



**FRIENDS of the
BLACK RIVER**

A Citizens' watershed
conservation organization

Reading the River



Volume 17, Issue 1 ~ Spring 2020

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The Friends of the Black River
PO Box 475
Black River Falls, WI 54615
www.friendsoftheblackriver.org
Info_fbr@yahoo.com
FBR is also on Facebook

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

Yvonne Mair
(262)470-1000

Members of the Board

Sherrill Anderson
920-412-1920

Sue Bitter

(715) 896-1632

Adam Marciniak

(715) 610-7529

Jeff Polzin

(715) 896-5534

Pete Segerson

(715) 333-2033

Staffer

Pat McKnight
(608) 526-9873

Greetings from the vice president

While FBR President Steve Rake is out of town, Vice President Mitch Wester is filling in to provide this issue's message.

Welcome to spring everyone! It was a mild winter for Wisconsin with lots of opportunities for outside activities. I'm not sure if the winter will return for one last chance to do each person's favorite activity be it ice fishing, snowshoeing, walking with no insects, snowmobiling or Steve's favorite, skiing.

I think we are all ready for the weather to warm up so we can have fun outside without the need for winter clothes.

Jeff Polzin and Adam Marciniak have been planning trips on the river both in Jackson County and in the Neillsville

Greetings, continued on page 2

Springing forth



A trout lily stands amidst spring beauties in a bouquet of wildflowers. They are among the early spring bloomers that can be found in the woodlands in the Black River watershed. Photo by Pat McKnight

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 this spring

Due to restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 situation, the upcoming event schedule is subject to change. Check your email for messages or log onto the FBR Facebook page or website for updates.

- April 8, 2020**—Monthly meeting, cancelled
April 18, 2020—Jackson County Earth Day Cleanup, 8 a.m., site to be determined
April 25, 2020—Clark County Earth Day Cleanup
May 9, 2020—Wildflower hike, time and place to be determined
July 4, 2020—Paddle in the Park, Lunda Community Park, time to be determined

Send suggestions for programs for 2020 programs by emailing info_fbr@yahoo.com. Announcements about FBR activities are posted on FBR's Facebook page and website, the Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events and broadcasted on WWIS and WCCN radio.

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

Spring paddles planned in Jackson and Clark Counties

This spring, paddles are planned for both Jackson and Clark counties. (No cancellations are anticipated at this time.)

Jackson County:

- Saturday, April 4, Robinson Creek, 10 a.m.
Sunday, April 5, Halls or Morrison Creek, 9 a.m. (Site to be decided at April 4 paddle)
Sunday, April 19, Black River, 10 a.m., put-in at Clay School Road

Clark County:

- Saturday, May 17, Black River, flat water, put-in at Rubys Landing
June 20 and July 25, details still being developed
Two whitewater paddles are tentatively planned for Tuesday, April 21 on Wedges Creek and Thursday, May 14 on the Black River in the Neillsville area.
More information regarding dates, times and locations will be sent out as they are firmed up.

For more information or for those interested in whitewater paddles, contact Jeff at 715- 896-5534. Paddles are held depending on water conditions.

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

area for anyone interested in canoeing or kayaking.

The list of days and places should be in this newsletter as well as on any electronic view of the Friends of the Black River information. Our annual Earth Day cleanup will be on Saturday April 18th here in BRF and the following Saturday in the Neillsville area. It's a great chance for us to show we care about our area!

With spring, the Brewers are warming up for the year and the Bucks are finishing off a terrific season. As you plan your outdoor adventures be sure to include the wildflower hike on May 9 (the day before Mother's Day). We're so lucky to live in this beautiful area!

Smile and enjoy our great world.

Mitch Wester

Volunteers needed to test streams

The Water Action Volunteer program is planning this year's stream monitoring season. Volunteers are needed to collect data on the long-term trends of water quality in the Black River watershed.

Volunteers work in teams of two to collect data about the water quality of streams which is then entered into the statewide water-quality database.

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

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



FBR—Clark County Chapter News

Chapter holds meet-the-warden event



Greg Prewitt (left), Friends of the Black River—Clark County Chapter committee member, converses with chapter chair Adam Marciniak (center) and WDNR Conservation Warden Charles Ackerman (right) during the Jan. 15 get-to-meet the warden event. Two FBR board members from Jackson County joined around 20 Neillsville area citizens in attending a meet-and-greet with Ackerman, the new Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conservation warden for Clark County.

Clark County Chapter activity update

The spring cleanup in Clark County scheduled for April 25 will be based at Greenwood Park. Adam Marciniak will be contacting sources who can advise him of dump sites that need to be cleaned up.

The Clark County Chapter has been working to identify landings along the Black River to advise paddlers of places to put-in and take-out. Adam is planning to meet with the county's Forestry and Parks Department about placing landing signs in Clark County as well as Jackson County.

