

# FROM THE WATERSHED streamings

Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program Newsletter



## THE OWPP TURNS FIVE



This past September marked the Five Year Anniversary of the beginning of the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program. On January 27, 2021, we held a virtual meeting on the details and progress made during these five years. We had approximately 80 people tuned in for this two-hour presentation. If you were not able to join us, the program was recorded and can be found by visiting our website at <http://oconomowocwatershed.com/resourcesmaps>. 

## SHORELINE MANAGEMENT - TAKE 2

In our last issue we talked about the benefits of maintaining a healthy protected shoreline. This is important for shorelines of all water bodies but can be especially important for our creeks and rivers where steady and strong currents can be very destructive at sharp bends in the flow stream.

A good example of this is Mason Creek just east of Koester Road. The North Lake Management District has funded a streambank restoration project here since 2016. The flow at this bend in the creek was causing major erosion during periods of high flow and the steep embankment was slowly being washed into the creek and – eventually – into North Lake.

In April 2016, a contract was made to install protective matting, native deep-rooted plantings, and strategically placed rock to armor the most vulnerable sections of the embankment. The matting was extended upward on the embankment to a height of three feet above the average water level. Since its installation, adjustments and some repairs have been required, but overall the system is stabilizing this bend and shoreline quite well.



**Koester Road streambank stabilization project.**

Another project to stabilize shoreline erosion was recently completed on the Oconomowoc River in the Town of Oconomowoc. This project was completed by Andy and Shantelle Schmidt who recently purchased their property on

*[continued on page 2]*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**SAT / JUNE 26 / 2021**  
**Lake Country Clean Water Festival – Pewaukee Lake**  
[cleanwaterfestival.com](http://cleanwaterfestival.com)

**SAT / JULY 10 / 2021**  
**OWPP Paddle**  
[oconomowocwatershed.com](http://oconomowocwatershed.com)  
[tom@tallpinesconservancy.org](mailto:tom@tallpinesconservancy.org)

**SAT / AUG 14 / 2021**  
**13th Annual Ride to the Barns**  
[tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org)  
[info@tallpinesconservancy.org](mailto:info@tallpinesconservancy.org)

**SAT / AUG 28 / 2021**  
**Sustainability Fair**  
[waukeshacountygreenteam.org](http://waukeshacountygreenteam.org)

**FRI / SEPT 17 / 2021**  
**LCCW Healthy Lakes Conference**  
[lakecountrycleanwaters.org](http://lakecountrycleanwaters.org)  
[info@lakecountrycleanwaters.org](mailto:info@lakecountrycleanwaters.org)



## SHORELINE MANAGEMENT - TAKE 2... [from page 1]



Schmidt shoreline project.

Washington Street east of the Juneau Street bridge. This is a relatively straight section of the river, but due to the constant current the shoreline was suffering steady erosion. For this project, a combination of organic logs, native plantings and rip/rap stone was installed by a contractor and helpful neighbors to stabilize and protect this 100' section of shoreline. A small kayak/coffee pier was included in their project. Kudos to the Schmidts for their efforts and forward thinking. OWPP assisted with the funding for both these projects.

If you have a shoreline in need of help and protection, please contact us. We would be glad to stop by and offer advice and discuss possible help with funding. 📍

## JUST YOU, YOUR CANOE, AND A BUCKET

by Tom Steinbach, OWPP Program Advisor

Whether canoeing or kayaking, the serenity of gliding along on a mirror-like surface of your favorite lake or river is one of the best ways to enjoy our local waterways and the wildlife they support. Heads of our furry and furless friends pop up and disappear, and myriad colors fly overhead.

If you are old school like me and like the comfort of a canoe versus a kayak and find yourself going solo, there is a very simple item that can serve several purposes on your trip. It's the good old plastic, five-gallon bucket.

**PURPOSE NO. 1** When paddling alone, the stability and maneuverability is decreased, especially if your canoe has an internal fin or keel. (The keel sticks up inside the canoe rather than downward on the bottom.) A quick and easy way to greatly increase the stability is to place a bucket full of water in the bow of your canoe. The weight of the water (35 to 40 lbs.) will keep your canoe level and the flat mid-section firmly on the water. By keeping this section on the water your canoe will be much more stable and be much harder to tip over in waves or if you lean too far to the side.

**PURPOSE NO. 2** The added weight in the front of your canoe will make your canoe much less susceptible to wind affects. Wind gusts can blow you around easily if the bow of your canoe is not in contact with the water.

**PURPOSE NO. 3** If for some reason your canoe tips and you find yourself with a canoe full of water, your bucket can give you the ability to bail it out. For this reason, it's wise to tether your bucket to the canoe so that you don't lose it downriver.

And, don't forget about our Annual Paddle Event coming up on July 10th. We're planning a one-way trip this year from Okauchee to Fowler Lake. Hope you can join us. 📍



See ya on the river!

## LAKE COUNTRY CLEAN WATERS

by Bradley Steckart, LCCW Director



Lake Country Clean Water's (LCCW) mission is to serve as a catalyst to engage the community and help organizations protect and improve Lake Country's groundwater, lakes, rivers, and streams. We focus on economic, educational, science-based, and political goals to ensure that our waterways maintain the pristine quality of their natural heritage and are safe and resilient for generations to come. Lake Country Clean Waters acts as a central connecting point for lake, river and water conservation organizations to communicate water-related issues and share successes or failures relating to water resources. LCCW hosts an annual conference, held this year on September 17th, as well as regular quarterly meetings. To get on our organization's email list, email [beth@tallpinesconservancy.org](mailto:beth@tallpinesconservancy.org). 📍

## DNR REVISES IMPAIRED WATERS LIST

Every two years the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources revises the Impaired Waters List for all navigable water bodies in the State. In 2020 the listing was revised for three lakes in our watershed.

Lac La Belle's listing has been revised to include Total Phosphorus in addition to the previous listing of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).



Oconomowoc Lake has been removed from the impaired waters list. It had been listed for Mercury since 1998.

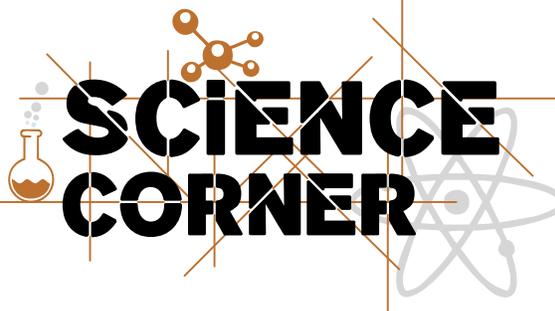
Little Friess Lake has been added to the list in a "proposed for list" status, being considered due to excess algal growth. 🌊

## 5TH ANNUAL HEALTHY LAKES CONFERENCE

**FRI / SEPT 17 / 2021 • 8a-3p**

Two options to attend! Join us in person at the Oconomowoc Community Center *OR* watch the conference remotely via Zoom. The event concludes with a guided pontoon boat ride. RSVP required. \$30 p/p

[lakecountrycleanwaters.org](http://lakecountrycleanwaters.org)  
[info@lakecountrycleanwaters.org](mailto:info@lakecountrycleanwaters.org)



## WHERE DID ALL OF THAT FOAM COME FROM?

Bubbles and foam can appear on the surface of lakes and rivers and sometimes we wonder, "Is this the result of pollution?" It certainly can be. In the 1950s and 60s the foam on the Wisconsin River grew to 3' deep in some areas due to unregulated industrial discharges into the river. I remember as a kid noticing a trail of foam patches coming from the discharge of a creamery into a river my Dad and I often fished in Rusk County.

### ENTER: WATER "SURFACE TENSION"

Small patches of foam can also form naturally on rivers where there is turbulence and rapid mixing such as downstream of a rapids. The bubbles producing the foam in this case are the result of the "surface tension" that exists on the surface of all natural waterways.

