting, activist who paddled boarded the Wisconsin River

Saturday, Sept. 23—County Hwy K Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup (tentative)

Wednesday, Oct. 11—Annual meeting, program and meeting site to be determined

Wednesday, Nov. 8—Monthly meeting, program to be determined

Monday, Dec. 4— 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

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.

Upcoming paddles dates and times

Friday, June 30 - Paddle in the Park, Lunda Community Park, 4:30 p.m.—6:30 p.m.

Saturday, July 8—Hatfield release, 11 a.m.

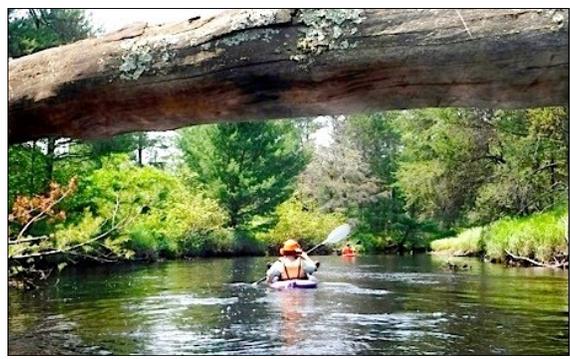
Saturday, July 15—Lake Wazee kayaking instruction, 11 a.m.—1 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 12—Hatfield release, 11 a.m.

Saturday, Sept. 9—Hatfield release, 11 a.m.

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

Dates and time subject to change depending on weather and water conditions.



Youngsters enjoyed an afternoon of paddling on the youth fishing pond at Lunda Community Park during a past Paddle in the Park event. FBR file photo

Greetings from the president, continued from page 1

cleanups, paddles, hikes and various programs. In the afternoon of Friday, June 30, we will conduct the Paddle in the Park again this year, so people can paddle on the Lunda Community Park pond. It has been very popular and we enjoy doing this.

Then on July 19th, we will be conducting another prairie walk identifying native plants at Ron Cork's property just outside of town.

August brings our river cleanup where you can

paddle the river and help pickup trash at the same time. We even have canoes for people to use.

Part of our philosophy is to maintain a clean environment as well as reuse and recycle materials as much as possible. In that light we donated \$200 to the county's recycling program again this year, so hopefully recycling will remain a popular program.

Have a good summer....

~ Steve Rake

FBR partners with state forest for Earth Day Cleanup



Three young volunteers Brooke Lakowske, Ava Hizer and Cal Lakowske stand by a poster that expresses their support for preserving the earth.

About 20 volunteers turned out to help the Friends of the Black River and Castle Mound State Park personnel with the annual Earth Day Cleanup held April 22. Cleanup volunteers were given free admission to the state park that morning.

Volunteers were assigned to clean up about 20 illegal dump sites in the state park and separating the recyclables from trash and filling an eight-foot

by 6-foot by 24-foot dumpster.

A group of volunteers also cleaned up along State Highway 12 near the entrance to the state park.

The group also expressed support for conservation and scientific research with posters.



Young Earth Day Cleanup volunteers dried out their shoes and socks by the fire in the state park shelter after spending the morning of April 22 picking up litter along US Highway 12 near the entrance of the Black River State Park.

Photos by Tom Teeples

2017 Water Action Volunteer report

This season's Water Action Volunteer monitors are Jean and Dennis Lee, Larry and Ruth Casper, Mike Brauner, Jerry Schmidt and Chris Kelly, Mitch and Sue Wester, Pete and Rose Segerson.

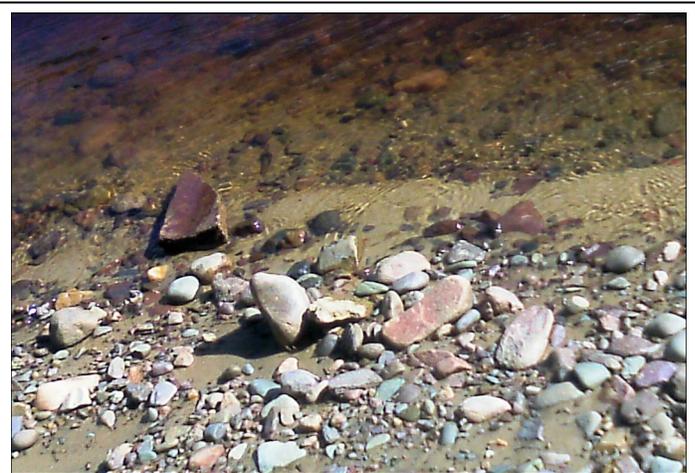
The stream monitors check temperature, turbidity, flow and dissolved oxygen levels each month from May through October at long term sites in the Black River basin.

Additionally, three sites in Jackson County are sampled monthly for phosphorous. The phosphorous sites are selected by water quality biologists from WI Department of Natural Resources and this information adds to the statewide database of phosphorous monitoring.

New sites for phosphorous monitoring are selected each year.

FBR is always looking for new water monitors and all sampling gear and training is provided.

Anyone interested in becoming a WAV monitor is encouraged to contact Pete Segerson at 715-333-2033.



A close-up photo of stream bed in the Black River watershed. Photo Jenna Severson

Black River fish and fisheries topic of June program

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 watershed at the Friends of the Black River’s June 14 meeting.

The Black River is one of the state’s waterways connecting 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.

