



**FRIENDS of the  
BLACK RIVER**

A Citizens' watershed  
conservation organization

# Reading the River

Volume 16 Issue 3~ Fall 2019

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## What's happening here?



See page 6 to learn the answer to the question.

## Greetings from the president

Summer is coming to an end and I am glad. This has been one of the wettest and buggiest summers that I can remember. Being someone who likes cooler, and hopefully, drier weather, I always look forward to Fall.

While our activities with Friends slow down at this time of the year, there are plenty of activities to do on your own. Camping and hiking can be es-

pecially enjoyable now.

We had an active summer, as usual, with a great prairie walk, the kayak activity at the Lunda Community Park and river clean-ups in both the Jackson and Clark counties. Our activities are making a difference in the reduction of trash found along the river.

We have our annual meeting

*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 2019

**Wednesday, October 9** - Annual meeting, research about fungi in the Driftless Region program

**Wednesday, November 13** - Monthly meeting, Moss-er Lee and sphagnum moss harvesting program

**Tuesday, December 3** - Monthly meeting, movie night

We welcome suggestions for programs and for 2020 meetings. Send ideas to FBR email at [info\\_fbr@yahoo.com](mailto:info_fbr@yahoo.com).

Watch for messages sent to your email box for up-to-date announcements of future events.

Announcements about FBR activities are also posted on FBR's Facebook page and website, the Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events, the School District of Black River Falls' television channel and broadcasted on WWIS and WCCN radio.

*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 Hub meeting room at the Lunda Community Center.*

## Youngsters of all ages try kayaking at Paddle in the Park



Members of the public tried their hand at paddling kayaks and paddle board during the annual Paddle in the Park held on the kids' fishing pond at the Lunda Community Park. The event gives youth and adults a chance to try the sport in a safe setting.

The Friends of the Black River provided kayaks and paddling equipment for the July 6 event.

The paddle was held in conjunction with the Festival in the Park, a fundraiser for the community park.

Photos by Sue Bitter



### Greetings from the president, *continued from page 1*

coming up in October when we have our board elections. We are always looking for more people to actively participate in our activities.

Keep in mind we are always looking for program topics related to outdoor activities and/or conservation issues. If you know of someone who could pre-

sent a program related to either of these topics, we would love to hear from you!

~ Steve Rake

## River cleanups held in Jackson and Clark counties



Volunteers for the Jackson County River Cleanup launch their boats Aug. 24, heading out to paddle the river in search of trash.



Clark County River Cleanup volunteers attack an illegal trash dump during the Sept. 7 event. This was the first year FBR sponsored a river cleanup in Clark County.

*More photos of river cleanup action on pg. 6*

## Jamaican exchange student volunteers with river cleanup

Volunteering with the August 24 Jackson County River Cleanup was just another way Jamaican exchange student, Veniessa Mais, “jumped out of her comfort zone.”

This summer is the first time Mais has been away from her family. She heard about the Work and Travel Program a year ago, and acting on her desire to explore new cultures and new experiences, she became an exchange student.

With the help of SWAT LTD and Greenheart Work and Travel, Mais was able to take part in volunteer opportunities.

“Volunteering at Friends of Black River is one of my favorite activities this summer,” said Mais. “I got to meet outstanding individuals who showed me being active in my community can be done at any stage of life.”



FBR member Tom Teeples not only served as Mais’ guide during the cleanup, he made it possible for Mais to try kayaking for the first time.



“We walked along the river to collect garbage and shared many stories,” said Mais. “Overall I am grateful to have gotten this opportunity and I will keep in mind all the lessons learnt along the way, to be used in future endeavors.”

## Wildflower enthusiasts turn out for annual prairie walk



**Michigan lily**

Rain didn't deter about twelve hikers from touring a native prairie during FBR's annual prairie walk, July 16.

Steve Humphrey led the hikers on a walk-about on land he has restored with native plants to pre-European settler times. He planted about 40 acres of depleted land located about five miles north of Black River Falls with native species.

Plants blooming at the time of the walk were Michigan lilies, butterfly weed, white indigo, bergamot, cone flowers, elder berry and others.

The prairie provides habitat for wildlife ranging from insects to reptiles to mammals.

While many of the native plants have flourished over the years, Humphrey indicated the prairie environment has to be continually monitored as non-native species and trees venture into the land. As trees gain a foothold, the prairie transforms to a savannah.



**Butterfly weed**



**Goats rue**

Photos by Pat McKnight

## Jackson County Forest subject of September program

Jackson County is fortunate to have one of the 29 county forests found in the state. The state has 2.3 million acres of woodlands in its county forests

Jackson County's Forestry and Parks Administrator Jim Zahasky told Friends of the Black River members and their guests the county enjoys having a forest.

"We are really happy landowners," said Zahasky.

Zahasky talked about the history of the forest and how his department sustainably manages the woodland during his presentation at the Sept. 11 Friends of the Black River meeting.

Zahasky, a 1985 forestry management graduate from UW-Stevens Point, has been Jackson County's forest administrator for 21 years, taking the post after serving as the Ashland County Forest Administrator for six years.

The 123,000-acre forest is the largest public forested area in the central part of the state; it provides recreational opportunities to about 23,750 users each year.

Zahasky gave a brief history of logging in Jackson County during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After the land was cleared, it was sold as farm land, and those settling on the cut-over land tried to raise crops on former swamp land. Farming proved difficult because the soil was hard pan under its top layer.

During the Great Depression, many of the landowners abandoned their farms. Because the county wasn't able to collect taxes on the properties, they sought help from the state. With the state's backing, counties took possession of the tax deed lands.

During that time, the Civilian Conservation Corps planted over eight million trees in the county forest to reforest it.

In 1938, Jackson County took over management of 96,300 acres, hiring its first forestry administrator. Two years later, the county had its first timber sale. The county continues to raise and sell timber from its forest using sustainable management practices. A percentage of the revenues from the sales is distributed to the towns having county forest lands within their boundaries.

The county continues to buy land to add to the forest. However, any sales require an exchange of three acres of private land for every acre of public land. Most land sales are to cranberry growers.

"We're pretty tough when it comes to selling any county land," said Zahasky. "We're selective of what we purchase for



Friends of the Black River member, Andy Ellingson (left), discusses forestry matters with Jackson County Forestry and Parks Administrator Jim Zahasky following Zahasky's presentation about the county's forest. Photo by Pat McKnight

the county forest. We won't sell on speculation. Sales have to benefit everyone."

The forestry department works to meet sustainability standards set by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Forests meeting those organizations' requirements have an advantage over timber sellers who don't meet sustainable standards. Sustainable timber buyers can tell their consumers the forests are being managed properly; meeting the FSC and SFI standards enhances the marketability of the timber.

"If you meet all the criteria, then business customers know the paper made from the timber that's being raised sustainably," said Zahasky. "We are a working forest, and we're cutting a sustainable amount."

Along with sustainable forest management, the forestry and parks responsibilities include improving wildlife habitat. Two of the species the JCFPD is monitoring and managing habitat for are the recently reintroduced elk herd and the Karner blue butterfly.

"We really don't like to manage for a species; we want to manage for habitat," said Zahasky. "The Karner blue isn't state-listed as endangered, but is protected at the federal level. The elk are starting to bugle and people are coming up to hear them."

One of the ongoing struggles in the county forest is controlling invasive species.

"The invasives we found in the forest are buckthorn, spotted knapweed, Eurasian milfoil and phragmites," said Zahasky.

Zahasky reported he is working on the department's next 15-year management plan and will be seeking input from the public. The plan is scheduled to be activated next year.

The biggest users of the county forest are motorized vehi-

*County forest, continued on pg. 6*

More photos from river cleanups, continued from pg. 3



Cleanup volunteers - Clark River County (left) and Jackson County (right)



Clark County River Cleanup volunteers drag a car door to a pickup site.

At the Clark County River Cleanup, 13 volunteers floated the river and 7 did land-based trash removal.

Among the trash filling two trailer loads were a window air conditioner, two TV's, a beer bottles and tin cans and 18 tires. The land crew made a dent in the dump piles on the back side of town, and the water search covered 7.5 miles of river.

Support was receive from the Kiwanis Club of Neillsville, Sav-Rite Building Center, Ratsch Engineering, Subway, Dresher's BP and Gross Motors.

Clark County photos by Sara Koller  
Jackson County photos by Tom Teeples

### Answer to page 1 photo question

Volunteers with the Clark County River Cleanup haul a load of trash to the pickup site.

### County forest, continued from pg. 5

cles such as all-terrain vehicles, utility task vehicles and snowmobiles.

"Those vehicles pay for their trails mostly through their registration," said Zahasky. "We would be willing to look at more nonmotorized trails."

Listening sessions are being scheduled to get input from the public about any changes to include in the 15-year plan.

More information about the county forest can be found on the Jackson County website at [www.co.jackson.wi.us](http://www.co.jackson.wi.us) under the "Departments" button.

## Fair photo winner



William Rogstad's photo of the Black River Falls dam was the open division grand champion photograph entered in the Friends of the Black River photography contest at this year's Jackson County Fair.

## 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, 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.

## 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

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:

