

Agenda/ Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: 01Mar2025

Topic: Lake Wisconsin Watershed Meeting

Meeting Attendees:

Organization	Representative
Columbia County	Chris Arnold Tess Wallner
Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wisconsin	Arthur (Art) Watkinson Nathan (Nate) Nye
Green Merrimac	Bob Pfaff
Golden Sands Resource, Conservation & Development Council	Mara Lince
Lake Wisconsin Alliance	David Kell Mike Gleason Amy Stowe
Lake Wisconsin Farmers Watershed Council	Joe Benish
Okee Bay/ Mill Pond Association	Carol McMahon Bill Spain
Sauk County Land Resources	Jen Schneiderman
Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance	Rob Lutz
Spring Creek Volunteers	Kim Myer

Meeting Discussion:

This was the second meeting held of the organizations supporting environmental causes around the Lake Wisconsin watershed. The meeting was organized and hosted by David Kell of Lake Wisconsin Alliance and Arthur Watkinson, South-Central Regional Lakes Coordinator of the Wisconsin DNR.

David and Mike described their attendance at Farmers Watershed Leadership Event in Starved Rock, Illinois. Their attendance was in partnership with Ron Schoepp. David and Mike talked about how LWA has partnered with local farmers to advance the message of conservation farming.

Each organization gave an update on their activities and identified areas for partnership and support.

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1. **Columbia County:** Chris Arnold has worked to develop what is now likely the largest county-based lake program in the state. Chris detailed all of the activities they support, including supporting applicants in the Healthy Lakes Grant process.

Tess Wallner is getting involved with the producer-led group in Columbia County, promoting ecological farming methods, such as cover crops.

2. **DNR, Wisconsin:** Nate Nye supports Columbia and Sauk County and is responsible for managing game fish populations in the area. They recently concluded a large survey on Lake Wisconsin. The full report is available on the DNR website by county.

The reports Nate discussed can be viewed via the links below.

[Microsoft Word - ColumbiaSaukLakeWisconsin2023Comprehensive.docx](#)

[Reports ColumbiaSaukLakeWisconsinandWisconsinRiver2023Creel.pdf](#)

Art Watkinson described his role as support for lake groups, focusing on securing surface water grants. Additional activities supported include the following:

- Aquatic plant surveys
- Water quality monitoring

Art reviewed the information available on the following websites:

[Upcoming Events | Sauk County Wisconsin Official Website](#)

[Lake Programs | Sauk County Wisconsin Official Website](#)

[Home — Lakeshore CAP](#)

[Wisconsin's Lake Protection Grant Program | Sauk County Wisconsin Official Website](#)

[Microsoft Word - 2020 Baraboo Hills Streams Report FINAL 20210610.docx](#)

[Trout surveys and assessments | Fishing Wisconsin | Wisconsin DNR](#)

[DATCP Home Land and Water Resource Management Plans](#)

The group also discussed having a lake management plan. Art informed the group that a plan was put together for the Winnebago lakes. That plan is posted to the following website.

[Winnebago Waterways Recovery Plan » Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance](#)

3. **Golden Sands Resource, Conservation & Development Council:** Mara Lince is an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Investigator. She works for 4 different counties. Her focus is for education of AIS across the 4-county area.
4. **Green Merrimac:** Green Merrimac has celebrated its 2-year anniversary this year. This is a volunteer organization with a mission to protect and improve our environment.

They have identified 4 major areas of emphasis: communication/ education; energy conservation; eco-scapes/green-scapes; and reduce, reuse and recycle. Bob reviewed the

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activities, accomplishments, and goals for the past year. Please refer to the attached presentation for details.

More information about Green Merrimac can be found on the website for the Village of Merrimac (link below).

