

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF LANDOWNERS AND AGENCIES

Yellowstone River Watershed



Those who live and work in the Yellowstone River Watershed are proud of its fertile soils, miles of streams and rivers and its other natural resources including Yellowstone Lake and its namesake state park. For decades, conservation minded landowners and dedicated agency staff have worked together to preserve and protect Yellowstone's land and water resources. However, a more concerted watershed effort and multi-agency approach began in the mid 1990s.

Meetings between agency staff to discuss a few specific issues within the watershed grew into a committee that meets regularly. This committee, now referred to as the Yellowstone Watershed Education Committee has participation from the County Conservation Departments, Natural Resources Conservation Service and



Farm Service Agency Offices in Iowa and Lafayette Counties, Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council, The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, The University of Wisconsin-Extension and occasionally other interested agencies, organizations and persons. This committee plans, implements and supports a variety of educational events and activities such as the watershed newsletter and tour, but more importantly brings agency staff together to share information and resources and to cooperate on efforts such as procuring grant funds and increasing participation in conservation programs.

In the pages ahead you will be reading about many of the accomplishments of the landowners, agency staff and organizations working together to enhance and protect the valuable natural resources of the Yellowstone River Watershed.



Concrete barnyards (top photo) help contain manure and make it easier for farmers to remove the manure for spreading in fields. Grass filter strips (above) for barnyard waste and milkhouse waste slows the flow of water to allow sediment to drop out, increase infiltration into the soil and decrease runoff and erosion. Sediment detention basins (right) hold rain and melting snow as it runs off pastures and fields and keep it from carrying sediment into nearby streams and rivers. The basin also provides habitat for wildlife.



Conservation Practices Installed

Grass Waterways, Contour Strips, Nutrient Management Plans and Manure Storage Structures. Barnyard Runoff Systems, Well Decommissioning, Prescribed Grazing and Prescribed Burning. These practices and others, including those listed to the right, are often referred to as "Best Management Practices" or BMP's. But installation of conservation BMP's requires significant resources- including time, money and expertise. Programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Targeted Runoff Management Program and county cost-sharing programs can help provide the financial resources needed to implement BMP's. The agency staff in the county conservation offices can provide the technical expertise. In the table to the right, you can see the variety and number of conservation practices that have been used in the Yellowstone River Watershed as tools to protect and conserve the watershed's land and water resources.

Yellowstone Watershed BMP's Installed

Practice	Quantity
Access Road	3320 linear feet
Barnyard Runoff System	5
Brush Management	27 acres
Contour Strip Cropping	73 acres
Critical Area Stabilization	1
Water Diversion	600 linear feet
Fish Stream Improvement	3800 linear feet
Grass Waterway	34 acres
Livestock Exclusion (woodland)	40 acres
Livestock Fencing	250 linear feet
Livestock Watering Facility	4
Manure Storage Structure	1
Nutrient Management Planning	772 acres
Prescribed Burning	175 acres
Prescribed Grazing	90 acres
Sediment Detention Basin	56
Spring Development	2
Streambank Protection	800 linear feet
Tree Establishment	10 acres
Well Decommissioning	13
Wetland Enhancement	4 acres
Wildlife Habitat Improvement	25 acres

Friends of Yellowstone

The "Friends of Yellowstone" program honors those who are exemplary stewards of the land and water resources in the Yellowstone Watershed. Some are landowners in the watershed who voluntarily install conservation best management practices on their land; others are helping improve, protect or enhance the natural resources of the watershed in other ways such as the rough fish removal efforts in Yellowstone Lake. The "Friends of Yellowstone" are chosen by conservation and natural resource agency staff in the watershed.

In recognition of your conservation and stewardship efforts in the Yellowstone River Watershed.

- Mike and Candi Flannery (1998)
- Dan and Brenda Syvrud family (2000)
- Hill n' Vale Ranch (2002-2003)
- P. S. Leonard Farm (2002-2003)
- Shawn McCarville (2002-2003)
- Holmesville Dairy (2002-2003)
- White Family Farms (2003-2004)
- Wayne Stietz (2003-2004)
- Greg Stamm (2003-2004)
- Ben Stamm (2003-2004)
- Samuel Hanson (2003-2004)
- Michael Gould (2003-2004)
- Byron Berg (2004-2005)
- Lafayette County Sportsmen Alliance (2004-2005)
- Stan and Robin Peterson (2004-2005)

Nutrient Management Education and Planning

In August of 2003, Steve Bertjens, Coordinator of Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council in collaboration with Peggy Compton, UW-Extension Basin Educator, wrote and submitted a grant application to fund nutrient management planning in the Yellowstone River Watershed. The proposal was funded for \$15,000 through the Multi-Agency Land and Water Education Grant Program. The funds will be used to create an

awareness of the value of nutrient management planning and to provide education, technical assistance and financial incentives to farmers interested in implementing a nutrient management plan. Work on this project will begin during the summer of 2004 and be completed by the end of 2005. Landowners interested in receiving a nutrient management plan through this project should contact the Lafayette County NRCS office (608/ 776-4028).

Yellowstone Fisheries Management

The Yellowstone Lake fishery has been intensively managed in recent years. Rough fish removal, stocking, and restrictive regulations have worked together to once again produce a desirable fishery at Yellowstone Lake. Since 1997 there have been over 393,000 lbs. of carp removed. Rough fish removal has helped increase aquatic vegetation which in turn has led to the increased reproduction of largemouth bass and bluegill. Like a building domino effect, the improved



DNR Fisheries Biologist, Bradd Sims with walleye caught during fyke netting surveys in Yellowstone Lake, April, 2004. (Photo by Chad Loomis).

reproduction provided needed forage to help increase growth rates of crappies, walleyes, catfish and bass. Catch rates for walleye and bass have increased 250% over the past seven years in the fall DNR sampling efforts. Total stocking events since 1997 have included 113,000 walleye; 3,750 musky; 1,700

largemouth bass; 1,200 northern pike and 250,000 bluegill.

Yellowstone Lake is not the only body of water getting help. With help from the Lafayette County Sportsmen Alliance, the Yellowstone River has had 3,700 smallmouth bass fingerlings stocked over the past three years. This has helped supplement weak year classes and has established a tremendous fishery for years to come. The Yellowstone River is also the only smallmouth bass stream in our area having a catch and release only regulation. The regulation has helped the river grow smallmouth over 16 inches.

The Steiner Branch is a small tributary of the Yellowstone River. Recent efforts have been taken to establish native brook trout in the Steiner Branch. Fifty adult brook trout were planted in 2001 with immediate success. These fish were found to be reproducing in 2002. Also in 2002 an intensive trout habitat project was initiated. During the fall of 2002 and spring/summer of 2003, 6500 feet of stream bank was sloped and seeded with 85 in-stream habitat structures installed. Steiner Branch will continue to get 900 spring fingerling brook trout stocked annually to help kick start this new population. With the new habitat, stocking, and natural reproduction things are looking up for the brook trout in the Steiner Branch.

Yellowstone Watershed Conservation Technician

In May of 1998 the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council submitted a grant application to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Lake Protection Program for the Yellowstone Lake Watershed Improvement Project. The grant was approved on July 1, 1998, and provided funding to hire a Conservation Technician to assist landowners in the Yellowstone River Watershed with implementation of conservation practices. The Yellowstone Conservation Technician works with landowners to identify resource concerns on their property and then surveys and designs the conservation practice. The technician also serves as the project engineer as practices are installed. Terry Loeffelholz was the first Yellowstone Conservation

Technician and remained in the position through June, 2001, after which Jason Thomas took over. Currently, Janet Vosberg is the Yellowstone Technician. This position is funded through August of 2005.



The DNR Lake Protection Grant was presented by DNR's Stan Druckenmiller (center) to Byron Berg, President (left) and Steve Bertjens, Coordinator (right) of the Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development Council.

Drinking Water and Groundwater Education Program

UW-Extension Basin Educator Peggy Compton and UW-Extension County Educators Paul Ohlrogge (Iowa County) and Dan Hill (Lafayette County) received \$10,000 from the Multi-Agency Land and Water Education Grants Program to provide cost-sharing dollars for watershed residents to test their drinking water at a reduced cost (landowner paid \$25 for an \$85 testing package) and to pay for well abandonment demonstrations in the watershed. A committee representing UWEX, NRCS and LCD from Iowa and Lafayette Counties worked together to plan and implement the project during the years 2000-2001.

One hundred nineteen landowners participated in the reduced-cost water testing program. Nearly one third of the samples tested were reported as unsafe with high nitrates and bacteria being two of the most frequent problems. During the educational programs held in Hollandale and Fayette, over 70 landowners heard experts interpret the drinking water test results and saw other demonstrations and presentations.

Forestry

Matt Singer, DNR Forester, has spent many hours walking the privately owned woodlots and forests in Yellowstone Watershed. He frequently gives landowners advice on various aspects of woodlot management including controlling invasive species, tree planting and timber harvests. He estimates that over 260,000 trees and shrubs have

Well Abandonment demonstrations were held at three farms in Iowa County and three farms in Lafayette County. At each demonstration participants learned about protecting groundwater by listening to presentations and seeing models and demonstrations including proper sealing of the abandoned well. Sixty five area landowners attended the six demonstrations.



Lee Montgomery, Lovelace Pump Co., pours bentonite chips down a well to properly seal it.

Program evaluations showed that 93% of the participants felt that the program increased their understanding of groundwater, 96% rated groundwater protection in their community as "very important" and 26% took action (such as repairing a well, changing septic system maintenance or changing fertilizer, pesticide and/or manure handling or storage) in response to their well test report.

been planted in the watershed since 1997. These plantings are often in conjunction with a Conservation Reserve Program contract, through the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program or on the initiative of the individual landowner. Seven landowners have participated in Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law Program, enrolling a total of 275 acres.

Exploring the Use of Cattle in Oak Savanna Restoration

This project studied the effectiveness of fire versus grazing versus fire and grazing together in controlling the undesirable "brushy" understory plants in degraded oak savannas. The project partners included:



Scottish Highland cattle at Yellowstone Wildlife Area.

UW-Extension, UW-Madison, UW-Platteville, DNR, USDA-NRCS and two landowners. The project sites included the Yellowstone Wildlife Area and two private farms. The initial funding for this project came from a \$20,000 Multi-Agency Land and Water Education Grant, with total grant funding of more than \$140,000 over the life of the project. Field days were held in 2001 and 2002 for landowners and natural resources agency personnel. More than 160 people attended the field days. A project summary is available from Peggy Compton.

Yellowstone Wildlife Area Welcomes Horses

The Saddle Club of Darlington agreed in May of 1997 to work with the DNR to sponsor an equestrian trail at Yellowstone Wildlife Area. After hours of work by volunteers from the saddle club, the trail was opened on July 4, 1997. It is estimated that 500 to 1000 horses rode the trail in 1997. Since that time the trail has become more popular and use has probably doubled. "Since this use is higher than anticipated, we are keeping a close eye on the trail to find any evidence of excessive use," property manager Bruce Folley reports. "So far the trail is holding up very well and there have been no conflicts between horse riders and other users of the wildlife area." To decrease the possibility of erosion, the trail was developed along old road beds and natural contours.



Horse trail amenities include picnic tables, hitching rails and a bridge to allow greater trail access. (Photos by Bruce Folley).

The trail includes about 30 miles of mowed trails and 5 miles of wooded trail, with four hitching rails

and several picnic tables. The addition of a bridge across Steiner Branch in 2002 provided even more

trail options. Every year members of the Saddle Club of Darlington, Blackhawk Saddle Club and the Belmont Saddle Club donate hundreds of hours to managing the trail. Funds from the Recreational Trails Program, the Wisconsin State Horse Council and private donations, along with this volunteer labor are essential components in the ongoing development and maintenance of the trail.

The trail is generally open from May 1 to October 31. However, during the spring turkey season equestrian use is limited to afternoon hours and the trail may close prior to October 31 depending on the dates of the fall deer season. No fee is required to use the trail but donations are appreciated. Maps are available from the county zoning office and at the parking lot located on Highway D just north of the old Fayette School.

Yellowstone Wildlife Area is currently the only DNR Wildlife Area in Wisconsin that welcomes horses and the success of the Yellowstone horse trail is recognized not just in Southwestern Wisconsin. In 2004, the trail was a national winner in the Environmental and Wildlife Compatibility category of the American Horse Councils Coalition for Recreational Trails awards program. Bruce Folley will be accepting the award at a ceremony in Washington DC.

Yellowstone Wildlife Area Firearms and Bow Range

The Firearms Range and Bow Range at Yellowstone Wildlife Area draw shooting enthusiasts from quite a distance. The Firearms Range, located just off County Hwy F has a 25 yard small bore firearms and handgun range and 100 and 200 yard rifle ranges. In 2003, a Bow Range was added to the same site. The Bow Range, completely planned and implemented by the Fayette Sportsman's Club, is a walk through archery range to simulate hunting. According to Bruce Folley, property manager for the DNR-owned Wildlife Area,

the Fayette Sportsman's Club's involvement and volunteer time commitment are absolutely essential to the maintenance of these ranges.

The Firearms and Bow Ranges are open six days a week (closed Tuesdays for maintenance) sunup to sundown. Unlike privately owned ranges, the Yellowstone Firearms and Bow Ranges are open to the public with no required reservation or membership.

Tours, Events and Other Special Days

River Cleanup

River enthusiasts gathered on May 22, 1999, for the first ever Yellowstone River cleanup. The group joined the more than 30,000 volunteers across the nation who participated in river cleanups during the annual National River Cleanup Week. Efforts focused on removing obstructions in the river and fixing fences that needed attention along the river. The small amount of trash that was collected is testimony to how much local residents have taken care of the river.

Watershed Tour

Over 50 watershed landowners and other interested citizens toured the watershed on June 14, 2000, to learn more about the benefits of installing conservation practices. The tour, starting with lunch at the State Park, included a stop at the Yellowstone Wildlife Area to view sediment retention basins and see a fish shocking demonstration, a barnyard project under construction at Dan and Brenda Syvrud's farm and a gravel stream crossing, streambank

stabilization (rip-rap) and riparian buffer at Jim Badertscher's property.



Landowners on the watershed tour listen as Gary Bald, Lafayette County NRCS technician, explains stream corridor improvement options (top photo). A young fisherman's catch is weighed in at the 2002 Rough Fish Round-Up (above). Students attending an annual Youth Conservation Day hear about ATV safety from local enthusiasts (right; photo by Lisa Trumble).

Rough Fish Roundup

A Rough Fish Roundup was held on the first Saturday of June in 2002 and 2003. These fun, family-oriented events brought attention to the problems that "rough fish" like carp and bullhead can cause for the lake. Rough fish are able to out compete more desirable species and can prevent the establishment of aquatic vegetation that serves as food and habitat for the more desirable fish species. Each year there were fishing lessons and door prizes for the kids and cash prizes for the biggest carp, biggest bullhead and heaviest total weight of rough fish caught. The event was supported by area individuals and groups including: Southwest Badger RC & D Council; The UW-Extension, Land Conservation and NRCS Offices of Lafayette and Iowa Counties, WI DNR; Bagley Bottoms Bassmasters; Lafayette Co. Dairy Promotion; Four Season's Resort; Lafayette Co. Dairy Sales; Fayette Sportsman's Club and Darlington FFA.

Youth Conservation Day

Lafayette County Youth Conservation Day was held at the Yellowstone Wildlife Area each spring starting in 1988 and continuing through 2001 (The event is now held in Woodford Park). Annually, nearly 300 fifth grade students participate in fun and educational sessions on a variety of conservation and natural resource topics, including water quality, soil conservation, wildlife habitat, forestry, outdoor safety, prairies and native plant communities. Youth Conservation Day is organized by the staff in the NRCS and Land Conservation Department in Lafayette County and is supported by local individuals and organizations who donate their time to teach the kids.



More Projects, Events and Special Days

Lafayette Manor Visits Yellowstone Lake

The residents of Lafayette County Manor Nursing Home annually enjoy a trip to Yellowstone Lake State Park. This trip is made possible through the work of local sportsman's clubs who provide transportation, a meal at the park and assistance to residents who wish to do some fishing. Since the early 1990s about 500 Manor residents have enjoyed



The "Accessible to All" fishing pier is enjoyed by many visitors to Yellowstone Lake.

this afternoon at the lake, making it the facility's most popular outing. The "Accessible to All" fishing area and picnic area, constructed in 1999 in conjunction with the Lafayette County Sportsmen Alliance, is enjoyed

by Manor residents on their annual visit, as well as numerous others throughout the year.

Yellowstone Lake Celebrates 50 Years

Yellowstone Lake became the 8,677th lake in Wisconsin on June 14, 1954 when the gates of the newly constructed dam were closed. A subcommittee of the Yellowstone Watershed Education Committee have planned a host of fun and educational programs and activities to commemorate Yellowstone Lake's 50 years of conservation and recreation. The lake will be rededicated to the citizens of the area and all those who enjoy and support the lake in a special ceremony on June 14, 2004. Anniversary events were supported by a grant from the Natural Resources Foundation.

Natural Resources Board

On August 15, 2000, a busload of state Natural Resource Board members and DNR staff took a breather at the park after touring agriculture-related sites in Lafayette County. The informal gathering gave local conservation groups an opportunity to swap stories with the policy making board and to show off accomplishments.

New Park Office

On September 13, 1998, a dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony was held at Yellowstone Lake State Park's new office. This new building allows for more efficient service to the park's visitors with a drive-up window and a large lobby area with information about the property, surrounding communities and a large bulletin board area which has been the site of a watershed map and display as well as other educational displays.



Park Supervisor Greg Pittz addresses the crowd gathered for the dedication of the new office at Yellowstone Lake State Park.

Watershed Newsletter

With a readership of over 120, YELLOWSTONE NEWS has informed, educated and enriched the residents of the Yellowstone watershed since November of 1997. The newsletter has covered diverse topics ranging from the history of the community to the lake's health and fish populations. The newsletter even took a stab at solving the riddle of how Yellowstone got its name.

Native Plants Restoration

During the summer of 2001, UW-Platteville student intern, Erin McGraw, led a shoreline restoration effort at Yellowstone Lake. McGraw and her helpers planted over 10,000 bulrushes, water lilies and other aquatic plants that were needed to improve water quality, habitat and natural scenic beauty. They also removed a concentration of purple loosestrife in the bay near the park office. Purple loosestrife is an alien plant that has taken over thousands of acres of wetlands in the state, choking out native plants that provide food and shelter for wildlife.



Volunteers helped remove massive amounts of the invasive plant purple loosestrife.

Through the coordinated efforts of the multi-agency Yellowstone Education Committee, these financial resources have been procured to support projects in the Yellowstone River Watershed.

Targeted Runoff Management (WI DNR)	\$95,000
Cost-sharing for conservation practices	
Env. Quality Incentives Program (USDA)	>\$1million
Cost-sharing for conservation practices	
Multi Agency Land and Water Education Grant	\$20,000
Using Cattle in Oak Savanna Restoration	
Multi Agency Land and Water Education Grant	\$10,000
Drinking Water and Groundwater Education	
Multi Agency Land and Water Education Grant	\$15,000
Promoting Nutrient Management Planning	
Lake Protection Grant (WI DNR)	\$200,000
Watershed Conservation Technician	
Trout Stamp Funds (WI DNR)	\$13,000
Steiner Branch Stream Restoration	
Property Income (WI DNR)	>\$50,000
Carp Removal, sediment dams	
License Money (WI DNR)	\$20,000
Fish shocking, fish sampling, carp removal	
EPA	\$18,000
Shoreline restoration, supplemental cost-sharing	
DNR Environmental Damage Fund	\$7,800
Steiner Branch Stream Restoration	
TOTAL \$\$ for Yellowstone	>\$1,448,800

The following landowners have worked with the Land Conservation Office to install and maintain conservation practices.

Jim Badertscher	David Hexom	David Olson
Arle Braley	Howard Hill	Stan Peterson
Scott Bredeson	C.F. Holmes	Dave Reichling
Robert Corneille	Tim Holmes	Ed Reichling
Art Dearth	Allen Kolb	John Ruf
Sam Ferrell	Paul Laverty	Jack Sauer
Steve Fleming	Pat Leonard	Eberhard Schubert
Milford Gabioud	Ardell Lien	Steve Stangeland
Richard Gorder	Shawn McCarville	Daniel Syvrud
Mike Gould	LeRoy Narveson	Tim Weisbrook
Sam Hanson	Gerald Norton	Richard & Robert White
	Steve & Amy Norton	

Working together to protect and enhance the natural resources of Yellowstone River Watershed.

Agency Cooperators:

Southwest Badger Resource Conservation & Development Council
 The Land Conservation Departments of Lafayette & Iowa Counties
 The Natural Resources Conservation Service & Farm Service Agency
 Offices in Lafayette & Iowa Counties
 The University of Wisconsin-Extension
 The University of Wisconsin -Platteville
 The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Organizations Working in the Watershed:

Apple Springs Hunt Club Fayette Sportsman's Club
 Argyle Rod And Gun Club Gratiot Conservation Club
 Belmont Conservation Club Isaac Walton League
 Conservation Congress Lafayette County Sportsmen Alliance
 Darlington, Belmont and Blackhawk Saddle Clubs

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