

USRWA News



Strategic Plan Paves Future for USRWA

2014 was an important year for the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA). Through the support of a River Planning Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, USRWA worked to develop a five-year strategic plan to help chart the future of the organization. Strategic plans are especially important for non-profit organizations so staff members, volunteers and the Board of Directors can have a unified understanding of the long and short term goals.

Mission

The mission of USRWA is to provide leadership for continuous resource improvement through strategic partnerships that benefit the watershed's land, water and people.

Since USRWA partners with so many entities around the area, USRWA started by identifying key stakeholders in the community to get their opinions on what they felt USRWA's biggest priorities should be in the future. These stakeholders included municipalities, businesses, farmers, community leaders, schools, other non-profit organizations and USRWA members. Using this information, a committee led by Allison Werner from River Alliance of Wisconsin developed a mission, vision, goals, objectives and a detailed action plan in which to accomplish the objectives.

As a result of this strategic plan, USRWA has formed five committees to shoulder the work moving forward. Three of these committees (Agricultural & Adaptive Management, Fundraising, Event Planning) are open for members to join and participate in. Committees typically meet on a monthly basis and are currently made up of Board members and volunteers. Anyone interested in participating on a committee is encouraged to go to usrwa.org/volunteer for more information.

All told, the strategic planning process took eight months from beginning to end. USRWA would like to thank everyone who contributed towards this strategic plan, including Allison Werner, former Executive Director Megan Phillips, the entire USRWA Board of Directors, community stakeholders, and the feedback from USRWA members.

Goals

1. Work collaboratively with the farming community to reduce agricultural runoff entering the river.
2. Strengthen the capacity of the USRWA to effectively fulfill its mission.
3. Gather essential data to foster improvements in the watershed.
4. Improve water quality through targeted restoration projects.
5. Engage and educate our members and the community to increase their awareness and appreciation of the Upper Sugar River.

Vision

USRWA will serve as a steward of the river and its upland environments, and encourage projects and behaviors that enhance the quality of these resources and mitigate issues such as sedimentation and phosphorus runoff. The organization will facilitate community engagement and new partnership formation by implementing innovative approaches to solving watershed problems that are both pragmatic and cost-effective. Through these measures, USRWA will be known as a vital voice in the community that advocates for the river and bolsters awareness and watershed literacy.

USRWA Volunteers Monitor Water Quality at 22 Sites in 2014

As 2014 comes to a close, our devoted USRWA volunteers have completed another successful season of water quality monitoring. This season 22 sites were independently monitored by 10 volunteers across the watershed on a monthly basis from April to October.

Depending on the site, monitors test for numerous things including dissolved oxygen levels, water clarity (turbidity), temperature, river flow speed, habitat quality, phosphate, nitrate, conductivity and macro-invertebrate diversity. At 13 sites, USRWA also deploys continuous temperature data loggers called thermistors that track water temperature each hour throughout the monitoring season.



Continuous temperature logging devices were deployed at 13 testing sites around the watershed in 2014.



Water quality monitor and Board member Steve Gavin.

The data obtained from water quality monitoring is recorded into a statewide database coordinated by the Water Action Volunteers (WAV), a partnership between the Wisconsin DNR and UW-Cooperative Extension. WAV currently collects data from over 450 sites across Wisconsin and is ultimately used by multiple state and local agencies to assist in management decisions. As specific monitoring sites are tested year after year, trends in the data become increasingly reliable and valuable.

Thank you to all our volunteers for being part of the 2014 monitoring season. If you are interested in becoming involved next year, please contact Wade Moder at usrwa@usrwa.org or call 608-437-7707. Half-day classes are available starting in Spring to train volunteer monitors on the various tests and the science behind them.

Water Quality Monitoring Sites in the Upper Sugar River Watershed

Town of Blue Mounds

- Blue Valley Tributary upstream from County Road JG
- West Branch Sugar River @ Barton Road

Town of Cross Plains

- Sugar River @ County Road S, upstream
- Sugar River @ Domini Road

Town of Montrose

- Flynn Creek @ County Road A

Village of Mt. Horeb

- Schlapbach Creek @ Mt. Horeb Lift Station
- West Branch Sugar River @ Docken Road

Town of Primrose

- West Branch Sugar River @ County U
- Primrose Branch @ County Road U

Town of Springdale

- Fryes Feeder @ Town Hall Road near Highway 92
- Schlapbach Creek @ Sletto Road
- Schlapbach Creek @ Klevenville-Riley Road
- “Anderson Tributary” to Schlapbach Creek South of Bakken Road
- Fryes Feeder @ Miller Driveway off Town Hall Road
- Deer Creek @ Thompson Farm, crossing off Highway 92 on Sutter Drive
- Fryes Feeder upstream of Town Hall Road/ Highway 92 intersection
- Deer Creek @ Donald Park

City of Verona

- Badger Mill Creek @ Lincoln Street bridge, upstream
- Badger Mill Creek @ Lincoln Street bridge, downstream

Town of Verona

- Badger Mill Creek near Manhattan Drive
- Sugar River @ Riverside Road
- Sugar River @ Valley Road

Phosphorus is a Focus in the Upper Sugar River Watershed

Both in urban and rural areas, phosphorus runoff is perhaps the biggest threat to clean water. Phosphorus has long been recognized as the controlling factor in plant and algae growth in Wisconsin lakes and streams. Small increases in phosphorus to our surface waters can fuel substantial increases in aquatic plant growth, algae blooms (that can contain toxins), and nuisance algae (Cladophora). The resulting increased plant growth causes decreased levels of oxygen, which is needed to support a healthy fishery and aquatic ecosystem. All of these impairments to our surface waters can reduce recreational use, property values, and public health.

In 2010, Wisconsin became one of the first states to require specific numeric criteria for phosphorus in streams and rivers. Because these standards are still new, many waterways around the state are just beginning to be tested and very little baseline data currently exists. For a single site, reliable baseline data consists of monthly testing from April to September (six tests/season) professionally administered in a lab. Lab testing costs approximately \$25 per test, totaling \$150 needed to test six times at a given location.

The Upper Sugar River Watershed Association would like to jump start phosphorus testing in our waterways by issuing a challenge. Our goal is to perform phosphorus testing at 20 sites around the watershed in 2015, totaling \$3000 in all. If you would like to give your watershed a holiday present this year, please see the sheet enclosed for information on donating.

MMSD's Foresight Providing a Better Sugar River Watershed Today



Badger Mill Creek
Cascade Aerator
located along the
Military Ridge State
Trail near Verona

In the 1990s, the Verona area was at a crossroads in terms of managing its wastewater. The Verona Wastewater Treatment Plant was nearing capacity, and something needed to be done to facilitate the future growth of Verona while maintaining the environmental integrity of the Sugar River Basin.

Verona initiated a formal study to evaluate wastewater treatment alternatives. The preferred alternative was to abandon the Verona Wastewater Treatment Plant and pump all wastewater to the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (District) for treatment. However, the District's Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant is located outside of the Sugar River Basin and this approach would have diverted over 3 million gallons of water each day away from the Sugar River Watershed and into the Yahara River Watershed.

There was significant concern on the part of the public about diverting water out of the Sugar River Basin and the negative impact that this could have on stream flow. Based on input from the public and a Citizens Advisory Committee,

the District spearheaded an innovative approach which was completed in 1998 to return the water to its rightful place. Today, Verona area wastewater is pumped to the District for treatment, then pumped back underground nine miles and returned into the Upper Sugar River Watershed by way of the Badger Mill Creek Cascade Aerator (pictured). While this was not the lowest cost option for the District, it demonstrates their commitment to environmental stewardship.

This project is critical to maintaining the long term integrity of Badger Mill Creek as a fishery by maintaining a consistent base flow in the creek. Recent fish survey information shows that Badger Mill Creek supports a thriving fish population, including brown trout. In fact, Badger Mill creek is classified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a Class II trout stream.

In April 2014 the District and the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA) met to explore partnership opportunities in the watershed. Currently the District manages eight water quality testing sites along Badger Mill Creek and the Sugar River. In 2015, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association (USRWA) hopes to assist and potentially take over these duties as part of a volunteer citizen monitoring program. Other partnership opportunities will also be explored as a result of MMSD's continued support and membership with USRWA.

For more information on MMSD's work in the watershed, please contact David Taylor, Director of Ecosystem Services, at davet@madsewer.org or call 608-222-1201.

8th Annual Paddle & Pig-Out was wet yet successful

Save the Date: 2015 Annual Meeting & Open House

Sunday March 8, 2015:

The 2015 USRWA Annual Meeting & Open House date has been established for Sunday March 8 beginning at 12:30pm at Epic Systems in Verona. Details on this year's program have not been finalized yet, so please stay tuned to usrwa.org/events for more information.

Sunday May 31, 2015:

USRWA is planning a brand new fundraising event in 2015 called Rob's Sugar River Ramble. The Ramble will combine bicycling and paddling into one great event beginning in Mt. Horeb and ending near Paoli. This is a memorial event in honor of Rob Lucas, who loved bicycling around the watershed and paddling the Sugar River.

Please visit usrwa.org/ramble for more information. All proceeds from the event benefit USRWA.



Paddle and Pig Out 2014

Our famous Paddle & Pig-Out, offering 45-60 minute canoe rides down the Sugar River into Paoli, unfortunately got a little wet this year. Even though our 3pm trip had to be canceled and our Noon trip came back soaked from rain, smiles were still everywhere to be found throughout the day.

Over 100 people came the event despite the weather and enjoyed great food from Paoli Cafe, demonstrations for kids and the music of Catfish Stephenson and Down from the Hills. 15 people became members of USRWA at the event as well, which was great to see.

Photos from the event can be found on our Facebook page. Be sure to join us for next year's Paddle & Pig-Out coming in August 2015!

Help Wanted: Openings on the USRWA Board of Directors

Currently there are two openings on the USRWA Board of Directors and we are accepting applications. Being on the Board allows you to have a part in shaping the organization first hand and help to carry out the mission of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association.

Board members are required to attend board meetings once per month, participate on a committee(s) and be a current member of USRWA. If you are interested in filling out an application or would like to learn more, please go to usrwa.org/volunteer or contact Wade Moder at 608-437-7707.



Executive Director Wade Moder filmed during the release of the purple loosestrife control beetles in Belleville. A short film was made by Wisconsin Sea Grant on managing purple loosestrife, which can be viewed at usrwa.org/invasive

Stopping Invasive Species in their Tracks

USRWA has been hard at work this summer and fall helping to stop the spread of invasive species around the watershed. Through a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, USRWA has done the following in 2014:

- Purple Loosestrife control around Lake Belle View in Belleville: USRWA began a biological control program to stop the spread of purple loosestrife through the use of *Galerucella* beetles, which are native to Europe. This biological control approach has proven to be effective in Wisconsin with beetles consuming purple loosestrife almost exclusively instead of other native plants. Although this approach alone will not eliminate
- Purple Loosestrife, it will help to control the spread of the invasive to other areas.
- USRWA participated in the Aquatic Invasive Species Bridge Snapshot Day organized by the River Alliance of Wisconsin. Volunteers surveyed six sites around the watershed for new invasive species that many times pop up near bridges where human traffic is high. USRWA was one of 15 groups participating around the state, and thankfully no new invasives were found in our surveys.
- Two wader wash stations have been placed in Donald Park near Mt. Vernon as a way for recreationalist to clean their shoes and other gear

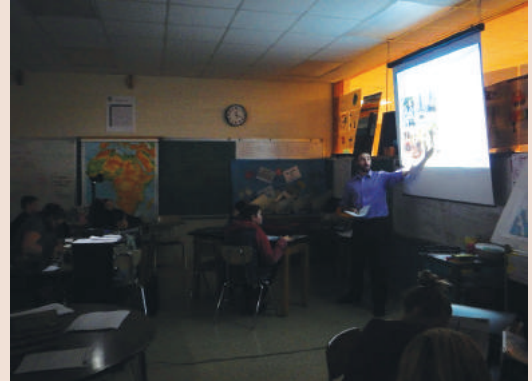


Wader wash station installed in Donald Park in the Town of Springdale.

before entering or leaving the park. These stations have a 3-sided boot brush along with a long handled brush. Two more stations will be placed in the newly established Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area in 2015.

- Executive Director Wade Moder and Board member Rodd Wangen attended the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference in Duluth, MN from October 20-22. Both attendees gained information on how to control specific species, creating a management plan, and the resources available in the Upper Midwest.

Educating the Future at Toki Middle School



Youth education with USRWA Executive Director Wade Moder.

USRWA and Executive Director Wade Moder had the privilege of teaching three 7th grade classes, over 80 students, at Toki Middle School on December 4. Students at Toki are currently learning about watersheds and the importance of clean water in their daily lives. USRWA helped students understand the local and regional watersheds they are a part of, and what we can do on land to protect our water.

In Spring 2015, the student's goal is to build a rain garden on school grounds. Good luck to Toki Middle School and thank you for including USRWA into your lessons. We look forward to more partnerships in the future!



USRWA

PO Box 314
207 E. Main
Mt. Horeb, WI 53572
(608) 437-7707
usrwa@usrwa.org
Return Service Requested

Non-profit
Organization
Postage Paid
Mt. Horeb, WI
Permit No. 5