[Green Merrimac - Green Merrimac - Village of Merrimac, Wisconsin \(merrimacwi.gov\)](https://merrimacwi.gov)

5. **Lake Wisconsin Alliance (LWA):** Mike Gleason presented the mission of the LWA, its mission, and membership. Some of the 2024 activities included:

- Member newsletters featuring activities around the area and information on native and invasive plants
- Fund raising and community involvement activities (e.g., Ice Fishing Tournament, Eskimo Open, sponsored by the Lions Club)
- Support buoy and light installation with the Grade Boat Club
- Monofilament Line Containers: Built and installed at area boat launches

More information on the LWA can be found on its website lakewisconsinalliance.org

David learned that some areas have a Watershed Coordinator. There is a coordinator for Sauk County (Mitch McCarthy). At this point, it is believed that Chris Arnold is the coordinator for Columbia County. The question remains as to if there should be a defined position or role for a watershed coordinator for Columbia County.

6. **Lake Wisconsin Farmers Watershed Council:** Joe Benish discussed the hurdle of funding support for alternative farming practices. Funding support for these practices is getting cut around the state. This group wants to get the general public more involved and aware of how their food is produced.
7. **Okee Bay/ Mill Pond Association:** Bill Spain presented for the Okee Bay Association. Their activities this year included the following:
 - Fundraising
 - Conducted 2 harvesting events on the bay
 - Worked Lake Wisconsin Farmers Watershed Council
 - Reached out to the property owners in the Spring Creek watershed
 - Worked with the DNR and Columbia County for aquatic planting
 - Submitted a proposal for a student practicum with the University of Wisconsin Madison, Nelson Institute, to study the bay and watershed. The proposal was accepted. The outcome of the practicum will be recommendations for the healthy management of bay and watershed.
8. **Sauk County Land Resources:** Jen Schneiderman presented for the Sauk County Land Resources group. This organization is largely focused on agricultural land use and conservation. Jen works

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with Sauk County Parks. Mitch McCarthy is the watershed coordinator and works with a lot of the local lake groups. This organization's activities include the following:

- Offer a cost sharing grant with landowners that offers up to 50% cost sharing for shoreline improvement and lake management
- Host a native plant and tree sale. They include plant kits. For example, they have a low growth plant kit for shoreline planting that will not obscure the lake view.
- Work across departments and local and federal organizations.
- Planning a State of the Lakes event. More details to come on this!

Conservation events can be viewed at the [Upcoming Events | Sauk County Wisconsin Official Website](#)

9. **Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance:** Ron Lutz has recently joined this organization as Executive Director. This organization is responsible for converting the Badger Ammunitions Plant to a nature reserve. There are prairie and oak savanna areas within the property. There are 5 landowners on this property, with the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance being the coordinator between them. The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance coordinates volunteer efforts on the property. Last year, there were 510 hours of hands-on work done by volunteers.

Currently they are working on the following:

- Monarch Larva Monitoring project thru UW on the Ho-Chunk property.
- Write and submit grants for ecological surveys
- Working on extending the Great Sauk Bike Trail
- Keep the public informed about the contamination plume in the groundwater.

More information can be found at their website, [Home | Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance](#)

10. **Spring Creek Volunteers:** Kim Myer presented for the Spring Creek Volunteers. This is a small group of volunteers that are doing small projects around Spring Creek. Currently, they are working on stream bank restoration in the parks. They also connect with Okee Bay group on some topics/projects.

Next Meeting: Watch your email for the 2026 event



Annual Report 2024

1) History

- a) Green Merrimac grew out of a community awareness event sponsored by the Village of Merrimac Planning Commission, to solicit resident feedback for an update to the Comprehensive Plan conducted September 2022. Four items were identified by the group for the Plan's focus. One item was "*How can we address environmental impacts*". Our first organizational meeting was held on January 26, 2023. We meet monthly.

2) Mission

- a) *We are a group of dedicated community volunteers implementing meaningful changes for the Merrimac area that help protect and improve our environment through education and active citizen participation.*

3) Achievements

- a) On December 5, Powered Up Baraboo, a prominent grassroots environmental group, awarded a 2024 Climate Champion Award to Green Merrimac. The awards are given to individuals and organizations that are taking responsibility to help protect our planet by advancing local efforts to conserve energy, use renewable energy and create sustainable green spaces.
- b) Made a proposal to Village Board for environmental initiatives and received \$500 village budget funds toward those goals.
- c) Conducted 2nd annual Earth Day Event – Village streets and highway cleanup (12 participants)
- d) Sponsored an Information booth at the Merrimac Village Festival. We provided free LED light bulbs, had reusable grocery bags with Green Merrimac logo for sale, handed out information on Focus on Energy rebates and free energy saver packs and had information on recycling and composting.

- e) Implemented a Village-wide **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** event, including a dumpster at the village hall, sponsoring a village wide garages event and a rummage sale at the village hall supplied by donated items from village residents.
- f) We held our first Fall Picnic event in October.
- g) Promoted National Wildlife Federation NWF *Wildlife Habitat Certification* for home properties. We currently have (6) Certified Wildlife Habitats with several more pending.
- h) Continued energy audits at the Village Hall and Wastewater Treatment facilities. Advocated for a solar panel array at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, however, was not approved by the village board at this time.
- i) Conducted a resident survey to recognize concerns of Merrimac citizens. We continue to review and prioritize the results and use the results to guide our mission.
- j) Implemented environmental education articles in the Village Voice, Village Website and Facebook pages.
- k) Developed an email mailing list (currently 40) for regular communication to village residents promoting energy conservation and earth friendly practices for village residents.
- l) Developed an annual event calendar to help organize our recurring events.
- m) Implemented a winter environmental film series, called Friday Nite Eco Flicks, held at the Village Hall.
- n) Identified (4) areas of emphasis. 1. Communication and Education, 2. Energy Conservation, 3. Ecoscapes / Greenscapes 4. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

4) Goals.

- a) Complete an energy audit and saving plan for the village facilities and equipment. Provide support and resources to meet the energy saving recommendations.
- b) Promote and support the solar panel array installation for the Wastewater Treatment Plant and have the board approve the project while Inflation Reduction Act funding of 30% is still available.
- c) Receive *National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat Community Award* for the Village of Merrimac. We need (40) individual properties (homes, parks, schools, businesses, and others) to attain certification.
- d) Educate and encourage village residents to use renewable energy and sustainable environmental practices for their home, property and transportation.
- e) Continue to develop and expand cooperative relationships with other environmental, civic and religious groups in the area, such as Powered Up Baraboo, Lake Wisconsin Alliance, Merrimac School, the Town of Merrimac and Sauk Prairie Solar Schools.

- f) Continue to sponsor annual fundraising and awareness events in the Village, such as a spring village cleanup and recycling event, village festival booth and community Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and garage sale events.

5) Financial Statement 2023

- a) Most of the funds available for expenses have been made by proceeds from the rummage sale, committee member and resident donations.
- b) Current balance – \$661

6) Who we are:

- a) Chairperson – Bob Pfaff
- b) Vice Chairperson – Jennie Klecker
- c) Treasurer – Nancy Malmberg
- d) Active Contributing Members
 - i) Cheryl Anderson
 - ii) Laurie Martin
 - iii) Rick Portz
 - iv) Joyce Ogden-Portz
 - v) Sheila Burton
 - vi) Eric Hunter
- e) Supporting Members
 - i) (40) additional residents which receive our Email updates and have been supportive of our mission

Thank you for your continued support!

Contact Us at – greenmerrimac@gmail.com

Lake Wisconsin Alliance

2nd Annual Meet and Greet – March 1, 2025

Origin of Lake Wisconsin Alliance – 2014

Mission Statement: The Lake Wisconsin Alliance endeavors to balance the diverse interests of the Lake Wisconsin community while improving water quality, recreational opportunities, and sustaining a healthy ecosystem within the Lake Wisconsin watershed.

Membership: We have around 500 members, mostly lakefront property owners.

Quarterly Newsletter:

Tips on environmental things
people can do and get
involved in.



