

Friends of Cherokee Marsh Newsletter June /July 2017 (single page)

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# The Cherokee Marsh News

June / July 2017



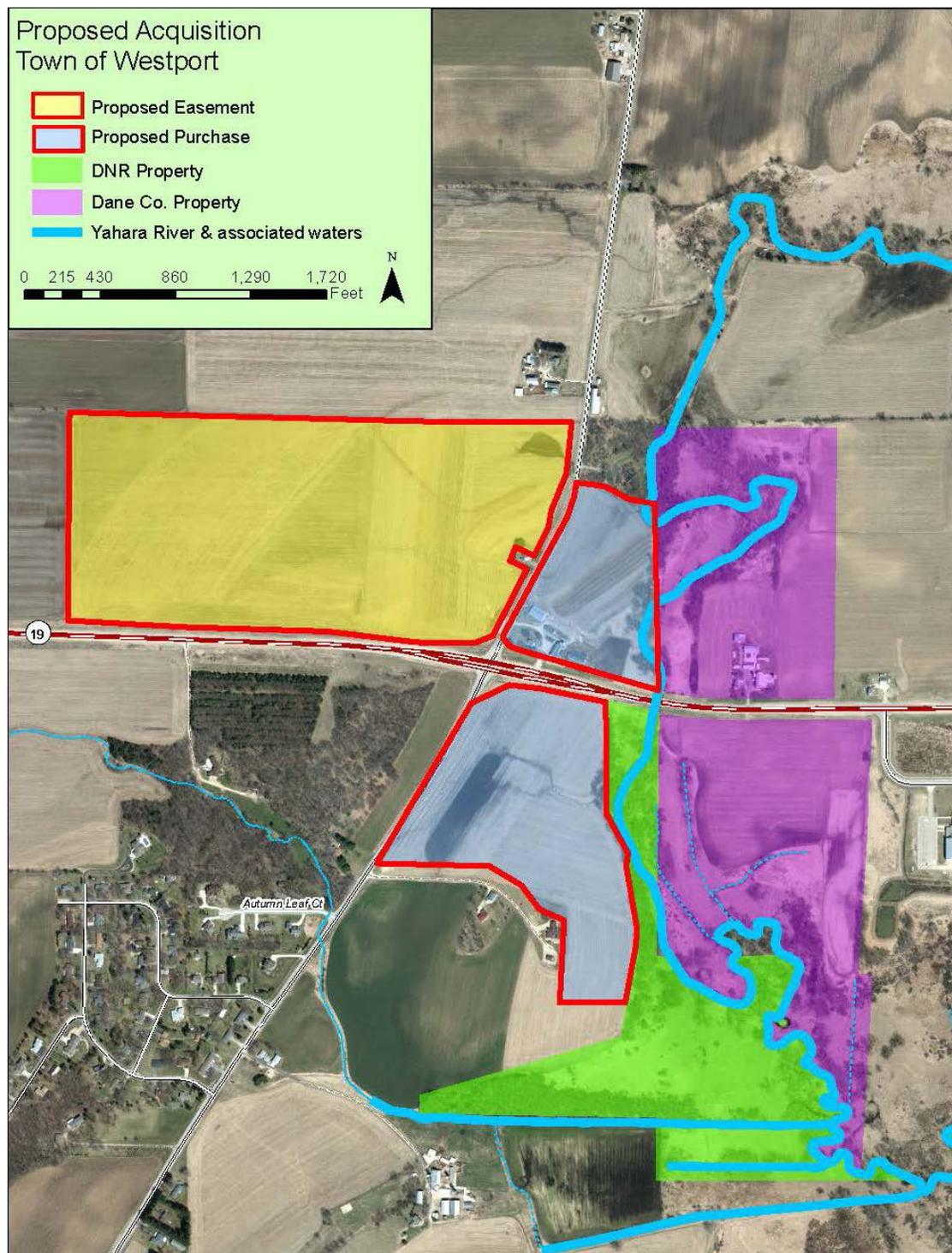
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## Land purchase approved, restoration plans in the works along upper Yahara River

On May 18, the Dane County Board voted to approve purchasing 53 acres along the upper Yahara River and protecting an additional 77 acres just west of the purchase through a conservation easement with a local farmer.

The land is in the Town of Westport, just north and south of HWY 19 at River Rd.



[View map as PDF](#)

This view shows the approved purchase looking south and east of HWY 19 towards River Rd:



This view shows the approved purchase looking north and east of HWY 19 towards River Rd. The land to be put into conservation easement is just beyond the farmstead.



The property is adjacent to [land Dane County acquired in 2015](#). The area is identified as a priority for county preservation in the 2012-2017 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan.

Most of the land is currently farmed and includes some river frontage and farm buildings. Restoring the farmland to grass vegetation will reduce runoff and improve water quality in the upper Yahara and its downstream lakes.

The total project cost is \$1.52 million. Funding will be provided by the county's Lake Preservation and Renewal Fund.

### **HWY 19 widening offers opportunities**

In related news, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is in the planning stages for a project to widen HWY 19 from River Rd to I-39/90 with construction

to occur in 2020. The new highway will have four lanes and wider shoulders with a roundabout likely at River Rd.

The project will use 2 acres of county land, and in exchange, the DOT has proposed providing a canoe landing and parking lot on the south side of the highway and a bridge with a pedestrian underpass so folks won't need to cross highway traffic to access the north and south parcels of county land. The DOT will also plant 2 acres of native flowers along the roadway.

[Learn more about the highway project](#)

For paddlers, reports are that the river north and south of HWY 19 is difficult to navigate due to many years of accumulated deadfall. If you are interested in helping us pursue funding to open a river trail in the area, contact us at [janaxelson@gmail.com](mailto:janaxelson@gmail.com) or (608) 215-0426.