Along with the signs, efforts are underway to install trash bag dispensers at the landings. Adam is looking into coordinating with Neillsville High School industrial technology department about constructing the dispensers.

Chapter assists sheriff's department with illegal dump site

This past winter, Adam Marciniak, chair of the Clark County FBR Chapter, discovered an illegal dump site on Hill Road just west of Grand Avenue in Neillsville.

He reported the find to the Clark County's Sheriff's Office and information on documents found at the site led to the identification of the person dumping household goods in a natural area.

The sheriff's department then contacted the person who was then fined and ordered to remove the items.



Safety tunnel for turtles topic of March program

Turtles and other wildlife as well as motorists are safer after an underpass was installed on State Highway 66 near Stevens Point. That is the conclusion of a study conducted by UW-Stevens Point herpetology professor Peter Zani and his students.

Zani presented the findings of the study at the March 11 Friends of the Black River meeting held at the Lunda Community Center. The project was a collaboration of the university professor, his students and the Wisconsin departments of transportation and natural resources.

In planning the highway project, the DOT needed to study the construction's impacts on wildlife. That department along with the DNR provided funding for engaging the university group to research how to lower the mortality rate on turtles trying to cross the highway.

The site of the study was in the section of STH 66 bordering Jordan Pond on its south. The highway runs on top of a dam providing water for a hydroelectric utility.

"Turtles are getting swept over the dam and are trying to get back to the pond," said Zani. "Most of the attempts (to cross the highway) are from south to north."

The underpass project had two parts – a 68-foot tunnel and a fence to direct the turtles toward the tunnel. The barrier is 16 inches tall and curved at the ends. The bottom is buried to prevent the turtles from burrowing under it and topped with smooth plastic to prevent turtles from going over it.

"Turtles can climb, it turns out," said Zani. "The curved end of the fence moves the turtles back toward the tunnel entrance. The fence is effective for keeping turtles off the roadway."

Although the tunnel and barrier project didn't eliminate all turtle deaths or injuries, the data showed there was a substantial reduction compared to the number before the underpass was installed.

One of the obstacles to encouraging turtles to use the tunnel was



FBR member Deane Chase (left) talks with UW-Stevens Point biology professor Pete Zani at the March 11 meeting. Zani presented a program about a turtle tunnel he and his students helped design and continue to monitor on State Highway 66 near Stevens Point. Photo by Pat McKnight

lighting. If turtles don't see light on the other end of the passageway, they think it doesn't have an outlet. Among the remedies was to install grates in the highway to allow light into the underpass. The designers also installed a passive reflector on the end to add more light into the tunnel.

"The brightness of the opening determines whether turtles will use the tunnel," said Zani.

For those turtles ending up outside the barrier, a hole was cut into the fencing to allow them access to the tunnel. To prevent turtles on the inside of the fence from accessing the hole, smooth flashing was installed to prevent them from climbing up the earthen ramp to the hole.

Data collected before the tunnel and barrier were installed and after indicates the project has reduced the rate of turtle mortality.

"In 2015, 66 turtles were killed in that section of highway," said Zani. "In 2016, there were four turtles killed post-construction. Last year, there were only nine road-killed turtles."

Zani believes those turtles making their way onto the highway likely started their trek outside the fencing.

The study team installed cameras at the tunnel to record the use of the underpass. Along with the turtles, other wildlife species caught on camera using the tunnel have been raccoons, opossum, beaver, mink, porcupine, weasels, skunk, muskrat and a mallard hen and ducklings.

The reduction of wildlife moving across the highway has also lessened the hazards for motorists who were either swerving to avoid turtles in the 55-mph zone or stopping to help them cross the road.

Turtles, continued on page 6

County recycling program update given at February meeting

When Wisconsin residents and businesses recycle, they keep around 1.7 million tons of materials out of landfills and incinerators every year; their communities and environment are more livable because of those efforts.

Since 1991, Jackson County Zoning and Private Onsite Waste Disposal Systems Administrator Terry Schmidt has been overseeing the county's recycling program. His talk at the Friends of the Black River's Feb. 12 meeting chronicled his department's efforts to recycle items disposed by residents. He also discussed the issues the program is now facing.

"The program has changed a lot," said Schmidt. "There's been a decrease in what is allowed to go into landfills."

In his presentation, Schmidt gave a brief history of the recycling program instituted by the state and implemented at the local level. The state recognized the benefits of recycling, and in 1990, the legislature enacted Act 335. The Wisconsin Solid Waste Reduction, Recovery and Recycling Law established the processes for reducing solid waste sent to landfills. At the time, bill supporters believed recycling could generate revenue for the counties and municipalities.

Unfortunately, changes in regulations as well as in materials and the market for those materials have increased costs for the county to operate the program. Regulations subsequently enacted by the state restricted the variety of materials going to landfills.

"It's amazing what goes into a landfill that shouldn't be in a landfill," said Schmidt.

Among the banned materials are aluminum, plastic and steel containers, corrugated cardboard, foam polystyrene packaging, glass containers, magazines, office paper and newspapers.

"You can recover a newspaper that was put into a landfill in the 1950s and it will be almost like new," said Schmidt. "When no air gets to it, it doesn't break down."

In 2010, electronics and e-waste were banned, and engine oil, filters and absorbents were banned in 2011. Other materials not allowed in landfills include garbage, construction materials, window glass, stoneware, ceramics,



FBR member Dave Cooley (left) discusses recycling with Jackson County recycling program administrator Terry Schmidt at the Feb. 12 FBR meeting. Photo by Pat McKnight

oily or greasy cardboard, medical waste, personal hygiene items and yard waste.

In the early years of Jackson County's recycling program, Riverfront (now named Aptiv) workers were contracted to separate materials. Recycling programs didn't have "single-stream" disposal at the time. Single-stream recycling is easier for consumers because they aren't required to separate their recyclables by type, i.e. newspaper, glass, metals, plastics, etc.

"Now, recyclables are single-streamed; machines will separate much of the materials," said Schmidt.

In addition to setting up recycling collection sites in the county's outlying areas that operate year round, the county holds special collection events. Items accepted at these events include pharmaceuticals, fluorescent light bulbs and sharps (needles, etc). Appliance and electronic roundups are held every spring and tire roundups are held three times a year during the summer. Those bringing items to the collection events are required to pay a disposal fee.

Despite holding the special collections events, Schmidt reports incidents of people dropping off recyclable items without paying the disposal fee. He reported several tons of tires were dumped at the county shop.

"This is littering and littering is illegal," said Schmidt. "My department can cite violators. Illegal dumping of tires at our collection site has dramatically increased these recycling costs."

The 369 tons of tires collected for recycling last year cost \$76,400 to recycle. This is an 85 percent increase from 2018 in tonnage and an additional \$14,400 in costs.

When people dump tires and other regulated materials without paying the recycling fee, the county has to find other

Recycling, continued on pg. 6

FBR helps sponsor Clean Water Lobby Day at the state capital

FBR was a sponsor for the Clean Water Lobby Day held in Madison January 30. The lobbying event saw nearly 300 conservation voters joined by 60 conservation organizations to deliver the message to legislators that clean water is a priority for the state's citizens.

Kerry Schumann, executive director for the Wisconsin Conservation Voters, reported the turnout proved that clean water is a major concern for Wisconsin residents.

"I had many incredible conversations with people who not only took action, but who serve as the backbone of conservation in Wisconsin each and every day," said Schumann.

There are several pieces of water legislation, many of which are bipartisan, advancing through the capitol. Along with the Climate Change Task Force launched in December, the movement for a healthy environment is continues to grow.

"We have the opportunity now to encourage and build on that momentum until it becomes an unstoppable force for good – for Wisconsin and for the world," said Schumann.



Recycling, continued from pg. 5

funding sources to make up the shortfall. While Schmidt's department does receive some revenue from the sale of materials, those markets have become fewer and those still operating are paying less for recyclables. To meet the costs involved with recycling, the tire disposal fee will be increased this year to \$3 each for automobile and light duty truck tires and \$20 for tires greater than 17 inches.

The county's recycling facility has limited storage space and isn't able to store collected materials in the event markets improves.

"You can't stockpile materials; you have to get rid of them," said Schmidt.

According to state law, every citizen in Wisconsin must have residential recycling service or drop-off centers within easy access and should be provided with recycling education and outreach. The good news on the recycling front is 94 percent of Wisconsin households recycle and believe it's worthwhile.

"In 2019, a total of 659 tons of household recyclables were collected in Jackson County at our drop sites or curbside pick-ups," said Schmidt. "People are recycling. If you make it convenient, they'll recycle."

Information about the state's recycling program can be found on the DNR website at DNRRecycling@Wisconsin.gov. Schmidt's contact information can be found on the Jackson County website at www.co.jackson.wi.us.

Contributions

Since the winter issue, donations to support FBR's work include:

- \$100.00 in honor of Gene Krohn's birthday
- \$200 Carl Herman and Joan Higgins to honor Jeff Polzin's contributions to FBR's mission
- \$20 from Wayne and Lynne Clark
- \$15 from Nyla Musser
- \$25 from Basil Holder
- \$100 from Thomas Turk

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

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 officials 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

Information about how to help FBR with its mission can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

Turtles, continued from pg. 4

Zani credits concerned citizens with helping to make the tunnel project a reality. Their input and reporting raised the awareness of the situation. He says UW

-SP biology department will continue to collect data on the turtles and the tunnel project.



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**
 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 give 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 _____

___ Jackson County Chapter

___ Clark County Chapter

Phone _____

Email _____

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.