Try this cool experiment. Fill a glass with water until it's nearly full and set it down on a sturdy, level table. Take an eye dropper and add more water, drop by drop, and watch the surface from the side. You will find that you can actually overflow the glass and yet the water doesn't run over the rim. Of course, there is a point where it will run over if you continue to add more drops, but the mounded water above the rim of the glass will be about 1/16" high before it spills over. This is the result of the "surface tension" of water. Causing this tension is the water molecules resistance to being separated causing a strong bond that holds it together. This same force can cause bubbles to form and stay intact on the surface of a river and if the water is cloudy the bubble may appear tan or even scummy. This tension is also what supports water bugs, which appear to be walking on water while not getting wet. The water molecule is very stable with two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen and the molecule just loves to stay intact.

On a windy day patches of foam can form and collect on the downwind shoreline of a lake. This is the result of air getting entrained by the wave action where the bubbles are formed. Floating debris is usually pushed along the surface as well and when combined with the foam it can take on a "polluted" appearance.

If you see foam on a body of water that is deep enough to billow up and actually be blown by the wind, you may be seeing the result of some source of pollution, either discharged from a shoreline source like a failing septic system, or from something introduced from users of that waterway. This should be brought to the attention of the DNR, your Lake Association, or your watershed group like the OWPP. 🌊





## FARMERS FOR LAKE COUNTRY

*GETS CREATIVE ENGAGING THE PUBLIC THROUGH ITS CHAOS GARDEN*

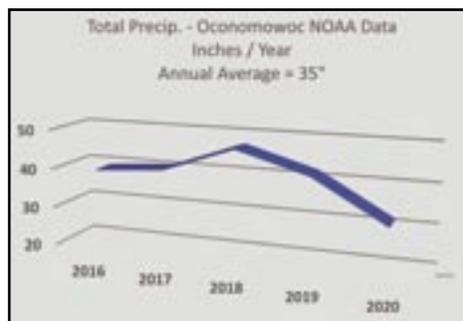
by Darrell Smith, OWPP Program Director

This past year's challenges with COVID spurred creative projects that allowed Farmers for Lake Country to directly support the greater Oconomowoc area. John Koepke and I planted a small "Chaos Garden" in one corner of a Koepke field that had recently been harvested for wheat. John drilled vegetable seeds – bush beans, snap peas, kale and spinach – in and amongst the volunteer wheat that was coming back up. The results were astounding. Rather than having a field remain "fallow" for a couple months and be subject to erosion, beautiful chaos ensued! Rows of vegetables emerged through the wheat seedlings and over a four-week period a couple hundred people stopped by the "free pick" field off of O'Neil Road. It was heartwarming to see people outdoors connecting with the land during our pandemic and taking advantage of the free produce. One church group came by to harvest and deliver to local food pantries.

This year we're planning to expand the Chaos Garden concept by planting an area on Hwy K just west of the Hwy 16 bypass. Beans and peas, kale and spinach will be planted again with some additional surprises. Stay tuned for more information coming soon. Watch for progress and announcements on our website at [farmersforlakecountry.org](http://farmersforlakecountry.org) or find us on Facebook. 🌱

## 2020 PRECIPITATION RETURNS TO NORMAL

2020 was an unusual year in many respects but our weather actually resulted in a more normal precipitation total. We've been lamenting since 2017 that our rain and snow totals have been high causing damaging runoff and erosion. In 2018 the total precipitation was 47.2", 12" over our average for our area. The 2020 total was down to 31.5" and so far the start to 2021 has been relatively low, resulting in many wildfires throughout the state. Let's



hope 2021 can be logged as a normal precipitation year as well. 🌱

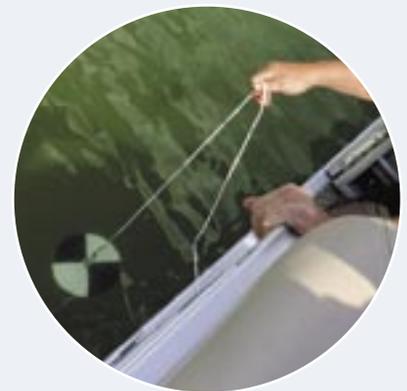
## NORTH LAKE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

*TAKING ACTION TO KEEP OUR WATERS CLEAN*

This summer the North Lake Management District (NLMD) will continue a study begun last year to assess lake conditions and evaluate the effect of various types of watercraft that are used on the lake. Last year's preliminary study monitored the effects of the operation of all types of motorized boats on the shorelines, lake bottom, and aquatic life.

