

WaterWays



RIVER ALLIANCE
of WISCONSIN

WINTER 2018 | VOL. 24 | ISSUE 1

2018 Events Schedule

Check out the enclosed events postcard (maybe even tack it up on the fridge?) to see our wide variety of events that connect you with fellow water lovers, including our annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival, Fools' Flotilla, and more!

See the enclosed postcard for details, and find more online at: www.wisconsinrivers.org/events

"THE NEXT 25" | YOU'RE INVITED!

In celebration of River Alliance's 25th anniversary, we're hosting a series of community conversations across the state. River Alliance staff and board are eager to hear your perspective. We invite you to join us to chat about successes, the challenges in front of us and our path forward.

LOCATIONS:

Milwaukee | March 14 | 5-7pm | The Rumpus Room

Eau Claire | April 11 | 5-7pm | Lazy Monk Brewing

Green Bay | May 14 | 5-7pm | Titledown Brewing Company

Onalaska | May 31 | 5-7pm | Two Beagles Brewpub

Stevens Point | TBD



Fools' Flotilla on the Yahara River (River Alliance photo)

Find more details and RSVP at: www.wisconsinrivers.org/events



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Heroes of the Public Trust



By Raj Shukla

I paddled the Namekagon River and Milwaukee River last year because of something called the Public Trust Doctrine. For those not familiar, it's a legal principle that dates back nearly two thousand years and holds that some natural resources should be preserved for the people. Wisconsin's constitution embraces this principle by declaring all navigable waters "common highways and forever free."

This poetic language in our state's constitution makes plain our shared belief that the right to experience the beauty and bounty of Wisconsin's waters belongs to each of us. Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine is a commitment to freedom, and remains a pillar of our democracy. However, the Public Trust Doctrine is under threat from big money and small politics in Wisconsin and across the nation.

Early in 2017, Wisconsin politicians—influenced heavily by agriculture industry lobbyists—approved legislation to grant unlimited groundwater pumping rights to high-capacity well owners. Property owners and anyone who wants to recreate are now at the mercy of corporations that can dry up the "common highways" that have been foundational to local economies and communities.

The backward slide away from public rights to Wisconsin waters continued as the year pressed on. Governor Walker and allies in the legislature handed Foxconn, a Taiwanese manufacturer, the rights to dredge and change the shape of public waters without a permit.

Foreign-owned corporations claimed our water again with the passage the "Mining for America" law authored by State Senator Tom Tiffany and State Representative Rob Hutton. Long-standing, bi-partisan protections from acid mine drainage were relaxed and,



Namekagon River
(River Alliance photo)

in some cases, eliminated. Local waterways, the local businesses that rely on them and the local residents who enjoy them were put at risk for the sole benefit of private companies.

We've seen this before. The public has long fought for universal rights to public waters and lands. And some businesses and wealthy individuals have long sought to keep it all for themselves. Today the balance of power has shifted decisively toward big money and the Public Trust Doctrine itself is in the crosshairs. But as we've done before, we can write a new chapter.

River Alliance of Wisconsin is 25 years old this year, with thousands of members like you: heroes who have removed dams and opened up rivers, derailed destructive mines and shortsighted policy alike, monitored waterways for aquatic invasive species, and so much more.

Heroes like you have stood up to the money and power that threatened Wisconsin's waters in the past. We need you again. We need you to ask the tough questions, demand strong protections and reward the businesses and decision makers who do the right thing.

And while we fight bad policy and insist on good practices in the coming year, we also invite you to celebrate the water heroes across the state, people of all ages and backgrounds, who protect and restore water every day. They are fighting for a legacy we can proudly leave to future generations; they are the defenders of Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine. We invite you to meet just a few on the next page, and then send us your nominations so we can continue to elevate and empower water heroes in the coming year. ●

Congrats to our Photo Contest Winners!

Thank you for sharing your photos and stories with us. Nearly 200 images were submitted during our recent photo contest. Every image told a story about your love and appreciation for Wisconsin's waters. Here are the three winning images selected by River Alliance staff.



"Chase Cleanup"

The photo is of my son Chase, age 11. My family helps to clean up the Wiouwash trail. The trail runs along Lake Butte des Morts, which connects to Lake Winnebago via the Fox River. My boys compete to see who can pick up the most garbage and Chase was celebrating filling two bags. I work for the Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance and coordinate their annual cleanup. My family volunteers to clean up our waterways many times (and places) throughout the year. — *Kelly Reyer, Oshkosh*



"Into the Morning Mystic"

I took this photo as my parents, my husband and I set out on a trip up the Wisconsin River toward the dam from the Sauk City boat launch just south of Hwy 12. It was a foggy morning but we were determined to paddle to the Blue Spoon for some coffee and breakfast! We feel blessed to have this beautiful water feature literally in our back yard. I'm passionate about the conservation of all our land and water in Wisconsin and believe it is of the utmost importance for future generations to come. — *Amy Chamberlin, Sauk City*



"Do Cows Bite"

This was one of the first times I took my daughter trout fishing. My wife Barb went along for moral support and to take photos. We were fishing for trout in Richland County. My daughter Anna wanted to go see the cows. We paused from fishing for a short time to go pet the cows. Just before we got to the cows my daughter Anna exclaimed, "Dad, do cows bite?" — *Len Harris (Photo by Barb Harris), Richland Center*



The Year of the Water Hero

For our 25th anniversary, River Alliance of Wisconsin is highlighting water heroes in an effort to showcase the many people working in a variety of ways across the state (and beyond) to protect water.

Meet some inspiring examples of real-life water heroes below. Then, we invite you to send us your own water hero nominations. River Alliance will feature nominees in the coming year.

SEE MORE DETAILS AND SUBMIT YOUR WATER HERO NOMINATION/S AT:

www.wisconsinrivers.org/nominate

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO BE A WATER HERO.

Individuals



Paul Hayes | Westby, WI
Paul is a retired high school science teacher and a longtime citizen water monitor who has worked on countless stream restoration projects. He is also a Trout Unlimited member and a Valley Stewardship Network member and volunteer. Paul had a leading role in the Weister Creek stream restoration project in the Driftless Area, along with Kickapoo Valley Reserve staff and the Wisconsin DNR.

Businesses



Tight Lines Fly Fishing Co. | De Pere, WI
Tight Lines has been an incredible example of how a business can take on an advocacy role. They've raised awareness of the threats to the endangered Menominee River from the proposed Back Forty sulfide mine. Tight Lines and their staff have hosted events, contacted elected officials, inspired their customers to take action, and participated in a video with River Alliance that received over 50K views.

Public Servants



Lisie Kitchel | Madison, WI
As a researcher of mussels and other aquatic critters, Wisconsin DNR's top mussel expert, Lisie Kitchel, keeps watch over "canary-in-the-coal-mine" freshwater mussels in our state, which tell us so much about the health of rivers. Lisie also leads numerous field trips, introducing Wisconsinites to these fascinating and important creatures.

Volunteers



Ron Grasshoff | Prairie du Sac, WI
Ron served as a dedicated DNR employee and in retirement has continued to be a champion for Wisconsin's waters. He is an active member of Wisconsin's Green Fire and serves on River Alliance's policy committee. He applies his knowledge and skills in myriad ways, including representing River Alliance on a DNR wastewater permit committee.

Tribal Community



Tina Van Zile | Crandon, WI
Tina is the Sokoagon Chippewa Community Environmental Director and serves on River Alliance's Board of Directors. Tina has been a powerful and critical voice for water for decades. From Crandon to the Back Forty Mine proposals, she has been a fierce water protector by organizing people across the state, testifying at public hearings and speaking at public events.

Students/Youth



Kristin Arakawa | Madison, WI
Kristin is a Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies graduate student. Amidst her studies, Kristin has generously given her time and expertise to River Alliance in the form of checking up on wader wash stations and stream signs, stream monitoring and many hours of data entry.

Elected Officials



Mayor Mike Wiza | Stevens Point, WI
Mayor Wiza took a stand against toxic sulfide mining in his community and voiced his concerns for Wisconsin's waters in a video with River Alliance of Wisconsin. He, along with the mayors of Wausau and Wisconsin Rapids, publicly opposed Senator Tiffany's 2017 "Mining for America" bill, which repealed Wisconsin's decades-long protections from mining pollution.

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention



Fritz Funk | Brice Prairie, WI
Fritz is a member of the Brice Prairie Conservation Association. After water hyacinth and water lettuce (prohibited aquatic invasive species) were discovered in Lake Onalaska in 2015, Fritz was instrumental in coordinating volunteer monitoring and control efforts. Zero water hyacinth or water lettuce plants have been discovered in Lake Onalaska since the initial discovery and response.

Artists



Jessica Becker | Madison, WI
Jessica is a writer, photographer and community leader who has raised community awareness of the Yahara River through participatory art installations. Her projects include "Reflections from the Banks of the Yahara River," an installation designed to highlight the history of the Yahara River, and "Lapham Buildimentary," a program for first and second grade students who created and installed their art in the parkway along the Yahara River in 2017.

Local Groups



Friends of the Kinni | River Falls, WI
Since the summer of 2013 the Friends of the Kinni group has done a stellar job organizing their community to consider restoring the Kinnickinnic River through the removal of two dams in River Falls, Wisconsin. They have helped set a vision of the positive economic and community asset the free flowing river can be to River Falls.

Organizations



Alliance for Water Stewardship | Milwaukee, WI
Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a global organization that promotes the responsible use of freshwater. The AWS International Water Stewardship Standard ("AWS Standard") is a globally-applicable framework for major water users to understand their water use and impacts, and to work collaboratively and transparently for sustainable water management within a given watershed. It is the world's only comprehensive water use standard and River Alliance is partnering with AWS to certify water stewardship on agricultural operations in Wisconsin.

SUBMIT YOUR WATER HERO NOMINATION TODAY: www.wisconsinrivers.org/nominate

To Improve Our Waters, Agriculture Must be Part of the Solution



By Matt Krueger

We continue to introduce elements of the water stewardship certification program we are piloting in conjunction with the Alliance for Water Stewardship, on dairy farms and processing facilities in Wisconsin. While the details of the program will be shared as they come into greater focus, one thing is crystal clear—the time for a new approach to water stewardship on farms is NOW.

Times are tough for Wisconsin's waters, as *WaterWays* readers know. Over 407,000 acres of lakes and reservoirs and 6,575 miles of rivers and streams in Wisconsin are impaired by excess phosphorus pollution, much of which comes from agriculture, as we've never shied away from pointing out. In part, though, this is a function of the scale of agriculture across Wisconsin—over 25% of the state is farmland, much of which is susceptible to erosion. Additionally, our dairy herd of 1.2 million cows produces waste equivalent to over 20 million humans (using other defensible cow-to-human waste comparisons, this number balloons to over 56 million). Some of these cows reside on permitted farms with manure treatment facilities and some don't, but the point is that if waters in Wisconsin are to improve, agriculture must be a part of the solution.

But times are also tough right now for many farmers, especially dairy. In 2016, we hit a historical low for dairy farms in the US. Land prices and farm costs are up, as profit margins and access to capital is down. Wisconsin had the second-most farm bankruptcies in the nation in 2017.

Tied to the viability of these farms is the strength of rural communities, whose populations continue to fall, while poverty rates rise. Or put more bleakly by agricultural columnist Alan Guebert, "rural America is both bleeding people and its people are bleeding."

The point here is not to paint doomsday scenarios, but rather to suggest that the status quo isn't working... not for our rural communities, nor for the waters that flow through them. If we're going to navigate out of this, we need to generate products that add value to farms, without polluting waters. Actually, in ways that enhance our waters. That's our vision, and that's the goal we will be working toward with our pilot program. ●



(River Alliance photo)



ONE DAY, ONE COMMUNITY, MANY WAYS TO SHARE



March 6, 2018
Your donation DOUBLED during The Big Share!

Donate and see more details at:
<http://bit.ly/riveralliance2018>

All gifts to River Alliance will be matched up to \$10,000.
Plus, enter to win great prizes!

Plan Your Next Paddling Adventure

As winter fades from our memories, we're pleased to share information to help you plan your next canoeing or kayaking adventure. We've included trusted resources all in one spot, including the popular "Rick Kark's Canoeing & Kayaking Guide to 309 Wisconsin Streams."

Start planning your next river outing now:
www.wisconsinrivers.org/paddling



Lower Dells, Wisconsin River (Photo courtesy Jonathan Beers)

HELLOS:

Shelly Gradwell-Brenneman

We're pleased to welcome Shelly Gradwell-Brenneman to our board of directors. Shelly holds degrees in environmental interpretation and in agronomy and rural sociology. She helped launch one of the first community supported agriculture projects in Iowa. Shelly also worked with Practical Farmers of Iowa and Iowa State University Extension on sustainable agriculture and natural resource education projects. Later she worked for the Kenai Watershed Forum in Alaska. Currently, Shelly is the executive director of the Valley Stewardship Network.

GOODBYES:

Amanda Perdsock

We wish the best to River Alliance's former Aquatic Invasive Species Program Director, Amanda Perdsock. You may have encountered Amanda as she led aquatic invasive species awareness events and trainings, including the Statewide AIS Snapshot Day. We appreciate Amanda's dedication to training enthusiastic volunteers and raising awareness to help keep our waters free from aquatic invasive species.