“The banded darter is one of the creatures worth hanging on to,” said Segerson. “The



FBR President Steve Rake (left) and FBR board member Pete Segerson discuss fish and fishing opportunities in the Black River following Segerson’s program about fish and fishing in the Black River at the FBR June 14 meeting. Photo by Pat McKnight

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. At times, runoff from farm fields causes the chocolate milk appearance to the water and limits light penetration.”

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 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.”

Wolves and wildcats were topic of April presentation

Managing the activities of apex predators in the state is a delicate balance for Department of Natural Resources biologists. In addition to humans and bears, other top-of-the-food-chain mammals making their home in the state include wolves and wildcats.

The management of the species was the topic of DNR wildlife biologist Scott Roepke's presentation at the Friends of the Black River's April 12 meeting. His presentation covered the history of the wolf population decline and its resurgence as well as the status of bobcats, lynx and cougars in Wisconsin.

Timber wolves and bobcats are native to the state. While there have been reports of cougar sightings in recent years, lynx sightings in the state are very rare.

The management of wolves has been a contentious topic in the past few years. Since 1957, the animals were essentially removed from Wisconsin's landscape through bounty hunting and the wolf has been listed as endangered since then. To list or not to list the species has been debated with management of the wolf bouncing between state and federal agencies.

Despite the efforts to eradicate wolves in the lower 48 states, a number of packs survive in the northern part of Minnesota. Since receiving protected status, the numbers of the animals grew and as the succeeding generations increased, the younger wolves began to extend their territories and creating new packs.

"Wolves moved in naturally," said Roepke. "They can cover a lot of ground in a short amount of time. The first packs in Wisconsin were established in the Duluth area."

In 1995, the first packs in the central part of the state were noted with about nine packs making Jackson County home in 2016. The DNR biologist believes the statewide population will level off at around 1,200 animals.

"The state has set a management goal of 300 animals," said Roepke. "The population has gone above that level. We don't want to see wolves eliminated but reduced to a manageable level. Ultimately, we would like to see all native species back on the landscape."

Because wolves will prey on livestock and pets, the state has a program to compensate



FBR members Jeff Polzin (left) and Andy Ellingson (right) talk with Scott Roepke, Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist, about wolves and wildcats following Roepke's April 12 program about the apex predators. Photo by Pat McKnight

farmers, shepherds and pet owners for the loss of their animals.

"There has never been a documented wolf attack on a human in the state," said Roepke. "Wolves have the good sense to keep away from humans. If you're out in the woods, wolves know you're there and will avoid you."

DNR is monitoring the movement of the animals by putting tracking collars on some of the wolves. One collared juvenile male was tracked as it traveled into the upper peninsula of Michigan and then down to the southern part of the state, near the Illinois border. It then headed north again and, at last check, seems to have settled in Jackson County.

Roepke also related the story of a cougar from the Black Hills that was tracked roaming the state in 2008 making its way through Rock and Pepin counties. In 2011, it was reported to have made its way as far as Pennsylvania, where it was killed by a vehicle.

At one time, cougars could be found from southern Canada to the southern-most tip of South America. The closest breeding cougars to Wisconsin are found in the Bad Lands of North Dakota and the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Also known as pumas, mountain lion, panther and catamounts, the cats once roamed throughout the state. These days, reports of sightings of the

Wolves and wildcats, continued on page 6

FBR holds annual spring wildflower walk



A group of Friends of the Black River members enjoyed the spring weather on a wildflower walk on a trail off Mission Road. The wildflower walk is held annually to identify spring flowers blooming in the Black River watershed. Photo by Pat McKnight

A spring wildflower walk sponsored by the Friends of the Black River drew about ten hikers May 13 along a hiking trail off Mission Road. The spring wildflower walk has been an annual event for a number of years.

The walk was led by Steve Humphries and Pat McKnight. The two naturalists identified various flowers found along the trail including blood root, marsh marigolds, meadow rue, hepatica, blue and wood violets, Dutchman's breeches, miterwort and others.



Bloodroots are among the spring wildflower found on the spring hike. Photo by Pat McKnight



Marsh marigolds give wetlands a splash of yellow in the spring. Photo by Pat McKnight

Wolves and wildcats, continued from page 5

wildcats are much more numerous than actual occurrences.

"We get a lot of calls about cougars, about 1,000 reports (a year) in the state," said Roepke. "I get at least one call a month. As many as 90 to 95 percent of cougar sightings are false."

He showed photos people have posted of cougars supposedly taken in the state that were doctored and have been debunked.

Roepke said often supposed sightings of cougars are of bobcats or domestic cats seen from a distance. Bobcats' range is throughout the United States and southern Canada. They generally feed

on small animals and some birds and will eat carrion if its available.

The wildcats are managed in Wisconsin and the state does have a season on them.

"The numbers have expanded in Wisconsin," said Roepke. "There's a limited harvest in Jackson County to make sure the numbers can be sustainable."

Bobcats have also been mistaken for lynx, but the larger wildcat is extremely rare in Wisconsin, preferring the forests of Canada.

Roepke's presentation was part of FBR's ongoing mission to bring educational programs about the Black River, its watershed and environmental and conservation issues to the community.

Ways to support FBR's mission

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

Brad Garson of Garson Growth Projects: \$150 to support the Earth Day Cleanup

Dr. Michael Mahan: \$200 in honor of Jeff Polzin

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

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:

