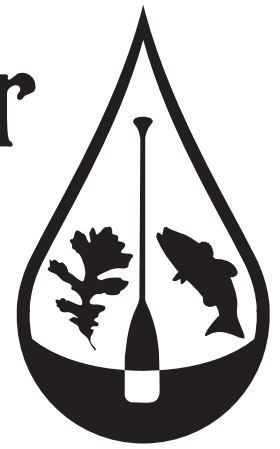


News on the Sugar

A newsletter distributed by the
Upper Sugar River Watershed Association
Winter 2015



Message from the Director

by Wade Moder

2015 has been a year full of adventures for the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association, both old and new.

Wade
Moder



As usual, we are doing our typical cornerstone activities. From April to September we partnered with Capitol Water Trails to host six river clean-up days on the Sugar River, helping maintain a flow in the river that both fish and paddlers appreciate. Our volunteers also maintained a record-high 25 water quality monitoring sites in 2015, performing monthly tests on things like dissolved oxygen levels, temperature, clarity, plant/insect life, etc. We fought invasive species, worked with three local schools on educational programs, and hosted our annual Paddle & Pig-Out event in August.

We also had lots of firsts. In May we coordinated our 1st annual Rob's Sugar River Ramble, a bicycling and paddling event focused on becoming the main fundraising event of our year. In the first year alone we attracted 163 participants and netted over \$5000 for USRWA...and we're just getting started. Please plan on attending or volunteering for our 2nd annual Rob's Sugar River Ramble on June 5, 2016. We also secured funds to perform total phosphorus testing at 10 locations around the watershed, bringing in nearly 10% of all state funding granted for this program. Coinciding with phosphorus, we are currently working with students at UW-Whitewater to pinpoint locations in the watershed most susceptible to erosion. This is a major undertaking, but it will pay major dividends down the road as we work with landowners to combat erosion issues.

Behind the scenes our Board of Directors has organized into working committees to tackle issues like urban/agricultural runoff, event planning, fundraising and creating organizational policies to help us run as efficiently as possible.

Finally, we are also preparing to become actively involved in the restoration of the Sugar River Wetlands State Natural Area just southwest of Verona along the Sugar River and Military Ridge State Trail. This property is owned by the Wisconsin DNR and has become inundated with some of the classic invaders; namely buckthorn, honeysuckle and garlic mustard. This will be a long-term partnership with the WDNR and will require the help of volunteers to make this area great again. Please check our website and Facebook page for updates on future work days.

At a time when DNR budgets are being slashed, organizations like Upper Sugar River Watershed Association have become a critical voice of our natural resources. I hope you consider becoming a member or renewing your membership again this year.

Thank you,

Wade Moder

Executive Director, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association

USRWA & Youth Environmental Education

USRWA enjoys partnering with local schools to teach K-12 students about water quality in the Upper Sugar River Watershed. Here are some examples of schools we have partnered with over the past 12 months:

New Century School, Verona

In June 2015, USRWA and New Century helped over 40 4th and 5th graders canoe the Sugar River as part of an end-of-the-year field trip. Many of the students had never been in a canoe before, and it served as a great learning experience for volunteers and students alike.

Students Today Leaders Forever, Minneapolis, MN

In July 2015, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association and Dane County Office of Lakes and Watersheds helped organize over 20 high school volunteers from Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF) to help plant prairie plants at Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area.



The volunteers from STLF were from Minneapolis on a volunteer service tour in the Midwest, and were able to lend a hand during their time in Madison.

Prairie plants establish deep root systems which help to reduce erosion, replenish groundwater supplies and filter out toxins such as pesticides and herbicides.



Glacier Ridge Elementary School, Verona

In October 2015, USRWA partnered with the City of Verona Public Works Department to bring over 250 students to the Whalen Pond Outdoor Laboratory in Verona. Students learned about the importance of prairies, the problems caused by invasive species, and had an opportunity to spread prairie seeds collected by Verona High School students.



Volunteers Needed: 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.

All interested applicants are encouraged to attend, with special emphasis on those with experience in fundraising, non-profit organizations, farming, media relations and grassroots organizing.

To learn more or to fill out an application, please go to usrwa.org/volunteer or contact Executive Director Wade Moder at usrwa@usrwa.org or 608-437-7707.



Phosphorus in the Water: What does it mean?

Phosphorus has long been recognized as a major factor in plant and algae growth in Wisconsin's lakes and streams. Small increases in phosphorus can cause substantial increases in aquatic plant and algae growth, which can harm the natural ecosystem and water quality. It can also reduce recreational use, property values and human health. Despite this, phosphorus is a widely used nutrient with varying sources and applications in industries we may not realize.

In 2010, the State of Wisconsin established new phosphorus standards, setting maximum thresholds for streams, rivers and lakes statewide. However these standards are still relatively new, and its impacts on those that use phosphorus and Wisconsin's waterways have yet to be realized for the most part.

What is phosphorus and where does it come from?

At its core, phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient. It's used in detergents, animal feed and fertilizers, and is found in our food and our waste. Through its broad uses and sources, phosphorus can reach our waterways through "point" or "non-point" sources and can originate from human-made or occur naturally in the environment.

Point sources consist of piped wastes such as municipal and industrial wastewater treatment plants that release liquid effluent to lakes and rivers or spread it on fields; and from natural sources, including wetlands or past phosphorus loads building up in lake bottoms. Non-point pollution occurs when heavy rains and melting snow wash over farm fields, feedlots, streets and parking lots. This carries with it fertilizers, manure, excess soil and contaminates from urban areas which eventually feed into lakes and streams.

What USRWA is doing about it

To this point, phosphorus sampling in Wisconsin's waterways has only been done sporadically due to the costs associated with it. Monitoring phosphorus levels in

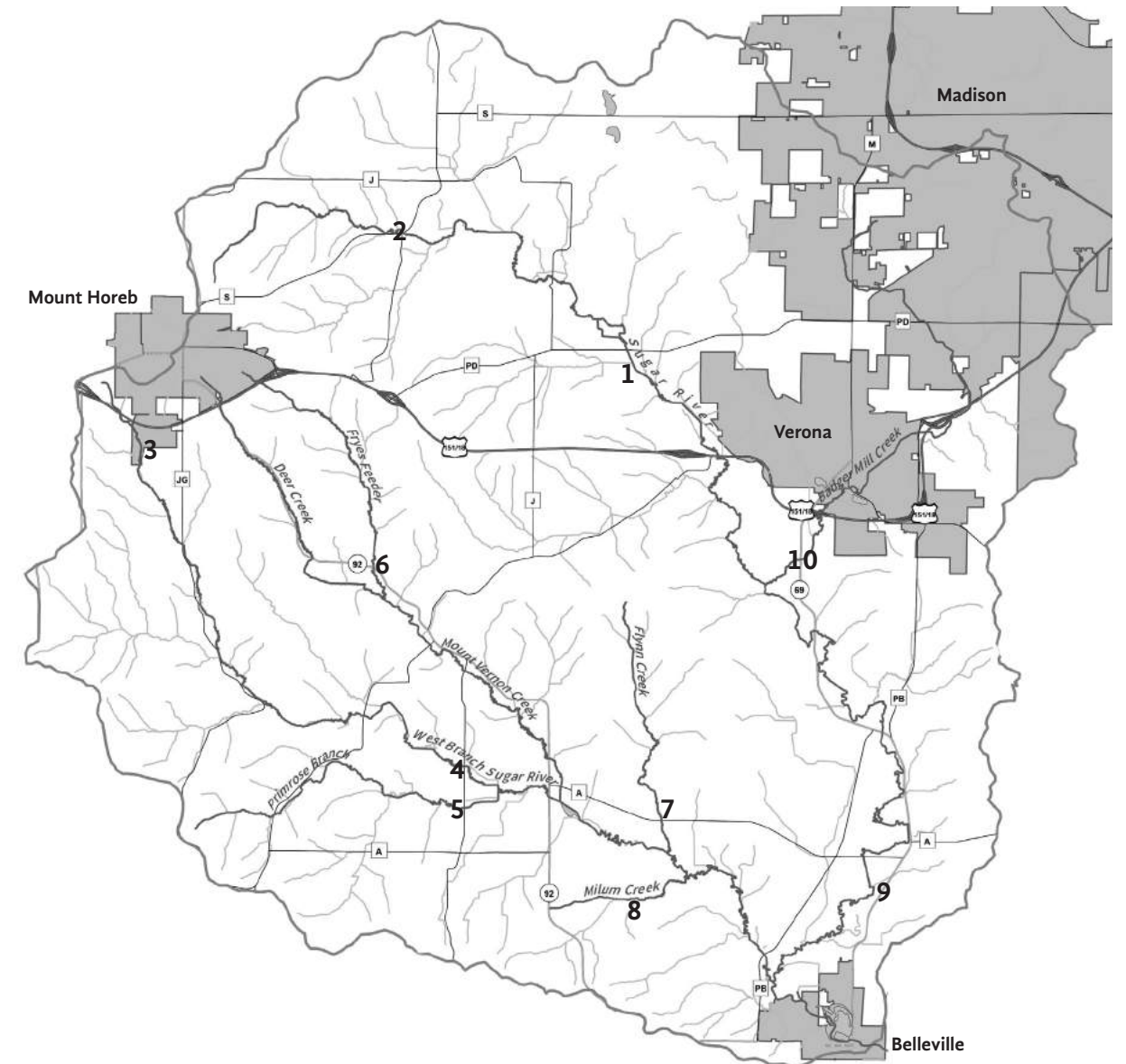
water requires testing from a lab to ensure accuracy, and multiple tests through the year create more reliability at a given site.

Through a grant from the WDNR and the help of the Water Action Volunteers, Upper Sugar River Watershed Association was approved to perform monthly testing for total phosphorus in streams/ rivers around the watershed in 2015 from May through October. Fewer than 200 sites were funded throughout the state, with USRWA receiving 10 of those sites. This is due to the tremendous USRWA volunteers currently active in the water quality monitoring program, as all of these sites were managed by volunteers.

The data from these 10 testing sites shows the variability of phosphorus levels around the watershed. With funding for phosphorus monitoring potentially discontinued, USRWA is currently deciding which sites to continue monitoring independently along with additional sites to potentially add.

Learn more about USRWA phosphorus monitoring program at usrwa.org

Phosphorus monitoring



2015 Upper Sugar River Watershed Total Phosphorus Data										
Site Information					2015 Total Phosphorus Data (mg/L)					
Site #	Site	Municipality	Latitude	Longitude	May	June	July	August	September	October
1	Trib to Sugar River at White Crossing Rd	Town of Verona	43.0061	-89.595	0.103	0.0691	0.0598	0.168	* 0.469	0.0718
2	Sugar River upstream of CTH P	Town of Cross Plains	43.0349	-89.6658	0.0748	0.0848	0.0593	0.0114	* 1.46	0.115
3	West Branch Sugar River at Docken Rd	Village of Mt. Horeb	42.9926	-89.7453	0.112	0.1	0.11	0.123	* 0.156	0.181
4	West Branch Sugar River at CTH U	Town of Primrose	42.9197	-89.6474	0.234	0.151	0.111	0.141	0.107	0.0863
5	Primrose Branch at CTH U	Town of Primrose	42.9109	-89.647	0.157	0.0846	0.0462	0.0595	0.0509	0.0528
6	Fryes Feeder upstream of Highway 92	Town of Springdale	42.9628	-89.6745	0.087	0.0501	0.0559	0.0495	0.0398	0.0361
7	Flynn Creek at CTH A	Town of Primrose	42.9083	-89.5895	0.0692	0.0459	0.039	0.0449	0.0626	0.0547
8	Milum Creek at Fritz Rd	Town of Montrose	42.8913	-89.5972	0.102	0.0986	0.0939	0.0791	0.0863	0.0629
9	Sugar River at Frenchtown Rd	Town of Montrose	42.8914	-89.5307	0.109	0.181	0.0857	0.144	0.0492	0.061
10	Badger Mill Creek upstream of Highway 69	Town of Verona	42.9655	-89.5467	0.173	0.334	0.284	0.236	0.275	0.176

* = Significant rain event prior and during data collection
Bold = Data collected exceeds the 0.075 mg/L total phosphorus standard set by WI

Save the Date:

USRWA

Annual Meeting

Sunday March 13, 2016
from 1-3 pm

Epic in Verona, WI
Andromeda Building in
the Delphi Room
usrwa.org/annualmeeting

Keynote Presentation:
Erosion Modeling and Citizen
Science Working Together in
the Sugar River



**2nd Annual
Rob's Sugar River Ramble**
Sunday June 5, 2016
usrwa.org/ramble

Partnership with UW-Whitewater to bring Watershed Modeling to the Upper Sugar River



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
WHITEWATER

In an exciting partnership with Upper Sugar River Watershed Association and UW-Whitewater, geography students from Professor Dale Splinter's class will be working to create an Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for Agricultural Lands (EVAAL) model for the watershed. The EVAAL model allows USRWA to better assist farmers who are looking to limit runoff from their fields, including phosphorus.

Developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the EVAAL model evaluates locations of relative vulnerability to sheet, rill and gully erosion using information about topography, soils, rainfall and land cover. This tool enables watershed managers to prioritize and focus field-scale data collection efforts, thus saving time and money while increasing the probability of locating fields with high sediment and nutrient export for implementation of best management practices.

UW-Whitewater students will be working on this project during the Fall 2015 semester and hope to present their findings in December 2015. USRWA thanks Professor Splinter for this beneficial collaboration.

USRWA Receives Wisconsin Volunteer Stream Monitoring Award

USRWA is proud to accept the Wisconsin Volunteer Stream Monitoring Award, thanks to the tireless efforts of our committed volunteers. Since 2002, UW-Extension and Wisconsin DNR recognize exemplary work done by groups, individuals, employees, teachers and students who perform stream monitoring around Wisconsin. Individuals and groups are recognized for their efforts leading to increased participation in stream monitoring, collecting stream data, and sharing their knowledge of stream monitoring.

To date, USRWA manages 10 volunteers and 25 stream monitoring sites in the Upper Sugar River Watershed. All data collected from our monitoring is given to the Wisconsin DNR to assess the health of our streams and make resources available should a problem arise.

Thank you to all our volunteer stream monitors for making 2015 a great year: Toni Dallwig, Frank Fetter, Steve Gavin, Bill Keen, Lisa Keen, Cami Peterson, Matt Rehwald, Rodd Wangen



USRWA is part of the Water Action Volunteers network, a state wide group of citizen volunteers committed to improve the quality of Wisconsin's streams and rivers.



Volunteer river clean-up effort on April 11, 2015. The group worked on the Sugar River from Bobcat Lane to Valley Road in Verona.



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