This summer NLMD will conduct the second phase of this study using underwater drones and other high tech equipment and take various water samples to analyze for nutrients, chlorophyll, total suspended solids, and other water quality parameters.

The study will be funded by the NLMD along with a DNR grant. The OWPP will provide assistance by conducting lab analysis during the study.



Kudos to the NLMD for initiating this study, which will provide valuable information that can be utilized by other lake districts and associations and, ultimately, provide information that will help protect our shorelines and lake ecosystems. 🌱

# FARM FIELD TRANSFORMATION

In April of 2020 we met with the Mayers on Hwy E in the Town of Richfield to discuss an eroding field that was ripe for a transformation to perennial cover crops. Ike and Shelly Mayer were excited to hear what was possible for this project and how it could help the health of the Coney River and the downstream Oconomowoc River – and at the same time retain a source of forage for their animals on their dairy farm in Washington County. By May of 2020



**After: Same 8-acre farm field one year later in March 2021, with perennial cover protecting the soil long term.**



**Before: Annual cropland with exposed soil and erosion.**

the perennial crop was planted and two cuttings were taken for forage last year. The field looks completely different just one year later and the erosion has been checked. In future years, the vegetation's deep roots will improve water infiltration, and the Mayers will be able to take continued cuttings, providing valuable livestock feed and soil health benefits. 🌱



# WORTHINGTON STREET STORMWATER POND

Stormwater management in urban areas is a key part of our watershed program. The City continues to improve its stormwater collection and treatment system and last year a major project came to fruition after years of planning.

The stormwater retention pond on Worthington Street, just north of the City's Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility, was completed in September and serves an area 148 acres in size. The pond is 1.9 acres and includes a two-stage settling system. It is estimated that 10 tons of sediment and 50 pounds of phosphorus will be captured by this pond each year. The project was funded by the City DPW, the DNR through a grant, and the OWPP. 🌊

# PASSING THE TORCH

With this issue of *Streamings* we want to announce the promotion of Darrell Smith to Watershed Program Director for OWPP. Since starting with our watershed program in 2016 as our Ag Coordinator, Darrell has been an extremely important part of our progress and has steadily increased his roles and responsibilities.



Darrell started his transition to Director last fall and we're excited to have him take on this position. Tom will continue to stay involved to assist Darrell with monitoring, special events, and project work, but hopes to spend more time in his canoe in 2021. He and wife Lynn have five grandkids and they need mentoring to be our environmental stewards of the future.

Darrell notes, "It's a tall order to fill Tom's shoes. He has a broad knowledge of the region, a passion for water quality, and is a natural leader who has brought so many partners into the watershed initiative... he's left a lasting mark on the Oconomowoc River and we hope his paddling doesn't take him too far away." Darrell will head up the OWPP program under the direction of Kevin Freber, Operations Manager at the Oconomowoc Wastewater Treatment Facility, which manages the watershed program. Together, they are helping the City meet its water quality goals through a watershed-wide approach that stretches almost 27 miles, from Ixonia to Slinger. 🌊

# OWPP PADDLE SAT / JULY 10 / 2021

Fun for the whole family! Join us for a scenic trip along our beautiful local waterways. Bring your own canoe, kayak or contact us for rental information. Stay tuned for more details

[oconomowocwatershed.com](http://oconomowocwatershed.com)  
[tom@tallpinesconservancy.org](mailto:tom@tallpinesconservancy.org)



## OCONOMOWOC FARMERS MARKET

Saturdays

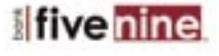
May – October | 8am till noon

Bank Five Nine Campus Lot  
155 W. Wisconsin Ave, Oconomowoc

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Presenting Sponsor



### WHO'S WHO

For more information on the OWPP, please contact us:



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[oconomowocwatershed.com](http://oconomowocwatershed.com) [tallpinesconservancy.org](http://tallpinesconservancy.org) [farmersforlakecountry.org](http://farmersforlakecountry.org) [lakecountrycleanwaters.org](http://lakecountrycleanwaters.org)

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