



# STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER

## Fall/Winter 2019

crawfordstewardship.org

# Monitoring our Waters through Citizen Science

*A new generation joins the team!*

By Omaru Heras

We met 15-year old Emily Schmidt at the Crawford Co Fair 2018 in Gays Mills, while identifying macroinvertebrates at our citizen science educational workshop. She was engaged at the event, and the next year wished to join our volunteer stream-water monitoring program.

In this interview, we highlight some of her passions and reasons why she got involved in Crawford Stewardship Project and became a citizen scientist!

"I was initially intrigued when I was first identifying macroinvertebrates at the fair because I

was aware of the water situation and the effect on the wildlife, let alone the safety of our water systems. When I learned that there was something I could do to help with research, I was all for it. There was no way I would miss out on this opportunity!

"Growing up, I was always attracted to the natural beauty of the Driftless. I loved swimming and playing in natural bodies of water rather than public pools. I especially loved the rolling landscape and diverse wildlife."

Emily took the Water Action Volunteers (WAV) Level 1 training with CSP and Valley Stewardship Network (VSN)

to become a volunteer, and did her first couple monitorings at some local sites of great concern.

We asked her to share some of her motivations, concerns, and insights from her experiences, and were blown away by her wise perspectives:

"It can get intimidating when you get the test results back and realize how poisonous the water is. What made me want to keep going was personal experiences with the danger of contaminated water.

"In the past few years, the Driftless area has experienced traumatic flooding. The water

from the flood in the fall of 2018 was so toxic that if someone had a scrape on their leg and got some of that water in it, their leg might get so infected it would have to be cut off. People lost entire houses because of toxic mold. My experience with CSP has been satisfying because now I know more about what's going on by researching the water.

"My major concern with water quality is the effect on the natural life that depends on the water. I don't think it's fair to the wildlife living on the water systems when humans contami-

*"Monitoring" continued page 3*



## CAFO on the Kickapoo?

*Meet the Kickapoo Stewards!*

By Forest Jahnke

The big ag industrial complex keeps pushing out our small family farms, and is pushing for further consolidation as its influence oozes out of the flatlands and into our rugged and sensitive landscape.

Roth Feeder Pig presently has a CAFO of 2,900 sows (plus tens of thousands of piglets) and is now proposing to open another CAFO just south of Steuben, this time with twice the hogs, on a narrow karstic ridge overlooking the Kickapoo River. If we

*"Kickapoo" continued page 4*

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Forest Jahnke  
Rikardo Jahnke

**A thousand thanks to our dedicated volunteers and project collaborators! While some of you have been with us for over a decade, and others have just recently become involved, every one of you is deeply appreciated.**

**It was in your names that we accepted the "Friends of Conservation Award" this August from the Crawford County Land Conservation Committee. You are the servant leaders this world needs, and we could not do all this without you.**

Lamar Janes  
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### PROJECT COLLABORATORS

Citizen Action of Wisconsin  
Concerned Citizens for Smart Growth  
The Congo Players of the Underwater Church of Gays Mills  
Coulee Region Sierra Club  
Crawford County Conservation Department  
Crawford County Health Department  
Crawford County Farm to School  
Driftless Area Back to the Land Cooperative  
Driftless Brewing Company  
Driftless Community Action Network  
Driftless Defenders  
Family Farm Defenders  
Farms Not Factories  
Food Faith and Farming Network  
Freaks of Nature  
Friends of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway  
Gays Mills Library  
Grant-Iowa Wisconsin Farmers Union Chapter  
Grant County Rural Stewardship  
Helix Biolab  
Kickapoo Stewards  
Legion GIS  
Leuther Laboratories  
Medicine Brothers  
Midwest Environmental Ad-

vocates  
Richland County Conservation Department  
Richland County Health Department  
Richland Stewardship Project  
River Alliance of Wisconsin  
Save Our Unique Lands  
Socially Responsible Agricultural Project  
South Central Wisconsin Farmers Union  
South West Wisconsin Area Progressives  
St Croix County Defending our Water  
Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network  
Soldiers Grove Public Library  
Upper Mississippi River Region Interleague Organization - League of Women Voters  
University of Wisconsin Extension  
UWSP Water and Environmental Analysis Lab  
Valley Stewardship Network  
Vernon-Crawford Wisconsin Farmers Union Chapter  
Vernon County Conservation Department  
Vernon County Health Department  
Viroqua Climate Action  
Viroqua Plastics Free  
Wauzeka Village Hall  
WDRT Community Radio  
Wisconsin Farmers Union  
Wisconsin Conservation Voters  
Wisconsin Network for Peace  
Justice and Sustainability  
Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene

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### Board of Directors

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### Coordinators

• **Program** Forest Jahnke • **Community Engagement** Eli Mandel  
• **Water Quality Monitoring** Omaru Heras

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nate their homes.

“All the ground water and all the surface water is interconnected, therefore we have to be careful with this fragile resource.

“In the first training I went to, everyone was friendly and excited to be there. I learned so much from WQM, I couldn’t ask for a better experience. Shout out to everyone who gave me rides to the sites we were testing!”

Her family has been extremely supportive as well!

Kevin, Emily’s father, shared with us that, “Emily is fortunate to have these formative experiences as a teen. She will remember them, and environmentalism will become a central theme for years to come.”



**Real-world chemistry! Emily helps measure an exact amount of the chemically stabilized water sample.**

Emily’s message to all generations and to the whole world:

“As a new generation growing up with the challenges we face today, and the challenges we have to overcome in the future, it’s vital that young people take an interest in the effect they have on their world. My generation must understand that being a responsible citizen is being responsible with the en-



**Safety first! Omaru requires all our volunteers to wear gloves and masks at more concerning sites, and keeps a close eye on the process, as Emily and Ric Thill take samples.**

**E. Coli (Escherichia Coli)**

Bacteria used as an indicator of fecal contamination, as well as of other dangerous pathogens present in surface water samples such as *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli O157:H7*, and *Salmonella*\*.

Note: Safety recreational standard for surface waters is 126 cfu / 100mL.

<b>E. Coli and Background bacteria found in laboratory samples from sites of concern in Crawford Co., (in colony forming units (cfu) / 100mL)</b>					
Month	Minimum	Maximum	Average	# of Sites tested	*Max. Background Bacteria (!)
May	8	670	269	3	100,000
June	4 (a spring)	69,000	23,521	5	5,000,000
July	4 (a spring)	150,000	31,922	8	<b>81,000,000</b>
August	280	9,800	2,747	7	4,800,000
September	720	<b>170,000</b>	<b>37,003</b>	7	8,600,000

vironment.

“Engage other people by spreading the word that this organization (CSP) exists. Getting people excited about WQM will make them want to be a part of the work we do!

“Being a respectful and responsible citizen is about caring about the future of our planet. Taking the easy way out and focusing on short term motives is not helpful to the progress of taking care of the Earth.”

“We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” -Aldo Leopold

CSP is grateful for aware and proactive young people like Emily with encouraging families. Input from the newer generations is critical to making a real difference in the world, and Emily’s motivation has brought new energy and ideas to our organization.



**May 4, Emily joins her first water quality monitoring training with Crawford Stewardship Project and Valley Stewardship Network at the Mother Earth Green Center in Steuben.**



**August 5, local citizens turned out en-masse, and successfully convinced the Marietta Town Board to pass a one year moratorium on CAFOs in the Township!**

***“Kickapoo” continued from page 1***

do nothing, we will continue to see our communities evacuated to make room for more CAFOs and their waste spreading areas.

Good thing Crawford Stewardship Project, and the communities in this area, are not known for sitting on the sidelines and watching as industrialization takes over our beautiful rural area!

Since we caught our first whiff of this proposal, we have been at the forefront of facilitating democratic participation in this process and supporting Marietta Township, Crawford County, and even the state DNR in doing their due diligence.

In this struggle, as we do whatever possible, CSP has helped to catalyze a group of immediate neighbors whose lives will be directly impacted by this proposed operation. A talented and passionate mix of farmers, families, retirees, and other lo-

cal landowners, the Kickapoo Stewards are actively engaged in protecting their land, water, and local economy.

Together, we have attended Marietta Township public meetings and have persuaded the Town Board to schedule multiple public hearings on the topic. Through this process, we proposed (and achieved!) a year-long CAFO moratorium, as well as the creation of a township workgroup to further study the issues and come up with facts and recommendations for the Town Board to consider.

CSP is providing extensive research and information we have accumulated over the years, and several of the Kickapoo Stewards are members of the workgroup. That said, no less than three Roths have been added to the workgroup, presenting both a challenge (conflict of interest?!) and an opportunity to

have a direct dialogue with the CAFO owner/operators.

Moving forward, Crawford Stewardship Project is working hand-in-hand with the Kickapoo Stewards, hiring professionals for their expertise, as well as educating our elected officials, agency staff, and the broader public on the proposed CAFO and the impacts it would cause in our watersheds.

We are standing up for local control. We are urging Crawford County and the Wisconsin DNR to respect the Marietta Township Moratorium, and will be working with the DNR to ensure they are doing a full assessment of this application for all the many risks it poses.

We also attended and commented at the September Livestock Siting Law update hearing, calling for the Department of Ag, Trade, and Consumer Protection Board to finally im-

plement some much-needed revisions to the deeply flawed law. This one-size-fits-all state law that preempts local authority by setting a regulatory ceiling instead of a basic enforced regulatory floor, would be best if scrapped altogether, but would be greatly improved by the proposed updates.

As we see good people all across the state struggling with these same issues, we feel so blessed to live and work where people recognize the incredible value of this beautiful place, and are willing and ready to stand up on behalf of their communities. We have faith that with your support and active engagement, we can advance a regenerative and resilient vision of agriculture in our area, and prevent the worst impacts of the industrial operations that so desperately want to take root here.

## **CSP Launches the Stewardship Business Alliance!**

With over a decade of work catalyzing engagement and action from citizens and government officials and agencies at the local, regional, and state level, CSP is growing to work more closely and collaboratively with our business communities.

Moving into 2020 and beyond we will be working to generate and engage an alliance of local stewards in the business sector to strengthen our communities as one!

The Stewardship Business Alliance is a network of farmers, businesses, entrepreneurs, and job creators united in steward-

ing water, soil, and a healthy environment. We unite to conserve our natural resources, a healthy rural economy, and way of life.

Look forward to more information and opportunities upcoming, to be part of a growing network of leaders working for and supporting conservation in our communities. If you can already tell that this mission fits your local business, let us know you are interested in becoming involved!

Contact Community Engagement Coordinator, Eli Mandel [emandel@crawfordstewardship.org](mailto:emandel@crawfordstewardship.org) or 608-632-4213

# Collaboration & Action on Local Well Testing

By Eli Mandel

In the Spring of 2019 Crawford Stewardship Project completed our first ever Drinking Water Education & Testing Campaign, subsidizing and testing 53 private wells in Crawford County, and culminating in a Drinking Water Education Forum in Seneca. UW Extension Groundwater Education Specialist, Kevin Masarik, and CSP Drinking Water Consultant Dr. Steve Oberle, gave presentations and answered questions about the state of our hydrogeology and drinking water quality.

With the news of a proposed hog CAFO in Southern Crawford County we reached out to neighbors and helped them test their wells to establish some

baseline data in case this dangerous industrialized operation comes to be.

CSP staff and board members attended two different hearings of the Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality. There, we advocated for increased protections, fully staffing county conservation departments, and local control to deal with the sources of surface and groundwater pollution.

The fact of the matter is in Crawford, Richland, and Vernon Counties there is a severe lack of private well testing data. Our neighbors to the south—Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette counties—are engaged in the Southwest Wisconsin Groundwater & Geology Study (SWIGG). After

several well testing rounds, including the first of three sets of bacterial source tracking tests, results show concerning levels of contamination from both bacteria and nitrates in private well water.

Crawford Stewardship Project, after years of advocacy and work, is now collaborating with a diverse coalition of groups in the realization of the Driftless Area Water Study (DAWS). Spearheaded by Crawford, Richland, and Vernon county's Conservation and Health departments with expertise and support from CSP, Richland Stewardship Project, Valley Stewardship Network, Tainter Creek Watershed Council and the Farm Bureau, initial DAWS

testings and education will begin in 2020.

Plans are moving forward in the three counties (with slightly varying methodologies) to do two coordinated private well testing dates in 2020, the first being in late April or early May, with the goal to test 400 wells in all the three counties on the same day.

We are happy to see this finally becoming a priority for our region, and hope to see this fully supported by our County Boards and state partners. This is still only the beginning, and CSP will continue to push for more action at every level to protect our drinking water!



**Early members of the Driftless Area Water Study (DAWS) met on April 12 to discuss a coordinated well testing effort for Crawford, Vernon and Richland counties. Attendees included (left to right) Crawford County Conservationist Dave Troester, Eli Mandel of Crawford Stewardship Project, Vernon County Conservationist Ben Wojahn, Richland County Conservationist Cathy Cooper, Vernon County Public Health Sanitarian Sydney Garvalia, Crawford County Director of Public Health Cindy Riniker, Tom Lukens of Valley Stewardship Network, Forest Jahnke of Crawford Stewardship Project and Melissa Luck, Richland County Board Supervisor.**



## The Quiet Heroes Behind our Work

The Crawford Stewardship Board quietly works behind the scenes to further our CSP Mission. Some of us are more recent members, some since we first began meeting 12 years ago.

The work is sometimes challenging, and always satisfying, as the respect

and attitude of cooperation is strong within the group.

"I leave our meetings with a sense of support and a fondness towards my fellow board members," states Edie Ehlert, Board President.

Kathy Byrne, Board Secretary, said "The board is very engaged in this

important work, but we also have fun, laugh, and enjoy each other's company."

If you would like to have more information about the board's work and consider joining, let us know. Contact Edie Ehlert at [edieehlert63@gmail.com](mailto:edieehlert63@gmail.com) or call 608-734-3223.

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Crawford Stewardship Project invites you to our 8th Annual  
**Love the Land Music & Dance Benefit!**

January 25 • 7-11pm

Gays Mills Community Commerce Center  
16381 Hwy 131, Gays Mills

Enjoy live music,  
Driftless Brewing  
Company beer,  
wine, silent  
auction, treats  
and a new  
addition this  
year: Veggie &  
Meat Tamales!

Featuring  
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