More Unseen Truths in the Water

Scary new records

By Omaru Heras

Crawford Stewardship Project’s Water Quality Monitoring (WQM) Program, through the invaluable support of Leuther and State Labs, tests seven sites of concern for background bacteria, Staphylococcus aureus and MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus), as well as E.coli, total coliform bacteria, fungi, and total phosphorus.

One of two sites in Marietta Township (Kickapoo River tributaries), reached 500 million/100mL of background bacteria this year, crushing last year’s record reading of 75 million/100mL in July 2019 in both sites. 50,000/100mL is the safety standard for recreational waters.

As it all falls apart, we must all come together

Only SOLIDARITY and UNITY will bring the change we need

By Forest Jahnke

There has never been a stronger call for solidarity on every level. All lives can’t matter until black, brown, and indigenous lives matter, and none of our lives will matter if we continue destroying our living planet.
Abundant THANKS to our dedicated volunteers and project collaborators! We greatly appreciate all of the time and energy you good folks dedicate to Crawford Stewardship Project’s mission. Every one of you plays an important role in continuing the success of our work.

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Swamp Project People and all their volunteers
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Viroqua Plastics Free
Water Action Volunteers Program-UW Extension & WDN
WDRT Community Radio
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Farmers Union
Wisconsin Conservation Voters
Wisconsin Network for Peace Justice and Sustainability
Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene

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Delayed Driftless Area Water Study In-Progress!

CSP continues working on karst and groundwater susceptibility education

By Eli Mandel

As we shift through the ever-changing realities of life in 2020, Crawford Stewardship Project remains committed to the study, education, and protection of our most precious resource; clean groundwater.

Here in southwest Wisconsin, we all drink out of sandstone aquifers, water that we pull out of the ground to be utilized for our families, farms, and businesses.

Though delayed by Covid-19, the Driftless Area Water Study (DAWS), is now in progress in Crawford, Richland, and Vernon Counties. Initial sampling (with added Covid-19 safety measures) took place on October 26th in all three counties, with a subsequent sampling to occur in the Spring of 2021.

The 800 total samples taken will be evaluated at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) Water and Environmental Analysis Laboratory. Drinking water samples will be evaluated with the “homeowners package” testing, among others, the two most important factors in the water that can negatively affect our health:

- Total Coliform Bacteria and E. coli tests if your well is producing bacteriologically free water and is the most important test to perform regularly on a private water supply.
- Nitrate are the most common chemical contaminant in Wisconsin groundwater. Sources of nitrate include fertilizers, septic systems or manure and bio-solids applications. This test serves as an indicator of land-use impacts and may indicate the presence of other contaminants such as pesticides.

For over a decade, CSP has advocated for the health and protection of our groundwater and sensitive karst geology, working to change public policy and educate decision-makers, and the public about our local hydrological susceptibility to contamination.

This year, CSP was able to engage the public in a variety of ways surrounding our hydrogeological realities.

Due to the pandemic, staff delivered their planned in-person presentation online at the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention. This statewide event is presented by UWSP, UW Extension, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Water Action Volunteers (WAV) program.

The interactive presentation, “This is Your WAV on Karst”, was such a success that staff were subsequently invited and presented it to the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network!

A shorter karst presentation was digitally performed to the 4th graders of Crawford County for the annual Youth Conservation Day. This educational experience is organized by the Crawford County Conservation Department.

CSP’s Annual Karst Geology Exploration was a Covid-19 safe all outdoor event. Around 40 people were in attendance on a perfect mid-August afternoon. Participants explored a quarry, seeping cliff, and a rare sandstone cave and participated in a dialogue surrounding the state of our local geology and the threats our clean groundwater face.

Look forward to exciting future endeavors, as CSP launches our kARsT (karst+ART) Connections Campaign which will seek to reinvigorate and broaden our Karst Education Campaign through multimedia artistic and creative expressions!

Microplastics Monitoring...with a babylegs motion!

By Omaru Heras

Plastic, what a wonderful invention! But, its high production/consumption and poor management have turned it into a huge problem for the quality of the soil, air, and water worldwide. Many actions, small and large, can be taken to minimize plastics pollution, starting with REDUCING, REUSING and RECYCLING them.

And... What about MONITORING them too? Babylegs, it’s a fun name given to an efficient way to monitor microplastics, created by Max Liboiron through Public Lab. CSP recently adopted this community science and open technology initiative as part of our Water Quality Monitoring Program, thanks to PublicLab’s staff and collaborators, plus seven wonderful volunteers from Crawford and Vernon Counties.

The Microplastics Monitoring process requires building a low-magnification “dissecting microscope” and the Babylegs, deploying them, processing and identifying the samples. And the best part: anyone can do it!

CSP’s volunteers and staff will continue testing and practicing this method, defining our goals and parameters, and will be ready to officially launch the microplastics data gathering at various points on the Kickapoo River in 2021.

Volunteers Dave Hacket and Emily Schmidt holding the sampling pole with babylegs on the Kickapoo River. Other team members: Ellen Brooks, Kat Tigerman, Carl Schlecht, Vicky Ramsay and Dave Edinger.
In favor of extension of the Crawford County CAFO Moratorium, we have:
- A majority of the County CAFO Study Committee
- All involved county staff from the County Conservation and Health Departments, as well as UW Extension
- Overwhelming support from the public at the CAFO Study Committee’s public input Community Dialogue
- Midwest Environmental Advocates legal brief and County Legal Counsel advice supporting the legal soundness of such an action
- 16 organizations (focused on hunting and fishing, good governance, water and environmental protection, and agriculture, including unanimous votes of support by our local Farmers’ Union chapters).

Opposed to extending the CAFO moratorium are unfounded legal threats from the pork industry, and those county committee and board members who believe either that this is a township or state issue, or that we should hurry this process along so Roth Feeder Pig can get down to building their new expanded facility and operating what would be, taken together, the largest hog CAFO in the state.

With no real rationale, the Land Conservation Committee has refused to even put a moratorium extension on the County Board agenda for a vote. While an extension is gravely needed and well justified, it seems our county is ready to drop the issue without taking any action.

This opens up a very real possibility that our CAFO Study Committee will not complete our task, and no action will be taken by the County Board to ensure public health and safety in the face of current and potential CAFO impacts. This moratorium is our chance to protect our air, water, soil, and diversified rural economy before the DNR approves any number of CAFOs of any size anywhere in Crawford County.

While we push for meaningful action on the county level, we are keenly aware of the existing proposal by Roth Feeder Pig, Inc. (that operates the only Crawford County CAFO so far, near Wauzeka) to construct a new and expanded facility a handful of miles away, south of Steuben: Roth Feeder Pig II. This new operation plans to house 8,000 sows and produce 9.4 million gallons of liquid manure each year, and would be located on a narrow karstic ridge riddled with sinkholes, springs, and even a large cave, just above the Kickapoo River.

With our contracted expert reviewers, Midwest Environmental Advocates attorneys, and our boots-on-the-ground allies, the Kickapoo Stewards, we have filed an Environmental Impact Statement request to the WI Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for Roth Feeder Pig II. After years of enduring negligent reviews and permitting hundreds of CAFOs throughout the state, we expect the state to do a comprehensive review and implement protective measures, in accordance with this administration’s rhetoric about protecting drinking water.

Crawford Stewardship Project will continue to demand due diligence and appropriate action from our representatives at all levels, and will keep engaging the public and our allies with the process however we can.

Would you be willing to take action at a local, county, or state level to limit the spread of CAFOs in our special and sensitive region? There are many ways, big and small, for folks to plug in!

Please fill out our volunteer survey on crawfordstewardship.org, or contact our Community Engagement Coordinator Eli Mandel at emandel@crawfordstewardship.org or 608-632-4213.

“Truths” continued from page 1

But, larger amounts indicate ideal conditions for growth and/or high inputs of any form of bacteria (See Table 1: AVERAGES of seven sites of concern being monitored by CSP), including Crypto-sporidium and Salmonella species.

These microorganisms are heterotrophic because they depend on other organisms or decomposed organic matter to survive.

According to studies in Iowa (Iowa City Veterans Affairs and Kent State University), Illinois & North Carolina (University of North Carolina, Johns Hopkins University, George Washington University and the Statens Serum Institut in Denmark) and Germany (University Hospital of Munich and Governmental Institute of Public Health of Lower Saxony):

“Most of the MRSA carriers have been exposed directly to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO’s) and/or live nearby them. The average chances of getting infected are as follows: 300% in CAFO facilities and 200% in less than one mile away. S. aureus or MRSA can also be transmitted to humans through manure (spraying, runoff, water and air pollution) and products coming from CAFO’s.”

“The practices of intensive confinement and administration of antibiotics to animals – including non-therapeutically for growth promotion – are commonly used in industrial food-animal production and provide a reservoir for the selection of novel, antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can be exchanged between animals and humans.” (1)

S. aureus is another important water quality and MRSA indicator, a very dangerous and infectious bacteria that is difficult to treat.
We face open racism, xenophobia, and selectively applied violence in our streets.
Fracking, mountain-top removal, and tar sands produce most of our energy.
Our interpersonal communications come with ever increasing doses of radiation from our devices.
And now, direct unmediated contact is dangerous too!
Our farms are being turned into factories, so we consume cheap food from monocultured plants stripped of companionship and living soil, incarcerated animals unable to express their nature, and degraded landscapes, all doused with an array of questionable (if not outright toxic, but still perfectly legal) chemicals.
We've lost over two thirds of all wildlife in just the last 50 years, due to human activity.
“Natural” disasters visit us ever more frequently and powerfully, as even the basic elements strive to wake us from our destructive and extractive trance.
Every one of the seemingly separate issues that grassroots organizations like Crawford Stewardship Project are working on are, in fact, inseparably connected to all the others. They are all manifestations of the deep divisions that have been sewn among us, making us see ourselves as separate from “others” or “the environment”, when there is no separation. We are one people, one planet, and we are all deeply out of balance.
Those of us committed to justice must see that there are also common sources for the many injustices in the world, and join together to confront them at their root. These are the results of our heartbreaking colonial legacy of slavery and genocide against our brothers and sisters, and the living ecosystems on which we all rely. We must recognize these hard truths, and commit together to overcome them.

The good news is that once we see the intersectionality and convergence of all these issues, and how we are part of that system, we can join hands, work together, and take action to resolve them. Together, we can shift our minds (and the systems and institutions that we've created) from linear and extractive, to cyclical and regenerative. We can bring our corrupt & rigged political and economic system into harmony with the needs of life on earth. We can break the illusion of disconnection and isolation, and embrace our part as animals in a global ecosystem.
We can do this together, but not if we are divided. No one of us can do it all, but as a unified movement we can. This is why from our inception, Crawford Stewardship Project has been centered around solidarity with those most impacted by the systems of oppression that surround us. We have always been about justice, not charity, and have modeled these beliefs by engaging and empowering people to find their voices and how to most effectively use them to achieve change. This is why we are always ready for collaboration, to put our global perspective into local action.
Actively supporting the many creative ways being developed to begin addressing the issues of the past and moving towards a resilient and peaceful future, we are stepping up in this critical moment for racial justice. We stand in solidarity in the streets, reflect on the dominant culture and how we have participated, and we are now pushing ourselves to financially support an inspiring local project, 40 Acres and a Mule. This project is led by local people of color, and will use the funds to purchase a plot of land in the region for black farmers and food-ways. While this is only one small way to begin to rectify the injustices of the past, we look forward to supporting diversity in our farms in all ways, and collaborating to bring more soul into the local food movement.

“More Unseen Truths” ...

S. aureus levels skyrocketed a new record of 3,100/100mL (standard: less than 100/100mL) in June at one of the sites in Wauzeka that has been monitored for over a decade. After that, two other sites resulted in positive MRSA for the first time in CSP’s WQM history (See Table 2: AVERAGES of seven sites of concern being monitored by CSP).

CSP will continue looking for the unseen and you are welcome to grab and use your magnifying glass as well!
Contact CSP’s Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator Omaru Heras at oheras@crawfordstewardship.org.

Livestock-Associated Methicillin and Multidrug Resistant Staphylococcus aureus Is Present among Industrial, Not Antibiotic-Free Livestock Operation Workers in North Carolina. University of North Carolina, Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help (REACH), George Washington University, and Statens Serum Institut, Copenhagen, Denmark.
PLEASE JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR VIRTUAL LOVE THE LAND!
CSP Welcomes you to our online/phone-in Fundraiser
Saturday, December 12, 2020  2-3:30pm via Zoom

Relax in the comfort and safety of your home and join us for a fun filled fundraising event!

Featuring a variety of songs from local musicians, exciting auction items from our fabulous local artisans and businesses, and updates and actions from CSP staff on our various campaigns!

This year CSP is partnering with the 40 Acres And a Mule project, to help support African American owned farms and foodways in the Driftless.

Join by phone: (312) 626-6799  
Meeting ID: 99733334739#  
Or online: uwmadison.zoom.us/j/99733334739  
Passcode: crawford

For more details visit crawfordstewardship.org, our facebook page, or call 608-632-4213.

WELCOME!