Friends of the Platte River, Inc.

Fall *2007*

A group that exists to serve as a forum to address issues affecting the Platte/Little Platte River watershed and to seek impartial solutions that restore, enhance, and protect this valuable resource

US Army Corps of Engineers Speaker @ September Mtg.

Please plan to attend our quarterly meeting on Saturday, September 8, 2007 to hear speaker, Hank DeHaan from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,Rock Island District. Mr.DeHaan will share information about the ecosytems in backwater tributary areas of the Mississippi River and issues involved in their environmental restoration. He will share ideas and examples of Corps projects similar in nature to the Platte River and will be on hand to answer questions. He will speak at 9:00 am at the Dickeyville Community Center, located two blcks northeast of the Dickeyville Firehouse on East Ave.

The quarterly Board meeting will be held following the speaker presentation.

FPR Awarded 2007 River Planning Grant

The Friends of the Platte River, Inc. have been successful in obtaining continued financial assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in the form of the 2007 River Planning Grant through the fiscal sponsorship of Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council.

The grant award will provide operating funds for the group to continue our efforts to solidify and expand by focusing on addressing the issues (recreation, conservation, restoration and education) defined by citizens and stakeholders in surveys and discussions.

The primary objective of the group in the next phase is to plan and administer projects in these focus areas.

The group will do this by continuing to define stakeholder support, implementing educational programs, and building membership. Activities which will work toward these goals will include: subsidizing a watershed-scale ground water/well-testing program,

working with UW-Platteville staff and students to develop one or more student design projects in the watershed, continuing work on developing and promoting a Platte River canoe trail, and applying for funding for future projects.

In addition, the group will continue gathering and sharing information through various formats including a newsletter, brochures, print media, and an improved website.

Banfield Bridge Recreation Area to get Improvements

The Friends of the Platte River, Inc. met recently with the Grant County Parks Commission to share concerns about the loss of recreational capacity at the boat launch site at Banfield Bridge Park. The Parks Commission agreed to work with the friends group to address improvements to the park. Funding for

UW-Platteville students discuss Banfield boat launch

initial design phase of improvements will be applied for from state Fish and Wildlife funds which will hopefully be designated for the project this fall. UW-Platteville students will be involved in the initial design. Issues included in park improvements will be improvements to the boat launch and erosion issues. Another idea brought up at the June Board of Directors meeting concerned the possibility of installation of channel markers from Banfield Bridge to the Mississippi River to make navigation safer and easier. That project is being currently being investigated.

Bluer Waters/Greener Grass

As summer continues in southwest Wisconsin, many will notice algae blooms throughout the watershed, particularly in ponds, pool, and shallower slow-flowing waters. An algae bloom is an abnormally large, rapid growth of algae which can make a river ecosystem become unbalanced by depleting the water of oxygen, making it difficult to sustain aquatic animals.

Why So Much Algae?

In a balanced ecosystem, algae are kept in check because the limited amount of nutrients available in the water goes to supporting other plant growth. When excess nutrients like phosphate and nitrate are added to the system, an algae bloom occurs. This bloom, in turn, uses the available oxygen making it unavailable to other plants and animals.

Additionally, when the plants die off, the decaying plants in the water system can cause an increase in bacteria. These bacteria use oxygen, making less oxygen available for other plants and animals. In slow moving or polluted waters, much of the available dissolved oxygen is consumed by bacteria. This makes it unavailable to other organisms.

Too Little Oxygen

All aquatic animals need oxygen to survive. Waters with consistently high dissolved oxygen levels are usually healthy and stable environments. These waters can support a wide diversity of aquatic organisms. Natural and human-induced changes can affect how much dissolved oxygen is available in the river system.

Too Much Nitrate

Nitrate is needed by all aquatic animals and plants to build protein. Nitrate is released into the water by the decomposition of dead plants and animals, the excretions of living animals and from fertilizer runoff. However, excessive levels of nitrate increase plant growth and decay, promote bacterial

composition and ultimately decrease the amount of oxygen available in the water.

Too Much Phosphate

Phosphate is a nutrient needed for plant and animal growth. Levels can become too high and lead to an overgrowth of plants, increased bacterial activity, and ultimately, decreased oxygen levels. Like nitrate, one source of phosphate is human and animal wastes. Excessive phosphorus concentrations in the aquatic environment may produce eutrophication of streams and reservoirs. Eutrophication (nutrient enrichment) generally is characterized by an abundance of nutrients, decreases in

dissolved oxygen, and dense algal growth. Additionally, rooted aquatic vegetation may grow dense in shallow water with excessive phosphorus, thus reducing the recreational value of the water body. These rooted plants also may uptake phosphorus that is held in the bottom sediment and subsequently release it into the aquatic environment. Sources of phosphorus include inorganic phosphates added to agricultural soils as fertilizer, manure from confined animal-feeding operations, and treated human sewage discharged directly into receiving streams.

What can you do?
On the Farm

In agricultural areas, such as ours, the fertilizers and manure that farmers apply to crops can end up seeping into groundwater or running off into streams contributing to excessive nitrates and phosphates in the water. Many agricultural producers are realizing the value of careful planning and management of the nutrients used in their operations. Local land conservation offices can assist farmers in finding the information they need to properly manage their nutrient use.

What can you do?
In the Yard

Although nitrate pollution from agriculture has received a lot of attention**,** many private wells have been polluted with nitrates due to misuse of fertilizer on lawns that are close to shallow water wells. Mismanagement of fertilizer nitrogen is more common in urban areas. This misuse results from lack of knowledge of the relationship between excessive nitrogen use on home lawns and groundwater pollution. Urban sources of nitrate pollution have received less scrutiny because total amounts of nitrogen fertilizer used in urban areas is small compared to that used in agricultural areas. While the total nutrient load from urban areas is small, it contributes more nutrients on a per acre basis and can have significant impact on local water quality.

Some simple measures can be taken in residential lawn management to limit the nutrients ending up in rivers and streams. A recent issue of *Audubon* magazine gives several practical suggestions to maintain a healthy lawn while keeping nutrients out of streams. *Audubon* suggests using organic

pesticides, replacing unnecessary lawn with native groundcover, mowing high to put less stress on the lawn, and aerating the lawn to loosen soil and allow water to penetrate more easily. Other suggestions include leaving grass clippings on the lawn to reduce the need for fertilizer, never fertilizing before a heavy rain, and maintaining a buffer of tall grasses or plants along any streams or rivers on your property to trap soil particles and nutrients from entering the waterway.

Resources: McCommons, James. (2006, May-June) So Lawn. *Audubon, pp.62-63.*

2007 Board of Director Meeting Dates

September 8, 2007*
December 1, 2007

All meetings will be held Saturday mornings, 9:00 am at the Dickeyville Community Center unless noted otherwise.

*Remember to bring your in-kind statements with hours worked and mileage to this meeting.

Wanted: Your Stories

Everyone who lives near or has enjoyed the waters of the Platte River watershed for its beauty and recreation has a story to tell. We would love to read your story or hear about your ideas and inspirations in a future issue of the Friends of the Platte River, Inc. newsletter. Please contact us if you have something you'd like to share.

Summer River Clean-Up Event

The Friends of the Platte River participated in a July clean-up day to remove debris from lower stretches of the river.

Everett Malott and Dan Enz show off an abandoned boat they removed from the Platte River.

Join

Your investment in the Friends of the Platte River, Inc. allows you the right to help determine actions for the group, receive newsletters, updates, and invitations to educational events.

Your membership supports the very important mission of the group and insures that we will be able to continue applying for and receiving funding to work toward continued improvements in the watershed.
Thank You!

Membership Form

Sign up for:

*Student*_____	*$10.00*
*Individual*_____	*$20.00*
Family _____	*$35.00*
*Municipality*_____	*$50.00*
*Organization/Business*___	*$50.00*
*Add'l donation*_____	_____
Total	_____

*Name*_____
*Address*_____
_____
*Phone*_____
*Email*_____

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