### **Restoration plans in the works for land purchased in 2015**

County Parks has been working on plans for the land acquired in 2015 just to the east of this year's acquisition. According to County Parks Director Darren Marsh, a portion of the land will be planted to cool season grasses in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Also in the works are plans for a restored savanna with oak plantings and a 4-5 acre pollinator planting.

On receiving a permit from the DNR, the county will remove an old, caved in bridge on the north side of the property.



Madison Parks crew member Richard Westbury stands watch during a

prescribed burn at Cherokee Marsh. *Photo by Paul Quinlan.*

## **Conservation crew has successful burn season**

Did you notice the flames and smoke this spring in the conservation park? Madison Parks uses fire as a tool to maintain prairies, open woods, and even marshes.

Without periodic burns, aggressive plants such as honeysuckle and buckthorn crowd out the native grasses, wildflowers, and other plants that provide food and shelter for wildlife and add much beauty to our natural areas.

### **Burns allow native plants to thrive**

Before European settlement, lightning sparked fires on the landscape, and evidence shows that Native Americans also set fires to maintain hunting grounds and travel routes. Many native plants have deep roots and other defenses to withstand fire.

The fires, called prescribed burns, are set in early spring and late fall to avoid interfering with nesting birds or emerging spring flowers. The burn crew includes certified wildland firefighters who are trained in burning techniques and safety. Burns occur only on days when the winds are in the desired direction—away from neighborhoods—and not too strong. Mowed or cleared paths and the Yahara River provide fire breaks.

### **Good weather and a trained crew make for successful burns**

On burn day, the fire department is notified. The crew uses drip torches to light a line of fire while sentries stand watch and extinguish any flames that catch outside the target area. A crew member remains on site until all flames are out.

This spring, thanks to favorable weather and an increase in crew size due to cooperation with other City Parks units, the crew was able to burn almost 300 acres at the North and South units of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park.

The weather cooperated in multiple ways. The Madison Fire Department allows prescribed burns only when the Department of Natural Resources rates the fire danger as low or moderate, and that was the case for most of the prime burn season of late March and April.

Well-timed rains and favorable winds helped, too. Madison Parks Conservation Resource Supervisor Paul Quinlan explains:

*The weather made it possible for our staff to be able to burn larger areas, in excess of 50 acres, without extended mop-up. Two or three days of rainy weather each week maintained moisture in heavier woody fuels like fallen logs and standing dead trees. This prevented these large jackpots of fuel from catching on fire, while the finer fuels like grasses and leaves were still able to dry out and burn even when it had rained the day before.*

*We are required to extinguish all burning material before leaving the site, and this year, we left every burn before dark, which meant that we were available to burn the following day rather than returning to a site to continue mop-up.*

*These weather and fuel conditions also produced moderate intensity fires that spread well throughout the burn units, decreasing the time required to complete a burn.*

*Most importantly, we saw several days of south and east winds that blew smoke out over the marsh and river. Generally, we tried to refrain from burning under stronger west and north winds to avoid putting smoke into the neighboring residential areas.*

The average size of the burn crew doubled this year thanks to assistance from staff from West, Central, and East Parks, Forestry, and new Parks Worker positions that are rotating through different sections at Parks. Paul Quinlan credits conservation technicians Brandon Mann and Jay Walters for an outstanding job training and integrating the less experienced staff that have been available to help.

### **Neighbors notified using reverse-911**

Parks used the reverse-911 system to notify neighbors about planned burns. At one site, a young girl and her mother took the opportunity to set up camp on their deck on Wheeler Road to watch. Madison Parks Conservation Resource Supervisor Paul Quinlan reports, "that day, we arrived to find the mother and daughter already waiting for us to start. Pretty cool thing to do on spring break if you ask me."



## Thanks to our volunteers

Thank you to the many volunteers — including 26 cub scouts, siblings, parents, and grandparents — who came out to help pull garlic mustard this spring. The woods on the hill is looking better than it has in many years! Read more about the scouts' experience in the [Northside News](#).

### Submit your photos for the 2018 Madison Parks calendar

Do you have great photos taken in Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park (or other City of Madison Parks)? Submit them for consideration for the second annual Madison Parks calendar. The deadline is August 31. [More information](#).



## Upcoming events

[See full calendar](#)

### **Volunteer Day in Conservation - Aquatic Plant Installation**

**Sat. June 3, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm**

City Parks conservation staff are hosting a volunteer event to plant emergent aquatic plants on the edge of the new storm water pond at Wheeler Road and Bonner Lane.

We will be working in mud and standing water. Wear rubber boots or water shoes or shoes you don't mind getting wet and dirty.

Bring garden gloves if you wish. Dress for the weather: sun or light rain. Planting will occur rain or shine. Only lightning or downpours will postpone it.

#### **Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, South Unit**

*Meet at the intersection of Wheeler Road and Bonner Lane. Park on the street.*

*If you plan to attend, please contact Paul Quinlan at [pquinlan@cityofmadison.com](mailto:pquinlan@cityofmadison.com) or 267-4918.*

## **Bird and nature outings**

**Sun, June 4, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm**, explore Cherokee Marsh history and restoration with guide Tom Murn. We will explore wetland and prairie areas to learn about some of the historical ecology and how humans are helping to restore and preserve this beautiful place.

**AND**

**Sun, July 2, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm**, explore native prairie with Master Naturalist Alex Singer. Discover the magic of planting native plants in your yard and neighborhood and the many benefits for monarch butterflies and other creatures – including our own health!.

**AND**

**first Sunday of EVERY month, year-round, ALWAYS 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel road. ([map](#))

Sponsored by Madison Parks, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh and Madison Audubon Society. