

FROM THE WATERSHED streamings

Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program Newsletter



2022 UPCOMING EVENTS

SAT / MAY 21

OWL Prowl at Catholic Ecology Center
catholicecologycenter.org

FRI / JUNE 3

7th Annual Lake Country Clean Waters' Healthy Lakes Conference
lakecountrycleanwaters.org

SAT / JUNE 25

11th Annual Lake Country Clean Water Festival
cleanwaterfestival.com

SAT / JULY 9

8th Annual OWPP Paddle Event & River Clean-Up
oconomowocwatershed.org

SAT / JULY 9

ARTservancy Artists Reception with Frankie Suzanne Garr
gallery224.org

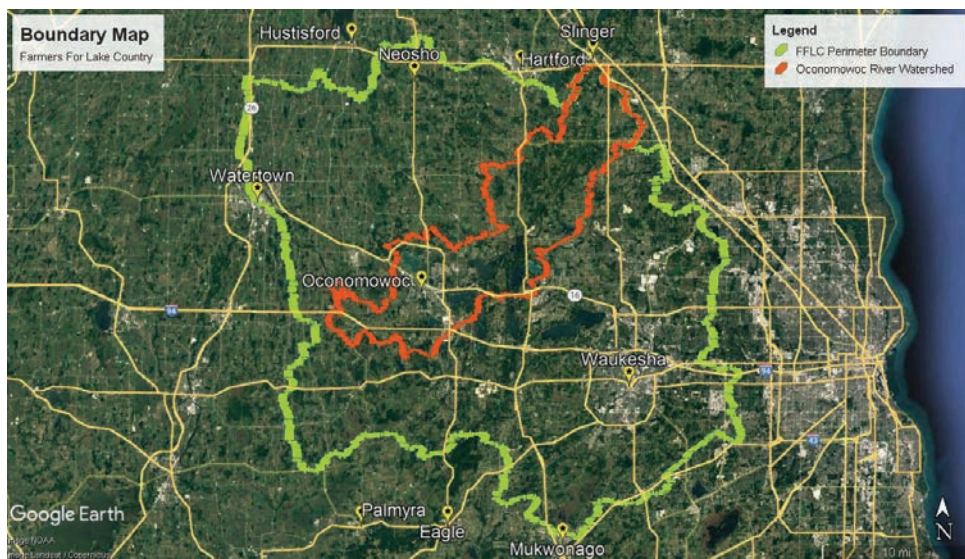
WED / JULY 20 / 6pm-7pm
Water Wonders - Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program
oconomowocwatershed.org

SAT / AUGUST 13

14th Annual Ride to the Barns
tallpinesconservancy.org

FARMERS FOR LAKE COUNTRY GROUP EXPANDS

The existence of OWPP and its success can be attributed to many great partnerships. In the first year of its operation, the OWPP engaged the help of farmers in the watershed to tap their expertise and experience. Bill Ingersoll, Dick Morris, and John Koepke were the first core group to sit down with the city to help formulate a plan of action to work with the agricultural community in the watershed. Since 2015, the Farmers For Lake Country (FFLC) group has grown and recently expanded to include new watersheds beyond the Oconomowoc River through an expanded partnership with Tall Pines Conservancy. The geographic area of the FFLC now encompasses the Ashippun River, and parts of the Bark River and Lower Fox River watersheds. With this expansion, the group will benefit from additional funding opportunities and the wealth of knowledge and experience of a greater body of farmers.



In 2022, the FFLC plans to continue the conservation-minded farming practices it has promoted, including no-till planting, cover crops, and inter-seeding of row crops. It will continue the experimentation of new practices to improve soil health and yield, and in so doing, reduce soil and nutrient loss from erosion.

Inflation is affecting all of us and farmers are feeling the pinch as well. A stark example of this is the rising cost of fertilizer, which this year is expected to be triple the cost of 2021 prices. Implementing best practices, including cover crops and precision planting, can reduce the need for fertilizer and herbicide. We look forward to the benefits of an expanded FFLC and increased participation from local farmers. Please contact Darrell Smith if you are interested in their calendar of events. And please consider buying local produce whenever possible to support our local farming community. 🌱



©Julian Kegel



2022 PADDLE EVENT TO INCLUDE RIVER CLEAN-UP

For the past seven years the OWPP has sponsored an Annual Paddle event to raise awareness of our watershed program and for just plain old fun. The first Paddle was held at the Hwy Q boat launch in Monches on June 13th 2015. About 20 people were present.

Since then, we've held the event at various launches and lakes including Fowler Lake, Riverside Park, the Road T launch in Okauchee, Upper Oconomowoc Lake, and Oconomowoc Lake. In 2021 we included an interactive scavenger hunt.

This year's event will launch at the Wisconsin Avenue public landing located just downstream of the dam visible from Hwy 16. It will be a paddle event combined with a clean-up effort of the section of the Oconomowoc River downstream of the launch to the mouth of the river at Oconomowoc Lake. We'll start at 9:00am and proceed downstream, collecting any trash we encounter along the way. Lunch will be provided back at the launch at noon. Please join us for functional fitness or just come to paddle. Kayaks are available for rental if needed. Please click on the QR code below to send your RSVP.

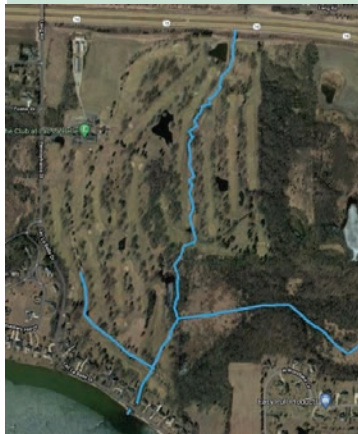
See you on the water! 🌊



To RSVP for the 2022 Paddle Event and River Clean-Up, scan the QR code above.

GOLF COURSE CREEK UPDATE

Golf Course Creek, also known as Cottonwood Creek, is a tributary to the Oconomowoc River Watershed that drains into Lac La Belle from the north. It has a history of being a contributor of significant sediment and phosphorus to the lake and during the last two decades, several projects have been completed to address soil erosion along this creek corridor. In 2018 our area received record breaking precipitation and runoff and erosion rates were high. Unfortunately, the Club at Lac La Belle golf course was in the throes of a major reconstruction project, which contributed to the erosion intensity.



The creek meanders through the golf course and many of the corners and bends are eroding further every year during periods of high flow. This fall a multi-partner project will address the worst section of the creek utilizing a Targeted Reduction Measure (TRM) grant awarded in 2021 by the WDNR. The partners participating in this \$300,000 project will be the Village of Lac La Belle, The Club at Lac La Belle Golf Course, The Lac La Belle Lake Management District, and the City of Oconomowoc. The project will include streambank armoring, slope mitigation and installation of flow control structures.

Streams and creeks running through golf courses are a challenge as there can be conflicting goals for how to manage them. For the golfing enthusiasts, there is nothing better than a beautifully manicured course with green fairways and greens and meandering streams like the famous Rae's Creek at Augusta. To water quality watchdogs, golf courses are problematic as the chemical use and vegetation management utilized for the picture-perfect course don't always protect water quality. Streambanks that are green and mowed down to the water's edge offer little to no protection for water and fertilizer moving across the ground during moderate to heavy rainfall or spring thaws. We are hopeful that the TRM Grant project to be completed this fall will result in a protected stream corridor and at the same time allow the course to be successful with a combination of protection and visually pleasing features for the course. 🌊



First phase of stream course protection completed summer 2020.

OWPP PROGRESS ON CRITICAL SOURCE AREAS

In the OWPP Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) adopted in 2016, 79 areas were identified that were likely to be susceptible to erosion and subsequently, contribute excessive levels of phosphorus to the waterways of the watershed. These areas, called Critical Source Areas (CSAs), have been our focus areas over the past 6 years and as of December of 2021, we have addressed over 25 of them with a mitigation plan using best management practices.

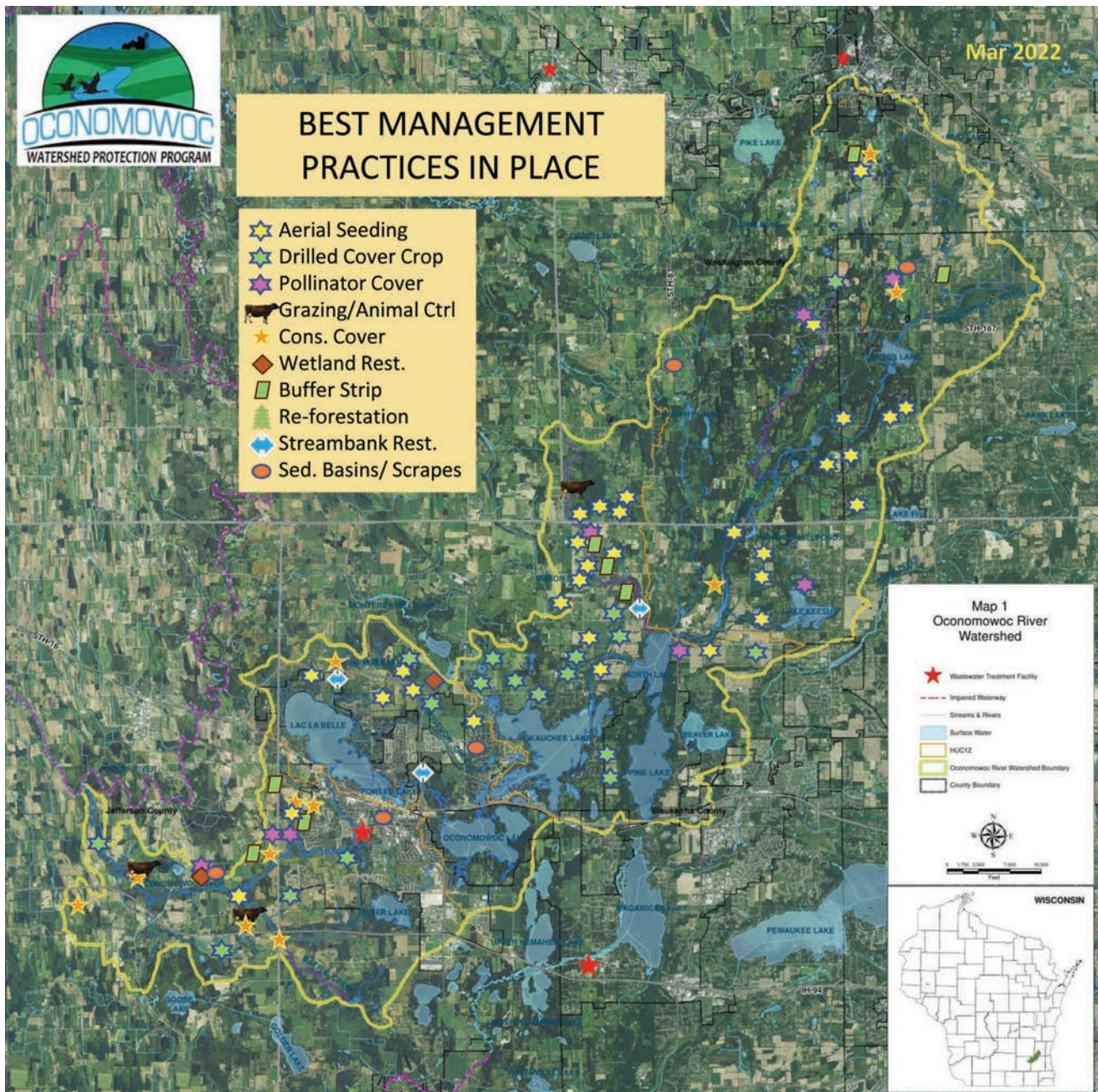
In addition to those CSAs specifically identified in the AMP, we have addressed other areas that have come to our attention along the way.

Our long term (5 or 10 year) practice contracts include buffer and filter strips, harvestable perennial cover, grassed waterways, scrapes, and prescribed grazing. Other projects include streambank restoration and shoreline plantings. Our annual incentive projects to improve soil health include cover crops, and planting “green” into living cover. Some of our long-term projects are mid-stage in their contracts, and we are starting to look at

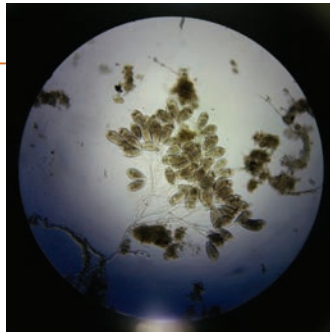
how to extend these efforts beyond their initial time frame.

One type of practice, pollinator habitat, has been established at 6 different sites covering 124 acres. Not only does this cover provide continuous, deep-rooted plant mass and protection against erosion, it also provides the needed pollinator habitat for our insect, bee and butterfly populations, and a diverse beautiful landscape to observe!

The accompanying map shows the locations of the mitigation projects we have completed so far. Thanks to all of our partners for joining this effort! 🌍



SCIENCE CORNER



and are actually very high tech, with sophisticated collection and treatment processes. Treatment facilities use a concentrated biological process to break down nutrients and pollutants, usually in under 12 hours! The mix of bacteria and higher-level organisms, called protozoa, are monitored constantly to ensure a correct biological balance. In terms of inputs, oxygen is the only component that needs to be added to maintain the microscopic community in a happy and healthy state.

So whether the vast variety and quantity of pollutants are entering our waterways directly or through wastewater treatment facilities, we have these amazing biological, completely natural systems to thank for our clean water, working in the background, invisible to the naked eye, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 🌍

POLLUTANTS: GOING, GOING, GONE

There are subjects that people love to talk about. Movies, grandkids, work, food, politics, sports, just to name a few. And then there are those subjects that almost never come up in everyday conversation... like natural decay, solid waste disposal, and wastewater treatment!

Our watershed program is focused on improving water quality through the reduction of phosphorus. But what about all the other pollutants that must be managed to keep our waterways safe and clean enough to allow us to fish and swim in them, or just to enjoy from a park bench? With all of our human activities, who keeps our waters clean? Whether it's out in nature or in our water treatment facilities, it's really quite an amazing system that is all biologically-based.

Some pollutants are generated every day and enter our waterways without going to a treatment facility. This includes storm water runoff from lawns, streets, parks, and playgrounds, wastewater from homes, manufacturing, and commercial

entities, and of course erosion from farms or construction sites. Other pollutants, including what we flush down the toilet, are conveyed directly to the wastewater facility for processing, before being released back into nature.

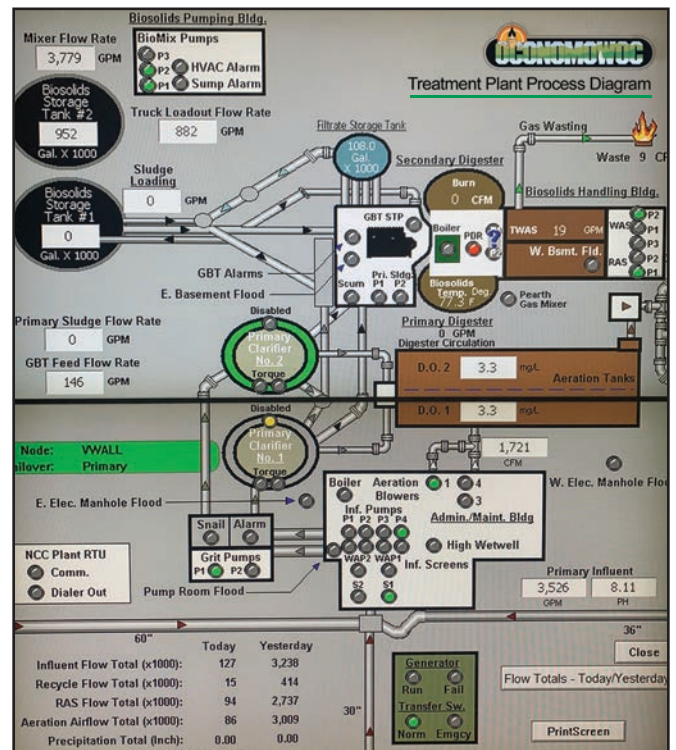
For all pollutants, the bulk of the neutralization and treatment is by biological activity. Our lakes and rivers contain a vast variety of organisms which consume pollutants as their food source. Plants take up pollutants as well. As long as these natural biological communities are not overwhelmed, they do an amazing job.

In our developed areas, most of the wastewater generated is treated at wastewater treatment facilities. In Wisconsin there are more than 600 of these facilities. As we go about our daily lives, these facilities are constantly working



Join Us!

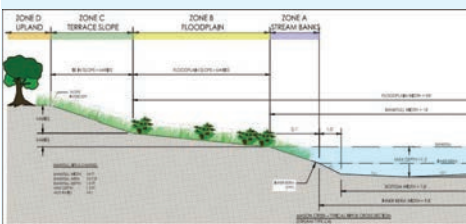
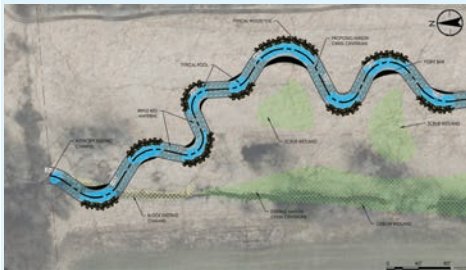
WED / JUNE 15 / 6pm-7pm
Oconomowoc Public Library
Water Wonders - Virtual Tour of
Oconomowoc's Wastewater Plant
 Join Kevin Freber, Operations Manager, for a virtual tour of the City of Oconomowoc's Wastewater Plant.





MASON CREEK RE-MEANDER IS SCHEDULED FOR THIS SUMMER!

The Mason Creek re-meander project, for which Tall Pines Conservancy is the lead partner, has received full funding and is scheduled for construction this summer. Sixteen hundred line feet of stream will be re-meandered from the current incised path to a more natural stream course with rock riffles, pools and tapered banks. Final permitting is in process with the County, Wisconsin DNR and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We are excited to see this project come to fruition, as fundraising and design efforts have taken place over the last three years. The end-result will be a healthier stream course that allows sediment and phosphorous to be filtered out during periods of high flow, improving downstream water quality in North Lake. Aquatic life will also have improved habitat, something that the locally-spawning brook trout will certainly appreciate! 🌊



TROUT STREAMS IN THE WATERSHED

In our watershed we are fortunate to have three areas that support trout. The most notable is the upper reaches of the Mason Creek – in the middle of the watershed. Ironically this creek is also on the State of Wisconsin Impaired Waters list for high levels of phosphorus. The other areas are the Coney River in the headwaters of the watershed and Rosenow Creek, which is a tributary of Lac La Belle.

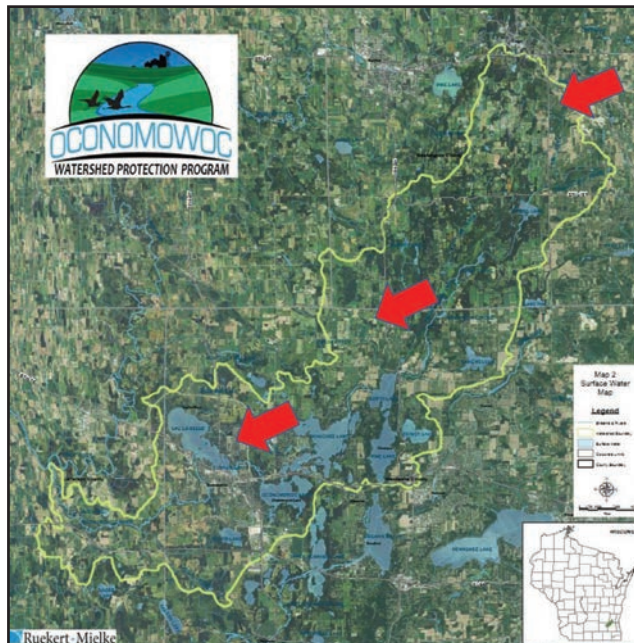
What makes a trout stream a trout stream? The simple answer is its environmental conditions, specifically water temperature and oxygen levels. The streams mentioned here have springs that feed them and the spring water is generally very cold and usually runs all year round. The cold water ensures that oxygen levels are maintained above 6 mg/l, an absolute must for healthy trout habitats. In comparison, other game fish are ok with oxygen levels down to 3 or 4 mg/l and some rough fish like carp can tolerate O2 levels down to 1 or 2 mg/l.



Photo courtesy of Jon Mayer.

Other features that provide the desired environment for trout are gravel or sandy creek bottoms, light rapids called riffles for oxygenation, pools where the water velocity slows, and cover from nearby trees and tall grasses that provide shade from the hot summer sun.

In the trout streams in the Oconomowoc River Watershed, the main species is the Brook Trout. Brook Trout and Lake Trout are the only two trout species native to our state. The trout population in our watershed is a precious group dependent on clean, cold water. The streams are not stocked like some lakes with other game fish so our trout population that has persisted for decades is testimony to the consistently high water quality of these streams. Unlike many game fish species, the Brook Trout spawn in October or November with the fry emerging from the streambed in spring.



The three trout streams in our watershed.

FOOD SOURCES FOR TROUT:

- **Mayflies and Stoneflies:** nymphs and larvae that's in the water.
- **Terrestrials:** insects that don't belong in the water but end up becoming trout food by falling into the river. Some terrestrial insects include grasshoppers, ants, beetles, and cicadas.

Fishing for trout is allowed but please check with the DNR for regulations on size and quantity, and on license requirements. And be sure to access these streams by way of legal public access. 🌊

2022 HEALTHY LAKES CONFERENCE

FRI / JUNE 3 / 9AM-3PM

OCONOMOWOC COMMUNITY CENTER

PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TALL PINES CONSERVANCY
AND THE OCONOMOWOC WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM
THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF GALLAGHER LAKE COUNTRY REAL ESTATE

The event offers the opportunity for members of different lake and river organizations to come together to learn from a variety of experts, share ideas, network with each other and enjoy our local waterways together. Presentation topics will include wave action studies, road salt effects on lakes, aquatic invasive species and healthy shorelines.

The event will conclude with a pontoon boat ride.

Registration and additional information is available at lakecountrycleanwaters.org.

OCONOMOWOC
**FARMERS
MARKET**

Saturdays

May – October | 8am till noon

Bank Five Nine Campus Lot
155 W. Wisconsin Ave, Oconomowoc

Brought To You By



Presenting Sponsor



WHO'S WHO

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