



*Friends
of the
Platte River, Inc.*

Winter

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

***UW-Platteville Engineers will
Present Banfield Boat Launch Ideas
@ December 1 Mtg.***

Please plan to attend our quarterly meeting on Saturday, December 1, 2007 to hear UW-Platteville senior engineering students present their preliminary design for improvements at Banfield boat launch area. These students have put a considerable amount of work into studying the launch site and erosion issues at the park and are putting together a very interesting presentation for this meeting.

The students are working on the project through the direction of Grant County Parks Commission with assistance from UW-Extension and the Friends of the Platte River. The presentation will be at 9:00 am at the Dickeyville Community Center, located two blocks northeast of the Dickeyville Firehouse on East Ave.

The quarterly Board Meeting will be held following the presentation.

***It's Official—Friends of the Platte
River, Inc. Achieves
Non-Profit Status!!***

Thanks to the tireless effort and hard work on the part of Friends of the Platte River founding member, William Brewer, The Friends of the Platte River, Inc. has been successful in obtaining

non-profit 501(c) 3 status.

Having this status will greatly increase the effectiveness of the group and our ability to continue securing grants and donations.

Thank you—Bill for all your hard work!

People of the Platte:

Bob Donald

The Platte River watershed is made up of more than just the water and land it runs through; it is the people of the watershed who make the greatest difference in the viability of the watershed. As a new feature of our newsletter, we will begin profiling the people of the Platte River watershed...

Bob Donald pulls off his ball cap and scratches his head for a second, "At least 30,000 trees," he says as he sweeps his arm over the steep hillside indicating a



forest of young trees which he has planted over the past eighteen years or so. Many of

the plantings have been done by hand with painstaking care.

Bob Donald and his wife, Debbi, both originally from the Waukesha, Wisconsin area, graduated from UW-Platteville in the late seventies, fell in love with Southwest Wisconsin, and have lived here since. They've owned their hilly 12 acre farm and old stone farmhouse along the Platte River in Harrison township since the late 1980's and have poured themselves into caring for the property which had been intensively farmed since the 1830's. The Donald's have since enrolled most of the farm in the CRP program.

As we stand on the forested hillside among the grove of young oaks and pines enjoying the breath-taking views of the Platte River valley below us, Bob pulls out a photo album and shows me a picture from when he first bought the property. It's the hillside we are now standing on, but in contrast to all the trees we now see, the photo shows uninterrupted pasture and cornfield, almost no trees.

As we travel further up the hillside Bob tells stories of wildlife that inhabit his re-forested hillside—mink, pheasants, turkey, deer, pileated woodpeckers.

Bob speaks quietly in a humble manner, but is as full of surprises as his impressive farm. One of the many gems on the farm is a carefully tended vineyard. Bob makes wine to share with friends and family from the grapes produced on the 114 vines. Winemaking isn't his only special skill, Bob Donald has also produced wooden furnishings and bowls from timber on his land.

Mr. Donald has planted twenty-five acres of his bottomland next to the Platte River in native prairie grasses— an impressive stand

of swaying orange stems on this late October afternoon.



What motivates Mr. Donald to undertake such an impressive array of projects? "I don't know, maybe all my years of scouting. I just like nature, I guess," he says in his unassuming way.

He reads a lot and asks a lot of questions to learn all the ins and outs of planting, culling and caring for his forest and prairie. He admits he has made some mistakes along the way and still has more to do, but anyone can see that what he *has* accomplished is nothing less than impressive.

Setting the Record Straight Misconceptions on Groundwater

As we begin thinking ahead to our spring project—a subsidized well testing program for people in the Platte River Watershed sponsored in conjunction with Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council and our local UW Extension Basin Educator—this article on the topic might shed some light on the complicated subject of groundwater. The article is reprinted with permission from River Alliance of Wisconsin's summer 2007 newsletter.

By Gail Gilson Pierce

Here in Wisconsin we're passionate about our water. Our lives are defined by it. Pure, clean water – and lots of it – is our right. Conversations in other states probably start with, "How do you like this weather?" But here in Wisconsin, we're more likely to ask, "How's the water level this year?" We Wisconsinites don't like low water levels. It means we have to consider adding more dock sections, or that we might not be able to get into our favorite fishing bay, or paddle our favorite streams. And we most certainly don't expect or appreciate threats to our drinking water. After all, we live in the land of "sky blue waters" – and a lot of it. When water levels or quality are low, it's human nature to blame someone or something. We want it to be someone else's problem, so they're responsible for fixing it. We boldly and confidently declare our explanations for such problems, and deny that our actions have anything to do with it. Kevin Masarik, groundwater education specialist in the College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point, has heard a lot of widely accepted



statements about groundwater that are simply not true. That's not surprising. After all, groundwater is kind of hard to understand, because you can't see it. The following are some of the more common groundwater

misconceptions – or some version of them – that Masarik has heard, followed by his explanation of what's actually true.

Misconception #1

No wonder our lake is so low when the neighbors keep pumping water from it to water their lawn. They should take the water out of their own well rather than take water from the rest of us around the lake!

Masarik

Actually groundwater and lakes are intricately connected. Pulling water directly from the lake really isn't much different than pulling water from a nearby well. In most situations low lake levels are the result of natural fluctuations in precipitation; still, those effects can sometimes be exacerbated by human consumption of water. As a result, we should try to conserve water whenever possible. If you are going to water your lawn, do it early in the morning or at night when evaporation rates are lower. And by not cutting your grass so short, it will allow for deeper roots which means your lawn won't dry out as fast and you shouldn't need to water it as often. Some people even choose not to water their lawns at all.

Misconception #2

People "up north" won't run out of well water. Their groundwater comes all the way from Canada and Lake Superior, and that's a pretty big supply!

Masarik

Well, groundwater is actually a local resource and originates as rain or snow melt infiltrating into the ground near your well. Some of this water infiltrates into the ground and reaches a point where all the empty space in between the soil particles or cracks in the bedrock is completely filled with water. This is our groundwater resource. It's not an underground river or lake, like some people think. Our groundwater does not come all the way from Canada or Lake Superior.

In fact, most water that you pull from your well probably infiltrated into the ground within a half or quarter of a mile from your home.

As for running out of water, we are fortunate that Wisconsin is a water-rich state and we're generally not worried about running out of water. However, large high-capacity wells can sometimes affect nearby neighbors' wells or nearby surface waters if the well is located too close to a small stream or spring. Some wells have trouble producing enough water because of the types of materials the well is drilled into. It's important to remember that we're not the only ones that need water. Plants, fish and other wildlife rely on that water too.

Misconception #3

I'm not concerned about contaminants in my drinking water. That water has been down there thousands of years – long before any of these modern chemicals were around.

Masarik

Most drinking water that we pull from wells is only a couple years to a couple of decades old. Depending on the depth of your well, the types of soil, and the type of bedrock that your well is drilled into, your drinking water may even be younger than that. It's not just modern chemicals finding their way into our ground- water that should concern us. There are also naturally occurring contaminants we need to look out for.

Misconception #4

I'm not about to pay someone to dispose of my leftover paint. I just make sure to pour it on the ground north of my well. And since ground- water always flows north, it will never even get to my well.

Masarik

Groundwater doesn't flow in just one direction. Rather, its flow depends mostly on the topography of the land. Just like a ball rolling downhill, groundwater generally flows from areas of high elevation to areas

of low elevation. Any chemicals that we spill or apply to the land surface have the potential to contaminate our groundwater. Just because it may not affect your well doesn't mean that it won't affect someone else's well.

Misconception #5

We buy artesian water from the store because it's purer, and tastes better than our well water.

Masarik

While some people may like the taste of certain water better, bottled water sold in stores isn't necessarily purer. You may be surprised that when it comes to contaminants in water, many household wells and municipal water supplies in Wisconsin produce water that is just as good if not better when measured against safe drinking water standards. Some bottled water is actually municipal water that may or may not have been treated. Bottled water labeled spring or artesian water must meet certain requirements to be labeled as such. In order to be labeled spring water for instance, the well that supplies the water must be located within a certain distance to a natural spring. Pulling large quantities of water from these areas can harm these important resources. Lastly, most of the cost you pay for bottled water is related to the amount of energy it takes to package and transport the water to the store, not the cost of the water itself. Most people can save money and natural resources simply by drinking the water that comes out of your tap at home.

For more information about groundwater in Wisconsin, visit

www.uwsp.edu/cnr/gndwater/

**2007 Board of Director
Meeting Dates:**

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.

***US Army Corps of Engineers
Site Visit***

Our September Board of Directors meeting featured Hank DeHaan from the US Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District. Hank gave a very informative presentation about Mississippi River backwater ecosystems and about the types of habitat improvement projects the Corps has been involved in. The meeting was followed up by an October Platte River site visit from Corps staff. Camie Knollenberg from the Corps attended that site visit and will be at our December meeting if anyone has any suggestions or questions for her concerning the site visit or possible areas of partnership with the Corps of Engineers.

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.

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:

<i>Student</i> _____	<i>\$10.00</i>
<i>Individual</i> _____	<i>\$20.00</i>
<i>Family</i> _____	<i>\$35.00</i>
<i>Municipality</i> _____	<i>\$50.00</i>
<i>Organization/Business</i> _____	<i>\$50.00</i>
<i>Add'l donation</i> _____	_____

Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Contact:

[*platteriverwisconsin@yahoo.com*](mailto:platteriverwisconsin@yahoo.com)

website: platteriverfriends.org