



STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2023

crawfordstewardship.org

Rubber-stamping factory farms in the Driftless?

Not on our watch!

By Forest Jahnke

As we strive for real protections for our water, land, air, property values, and health in our Driftless region, we need to work at the local level. Promoting protective ordinances in our towns and county is the next step. And we're ready to go! Is your township? Have you attended a meeting?

Is your township ready?

CSP is here to supply you with sample ordinances and background information to make your case! If you have not yet, we suggest that first you simply show up to a couple meetings and be present. Our most local governments have broad constitutional authorities, yet tend to be ignored, and without public participation and trust little can be done.

The state Livestock Siting Law has stripped our local control over CAFOs on many levels, but we can set a much higher bar for how they operate in our communities. That said, this needs to be done proactively - before permits are granted - and ideally before they are applied for. Don't wait to react, or your options will be severely limited, and your community will be further divided.

Rubber-stamping continued on page 5

Sheep help "Ropes Course" meet back to school deadline

By Joseph Childs

A teamwork building obstacle course referred to as a "ropes course" will be featured on the school grounds of North Crawford this year thanks to some creative funding opportunities, forward thinking, and some hard-working volunteers and staff.

Brandon Banks and Robert Ghormley, both instructors at North Crawford High School, are heading up the installation effort and are making great progress. The pair anticipates completion of the course in time for the new school year.

They were not always as optimistic regarding their deadline, however: "When we looked at this area in April, we figured we would need a lot more time or a lot more people in order to clear the brush and debris from the area," Banks mentioned.

Sheep help continued on page 3



Reflections on a decade of water quality monitoring

Join our team to check and protect a stream!

By Deb & Bill Hiller

When we retired to Crawford County in 2012, we wanted to connect with our new community. After reading an article that mentioned the Water Action Volunteers (WAV) program, we

attended the WAV training where we met Crawford Stewardship Project (CSP) coordinators, found mentors and learned about our Driftless area.

Reflections continued on page 4

THANK YOU to all our wonderful volunteers!

From those who bake a pan of cookies or help set up an event, to those who help manage our website or monitor streams, you allow us to have the impact we do!

Aaron Brin
Ana Molina
Anne Coleman
Anthony Seelow
Barbara Bangert
Bill Hiller
Brent Childs
Carl Schlecht
Carol Anne Kemen
Carol Dagnon
Chrisse Reynolds
Cindy Kholes
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Connie Champnoise
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Deb Conlon
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Diana and Larry Forkash
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Joe Childs

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Melanie Kandler
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Nancy Lu Rosenheim
Nicole Harris
Nyah Forkash
Omaru Heras
Paul and Amy Pedersen
Paul Byrne
Peg LaMartina
Peggy Timmerman
Phil Burgess
Randy Swiggum
Readstown Fire Department
Richard Thill
Rikardo Jahnke
Russ Peters
Sara Tedeschi
Sarah Bransky
Shary Sanders

Soldiers Grove Fire Department
Sophie Eyer
Tim and Linda Eisele
Tin Lawhern
Travis Klinkner
Vance Haugen
Wilja Happe

Bands

Neil Knutson
Shufflin Duprees
Murder Kween

Project Collaborators

Citizen Lake Monitoring Network
Crawford County Land Conservation
Department
Friends of the Lower Wisconsin
Riverway
Great River Graziers
Legion GIS
Leuther Laboratories
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Nofence
Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network
Swamp Project People
Thoreau College
UW Extension
Valley Stewardship Network
Viroqua Climate Action
Viroqua Plastics Free
Water Action Volunteers
Wisconsin Conservation Voters
Wisconsin Farmers Union - Vernon/
Crawford Chapter
Wisconsin Geological and Natural
History Suevey
Youth Initiative High School

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Sheep help continued from page 1



Ghormley added, "The sheep did an amazing job of clearing out the vegetation. The volunteers from Lake Valley Camp piling the brush allowed us to come in with a skid steer and move everything out in a matter of hours so we could start with construction."

The sheep are part of the North Crawford Community Pastures Project started by Crawford Stewardship Project, and have been grazing on the school grounds since early May. Joseph Childs, a CSP employee, has been managing the hungry flock each day since then. Along with the sheep, Childs coordinated with Sara Tedeschi and Lake Valley Camp to bring in a crew of 10-12 volunteers on

two separate occasions to help clear the area in which the ropes course was to be constructed. Bankes and Ghormley hope to see the ropes course being used by not only North Crawford students, but for North Crawford to host other schools as well.

This project was made possible by generous grant funding through Food, Faith, and Farming Network and

Wisconsin Rural Coalition. Other organizations that have offered support are Wisconsin Farmers Union and Great River Graziers. With the support of these organizations as well as the school, CSP hopes to see this program get a firm foothold in the years to come to emphasize the importance of farm education and participation in our rural community.

The impact that this project will have on the youth at North Crawford may very well be felt years into the future when students enrolled in the program begin to pursue careers in the agricultural field. Our hope is that those students are prepared for the market that they are stepping into and are able to practice agriculture in a sustainable fashion.



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION FUND (S.A.E.F.)

By Joseph Childs

The Sustainable Agriculture Education Fund (S.A.E.F.) will provide grant funding to public K-12 schools for their agriculture education programs. These funds will specifically target projects that introduce or expand upon sustainable agriculture practices and methods. The current model of farming will simply not work long-term. We have seen the effects of worker shortages, supply chain issues, and rising costs for farm inputs. This trend will continue as resources become more scarce and we face the effects of our new extreme weather systems.

FOOD SECURITY IS NATIONAL SECURITY!

Our ability to reliably produce an excess of food in this country has allowed us to remain independent. In order to continue this, our food system must survive for generations to come. Policy makers are aware of this issue and (thanks to the efforts of organizations such as the Farmers Union, National Sustainable Ag Coalition, and an array of grassroots organizations such as Crawford Stewardship Project -CSP-) have taken great steps in addressing it with hundreds of millions of dollars being spent on incentives and research for sustainable agriculture practices.

The public funds being allocated to research institutions as well as the incentives being given to producers to implement more sustainable practices are a great start. The initial shift in the agriculture industry will rely on these funds to research better practices as well as incentivize current producers to change their ways. However, for that initial shift to be continued on into the future, the youth must be invested in and involved. These are the farmers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and consumers that will shape the industry from top to bottom. The hundreds of millions of dollars spent by the United States Government on sustainable agriculture research and incentives will be wasted if the incoming generation is not educated on how to grow, harvest, transport, and market sustainably produced food.

Our nation's schools are currently hurting for funding. In order to invest in the next generation of farmers, funds are needed to support the type of projects that increase education on sustainable agriculture. These programs will not only support the next generation of farmers, but also the many facets of what it takes to run a farm. Business basics, trades such as carpentry and welding,

and the interaction of agriculture and renewable energies are just a few to begin with. The beauty of grant funding is that projects are only limited by the applicant's ingenuity. Crawford Stewardship Project and North Crawford Schools have already implemented one such project that would qualify for this style of funding if it were to become available. With the response from the community, farming organizations, and surrounding schools, we believe that there are many more project ideas in the pipeline that could use funding in the future!

These funds should be made available through the Farm Bill, which contains hundreds of millions of dollars allocated for sustainable agriculture incentives currently. The S.A.E.F. program would be funded at a percentage match of these incentive funds. Eligible applicants would include K-12 educational institutions.

By opening up these funds for schools, the youth of our nation will begin to see that there is another way of farming that does not solely focus on yield. Policy makers are well aware of the crisis that our food system will face in the coming decades. However, there is still time to address that issue by educating those who will be operating our

This proved to be the best way to gain knowledge about our streams and make a positive impact on the environment. But most importantly, the WAV program and CSP provided the opportunity to make lasting friendships.



Move aside!

And then there was the two-year battle with a beaver family that decided our 20-foot testing site was ideal for constructing a dam. We wanted to be respectful, knowing that beavers are beneficial to a riparian area, but we had been testing in the same site for many years... Couldn't they find their own spot! Eventually, a strong current from heavy rains washed away all their work.



Beavers at work



Watercress invasion

Trekking to our stream the next summer, low and behold another surprise. There was no stream! Upon inspection we found a thick matting of watercress growing in the stream bed and the water trickling below the leaves. We harvested a mountain of thick green mass and cleared out a 20-foot section to do our float test.

It never fails to excite us when we get a big healthy crayfish, damselfly larvae, or dobson fly larvae in our net when surveying for macroinvertebrates (stream-dwelling critters). But after heavy rains be prepared for a shock. The power of the current knocks down and washes away vegetation, banks collapse, rocks are brought to the surface, and there is a scouring of the macroinvertebrates. However, we have seen that it only takes a year for the stream to come back to life. It may change course, create new pools, or become narrower, reminding us that change is the norm in nature.

We hope this story will encourage anyone who values their natural resources to consider this opportunity to engage in environmental stewardship with CSP. It only takes a few hours a month and will help in our effort to preserve and protect this precious resource.

Get out in nature and explore!...

By volunteering for water quality testing, you have a unique chance to educate yourself and others about the importance of clean water and the factors that affect it.

Please reach out to Omaru Heras (oheras@crawfordstewardship.org, 608-632-7021).

Rubber-stamping continued from page 1

We see a lack of resources, staff, political will and perceived authority from our local and state government when it comes to oversight of industrial ag operations, now called Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). This continues to play out here in Crawford County in the permitting process for the Roth Feeder Pig II CAFO, to the horror of the downhill and surrounding neighborhood south of Steuben.

The facts that it is overlooking the Kickapoo River and the Kickapoo Bottoms State Natural Area, which flow shortly thereafter into the wetlands of international importance of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway, or the presence of karst features such as sinkholes, springs, and a large cave on and around that ridge seem to have no bearing on the process. Indeed there seems to be only one thing that matters in this permitting process: is there enough land available to spread on?

However, even this basic question is unclear, even though Roth Feeder Pig II has now received both state and county approval and could begin construction at any point. After CSP brought attention to the fact that fully 1/3 of the acres in the Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) were not indeed available for spreading last year, a new NMP was submitted this year removing one - of the three - properties, and with no new acres added.

Multiple landowners were in the position to need help from CSP to get the WI Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to remove their land from this plan they never agreed to in the first place. This brings the operation down to 0.38 acres/animal unit, dangerously low, especially on this landscape.

	Existing Laws & Regulations	CAFO Operations Ordinance
Enforcement	Taxpayers pay costs. Inspections only done every 5 years.	Permittee pays all costs for regular enforcement
Manure Storage Plan	Permittee self-reporting	Permittee pays all costs for regular enforcement
Manure Spreading Plan	Permittee self-reporting	Permittee pays all costs for regular enforcement
Air Pollution Controls	Not required	Required
Infectious Disease Plan	Not required	Required
Carcass Disposal plan	Not required	Required
Biosecurity Plan	Not required	Required
Road Plan	Not required	Required
Water Use Plan	Not required	Required
Impact on Property Value Analysis	Not required	Required
Fire Response Plan	Not required	Required
Financial Bond if Factory Closes	Not required	Required

At this point, our County Land Conservation Committee requested that the DNR do its job and verify spreading acres, as the vast majority are rented, and none have written contracts guaranteeing access. The DNR has refused to do this despite having clear authority to do so, and refuses to meet with CSP and our expert NMP reviewer to justify their assertion that there are sufficient acres or address the host of other concerns we have identified. Even our formal Open Records request was ignored for months, and in the end there was no record of the conversation that determined that their manure analysis is bogus, with normal phosphates being over 300 times what was reported.

Meanwhile, we now see Venture Dairy Cooperative and Wisconsin Dairy Alliance, represented by Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, suing the DNR in order to strip all permitting authority until a documented spill happens!

These are some of the same players who sent threatening letters to the Crawford County Board (and many other local governments throughout the state), falsely claiming that implementing a CAFO moratorium would be illegal. These groups claim to represent the dairy industry, despite almost non-existent membership and led by some of the top polluters in the state, making this look like a blatant effort to pollute with impunity.

The federal government is not an option to look to for help, as the recent push we see from them on this front is millions of dollars of subsidies to implement manure digesters. These systems do not reduce odor issues and it is one more pillar of support for the largest operators at the expense of the small and medium farms, and further cements in the inherently dangerous liquid manure system that is wreaking havoc on our watersheds.

“There’s overwhelming evidence to show that CAFOs cannot be trusted to regulate themselves.”

“Some of the people most closely associated with the groups that filed this lawsuit have a terrible environmental track record.”

- Midwest Environmental Advocates Staff Attorney Adam Voskuil

We ask you to think globally, and act locally!

Don't wait for the scary proposal to appear. Talk to your neighbors, and build bridges with your local representatives. We are here to help give you all the information and support you will need, but only you and residents and landowners of your municipality can make this happen.

Welcome to the team, Shary!!



My name is Shary Sanders and I moved to southwest Wisconsin in early spring of 2015 with my grown children and their families. We were drawn to this area in our search for community and a simpler life within the quietness of a rural home. We had to make huge changes and we took some really big chances, but we went for it and jumped feet first into a whole new life in Soldiers Grove. I found quite early on that I felt more at home here in the driftless region than I ever had in the far west suburbs of Chicago where I grew up and lived.

Crawford Stewardship Project (CSP) grabbed my attention with a poster of karstic features displayed at the library, and soon after that Forest handed me a CSP newsletter. I have followed their work ever since, and have always been impressed by their dedication, and by the depth of their knowledge regarding the environmental issues confronting our small communities.

I am very inspired to be part of CSP as Outreach Coordinator. I believe this organization provides an extremely important alliance, advocating for the health of each one of us, and putting forth efforts to help us all feel at home in the place we've chosen to live.



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