



**FRIENDS of the
BLACK RIVER**

A Citizens' watershed
conservation organization

Reading the River

Volume 18 Issue 3~ Fall 2021

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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

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

What's happening here?



See page 2 to learn the answer to the question.

Greetings from the president

Fall is coming and the weather is beginning to cool down. This is my favorite season and a great time to engage in outdoor activities.

We recently took a high school class out kayaking and had a great paddle (more details on page 6). The water was still warm enough to swim if you would like.

FBR had our first monthly meeting of 2021 in September and had a great program about hiking.

We plan to hold our monthly meetings this fall and hope our country can reduce the spread of the delta strain of the virus. Our meetings will be held at the Lunda Community Center's The Hub with masks required.

Hopefully, our society can get back to a more normal way of living soon. Remember that outdoor activities are relatively safe in avoiding the spread of the virus.

Steve Rake
FBR President

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 2021

Tuesday, September 28, 2021: Adopt-A-Highway cleanup, 8 a.m., County Hwy K and State Hwy 54

Wednesday, October 13, 2021: Annual meeting, Lunda Community Center, Mississippi River Flyway migration cam with John Howe

Wednesday, November 10, 2021: Monthly meeting, program on cloud formations with a representative from NOAA

Tuesday, December 7, 2021: Annual movie night, movie title to be announced

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 pages and website, Black River Area Chamber of Commerce's calendar of events and broadcasted on WWIS and WCCN Radio 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 at the Lunda Community Center.

Youngsters of all ages try kayaking during Paddle in the Park



FBR President Steve Rake helps paddlers launch a kayak during this year's Paddle in the Park held July 3 on the kids' fishing pond at Lunda Community Park.

Answer to page 1 photo question

Paddlers enjoyed the kids' fishing pond at Lunda Community Park during this year's Paddle in the Park held July 3.



The kids' fishing pond at Lunda Community Park was filled with paddlers trying kayaking and standup paddle boarding during the annual Paddle in the Park.

Photos by Yvonne Mair

Supporting FBR's mission

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

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.

Clark County Chapter News

Landing signs installed to inform river users

The Clark County Chapter reached its goal of installing 25 river landing sign posts by the end of summer. The sign posts were installed at the parking lots of the more improved river landing sites around the county.

The posts display satellite-image maps of the river on aluminum plaques along with information about distances and travel times on the river. In addition, the maps show where paddlers can obtain flow rate information, the location and classification of rapids and other information about kayaking and canoeing conditions.

The maps project started with several signs in Neillsville and was expanded to include the additional locations on the river as well as some navigable streams in the river's watershed.

In addition to the signs, the posts also have brochure holders containing more information about the river, the Friends of the Black River, trash bag dispensers and monofilament line recycling receptacles.



FBR board members Jeff Polzin (left) and Adam Marciniak finished an information kiosk installed at East Arbutus boat landing. The kiosk provides maps for paddlers and other river users as well as brochure and trash bag dispensers.



Along with a map of the river, the landing sign posts have brochure, trash bag dispensers and monofilament receptacles to recycle the filaments that can be hazardous to wildlife.

Clark County youth help beautify river bridges



Clark County FFA and 4-H members helped improve their community by painting over graffiti on bridges in Neillsville. The volunteers assisting with the project in the group photo are (left to right) Isaac Balderas, Braden Gerhardt, Kolin Schmitz, Ian Zoschke, Keith Miatk, Adam Marciniak and Jeff Polzin. Braden Gerhardt (right photo) looks over the graffiti on one of the bridges the group worked on.

Author shares information about scenic hiking areas

Nature author Rob Bignell believes conservation efforts are needed to preserve wooded places so future generations will be able to enjoy autumn hikes in Wisconsin. Bignell brought that message to Friends of the Black River members and guests Wednesday, Sept. 8, in The Hub at the Lunda Community Center.

Bignell's autumn hiking program resumed FBR's regular educational programming halted last year due to the Covid pandemic.

A Wisconsinite and a nearly three-decade backpacker, Bignell has written more than 30 hiking guidebooks. Along with writing about great places in Wisconsin to hike, Bignell published guides about other scenic places in the Upper Midwest and national parks; several have topped bestseller lists.

He started out writing books offering advice about hiking with youngsters. He encourages parents and other adults to get youth outdoors in the fall because the season provides some of the most ideal conditions.

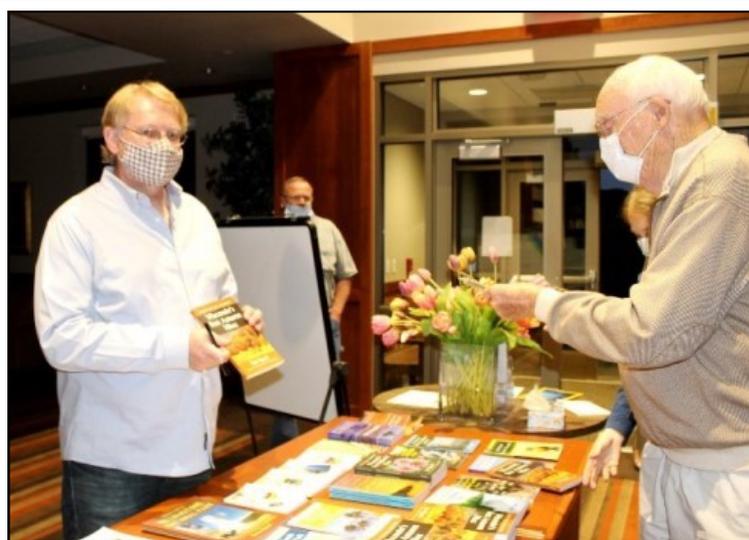
"Autumn hikes are one of the best ways to get kids involved," said Bignell. "It's the perfect time to go hiking. There are no bugs and the temperature is ideal. Autumn also gives some of the best sight lines when the underbrush loses some of its greenery, so geologic formations and wildlife are more visible."