Lake Wisconsin Alliance | PO Box 172 | Poynette, WI 53955 US

NEWSLETTER SUMMER EDITION JUNE 2024

IN THIS ISSUE

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES ZEBRA MUSSELS

UPDATES: Garlic mustard pull

UPCOMING EVENT
Conservation Night at Schoepp Farm

BOATING & SAFETY ON THE RIVER

POLLINATOR WEEK June 17-23
NESTING TURTLES

FISHING ON LAKE WISCONSIN

SUNSCREENS THAT HARM THE LAKE
AROUND THE LAKE



Photo Reference: Zebra Mussels by My FC, natdglb, Flickr cc 2.0

ZEBRA MUSSELS

**SUMMER IS HERE: WATCH
OUT FOR THESE HITCHHIKERS**

Photo and Article References: UWSP, CNR Associated Programs;
Extension Lakes Clean boats Clean Water, Ripple Effects, Ted J.
Rulseh

Native Plant Sale:

We send out information on what plants are available and good for the local ecology.



It's Time to Think About Spring!

The best way to beat the winter blues is to think about what native plants you will be planting this spring! Our friends at **Powered Up Baraboo** are taking orders for native plants that could be fantastic additions to your garden or surrounding property! Read on and click the link below to find out more information.

Native Plant Sale Fundraiser

Order online from February 1st until
February 28!

Order pick up and in person sale will
be held Saturday May 17, 2025.
Ordering online guarantees you will
get all the plants you want in May!

WHY PLANT NATIVE?

Native plants support pollinators,
improve and stabilize soil, reduce
rainwater runoff and require less
watering than lawns AND store
carbon in their root systems!

\$5 PER PLANT

Butterfly Weed
Bee Balm
Culver's Root
Prairie Blazing Star
Zig Zag Goldenrod
Columbine
Virginia Bluebell
Solomon Seal
Little Bluestem
Prairie Dropseed



for more information visit our website
poweredupbaraboo.org
or email us at
poweredupbaraboo@gmail.com

Lake Wisconsin Alliance community events and involvement:

Annual Ice Fishing Tournament:



Lodi Lions Club – Eskimo Golf Open



SATURDAY, AUGUST 3, 2024

MERRIMAC COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

NEW THIS YEAR CAR SHOW, SKI SHOW, LIVE
MUSIC, FUN FOR KIDS, CRAFT VENDORS, FOOD



Volunteer to pull invasive species in Badger Prairie Land





**Organize Local
Community Nature Hikes**



Sandbar Boater Get Together



Greater Boat Club Buoy Lighting and Maintenance Funding



Monofilament line collection for recycling



Conserve Sauk Film Festival



**CONSERVE
SAUK
FILM FESTIVAL**

November 4, 2023
10 AM - 5 PM

Free Event | UW-Platteville Baraboo
Sauk County Campus

This event is free and open to the public.
For more information including a complete list
of films, and film schedule please visit:
www.conservesaukfilmfest.org



SPONSORS:

- LAKE KATYU LODGE
- ALLIANCE
- BARABOO RIVER
- BARABOO INSTITUTE
- THE ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION
- BARABOO
- SAUK COUNTY
- SAUK COUNTY
- DEVILS LAKE
- BARABOO RIVER
- SAUK COUNTY

Conservation Farming Events Support







Questions and comments

OKEE BAY (MILL POND) LAKE ASSOCIATION



2024 PROJECTS

- April Fundraiser at Fitz's on the Lake.
- Aquatic plant harvesting in Okee Bay, May & July
- Sent out a joint letter with Lake WI Farmers Watershed Council to landowners with greater than 20 acres in watershed.
- Working on a web page.
- Involved with Columbia County and WIDNR on a watershed and bay project.
- Submitted a proposal to UW Madison, Nelson Institute as a practicum location.

2024 Projects

- Worked with Town of Lodi on rebuilding boat ramp on Okee Bay.
- Worked with Columbia County on Healthy Lakes Grant and will continue into foreseeable future.

2025 Projects

- Fund raiser at Lucky's on the Lake
- Fund raiser at Fitz's on April 27th
- Harvesting plan for 2025 season.
- Proposal accepted by UW to study Spring Creek Watershed starting Fall of 2025 through Summer of 2026.
- Continue work with Columbia and Dane Counties on Targeted Runoff plan for Spring Creek Watershed and Aquatic Plant management plan for Okee Bay.