And of course, the variety of colors of tree leaves attract those wanting to enjoy "the brilliant yellows, oranges and red of maples to the scarlet and russets of oaks, from the ambers and golds of aspen and birch to the crimson and purples of sumac and white ash," says Bignell. "It's like living in a painting created by Mother Nature's masterful brushstrokes."

He noted fall tends to inspire people to go out for a drive to take in the colors rather than becoming immersed in the woods by hiking.

"A lot of times, they just miss a lot (when riding in car)," said Bignell. "You don't see much except for a blur of colors."

Among the scenic places Bignell recommended in the Black River Falls area was



Nature and travel book author Rob Bignell (left) discusses his book, "Wisconsin's Best Autumn Hikes," with Gil Homstad. The guide book was Amazon's top selling Wisconsin travel e-book for three weeks in 2020 and continues to chart. Photo by Pat McKnight

Castle Mound State Forest. The lookout stands 189 feet above the sand plain and has a boreal forest of oaks, aspen and pine.

Other worthwhile hiking sites in the Black River watershed include the Ice Age Trail, Levis Mound's Porky Point near Neillsville and Halfway Creek Trail in Holmen.

Unfortunately, the state's and the nation's forests are threatened. The threats include warmer and drier conditions due to climate change. The warmer and drier climate also means greater incidents of wildfires.

"We are approaching conditions similar to the 1930s," said Bignell. "Warmer conditions are pushing our species north. The sugar maple are disappearing from Tennessee and starting to show up in northern Wisconsin. If we don't do something, we'll look like Preoria, Illinois in 20 years. We are going to lose what makes Wisconsin special."

Species preferring warmer conditions moving into Wisconsin might include hickory, black oak and walnut.

Forests are also threatened by pests such as emerald ash borer and from development of buildings and roads which brings more pollution. Agriculture can also make the land more acidic.

The best time for enjoying nature hikes in the middle section of the state is late September to mid-October. With such a narrow time span for viewing optimal color, residents in the Driftless Region will want to plan hikes soon.

Bignell's presentation was part of FBR's ongoing mission to bring educational programs about the environmental and conservation issues to the community.

Wildflower enthusiasts take prairie walk



Steve Humphrey (front) pointed out various varieties of prairie wildflowers during the annual prairie walk held July 21 at Erik Adsen farm near Shamrock.

Prairie environment specialist Steve Humphrey led a prairie walk July 21 on the Eric Adsen land near Shamrock. About 15 people took part in the walk to learn about the variety of wildflowers favoring prairie conditions.

Prairies environments have special ecosystems providing the conditions for grasses, forbs and sedges.

“There’s the entire ecosystem,” said Humphrey. “Some plants do better in dry conditions and others do better in wet.”

Prairie plants develop a thick root mass below ground, which makes it possible for the plants to recover after natural fires occur. Those fires prevent trees and shrubs from gradually turning grasslands into woodlands.

Oaks establishing a foothold in prairies tend to form savannas. The savannas create an environment for shade loving prairie plants.

Among the wildflowers Humphrey identified for the walkers included blazing star, gray-headed coneflower, flowering spurge, New Jersey tea, white indigo, wild rose and others.



Wild Rose



Blazing Star

Photos by Pat McKnight

FBR receives life jacket donation



FBR Clark County Chapter recently received a donation of 22 life jackets from generous supporters. The life jackets can be loaned out by the Clark County Chapter to participants taking part in its paddles while others could become part of a loaner program being considered at Lake Wazee. FBR is exploring starting a program in partnership with Jackson County Parks Department to set up a life jacket loan program at the county lake similar to the one at Lake Arbutus.

The Hatfield Lake Association’s program was the first group in the state to start a program allowing those recreating on water to borrow safety gear.

Jeremy Breheim, JCPD parks manager, says his department will pay for the construction of a container to store the life jackets. But, he says there are still some questions he needs to answer before the program can go into effect. Those questions include: What are the state requirements concerning the vests? Who would monitor the jackets? How will the program be structured with the state and groups running them? Is there any funding available from the state?

Students learn kayaking skills



FBR board members Steve Rake, Jeff Polzin and Dan Moore helped students from Black River Falls High School learn paddling skills during several on-the-water sessions. The outdoor adventure sessions were held on Lunda Community Park Fishing Pond, Lake Wazee and Black River.

Jackson County Fair river photographs class winners

Each year, FBR sponsors photography classes at the Jackson County Fair inviting photographers to enter photos of the Black River and its watershed.

Premiums are awarded to the champion and reserve champion photos in the junior and open divisions.

This year, Alyssa Tubbs received a grand champion placing in the junior division with her black-and-white photo (upper right).

Hannah Tubbs received a reserve champion placing in the junior division with her color photo (lower right).

Dave Meyer received a reserve champion placing in the open division with his color photo (lower left).



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 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.

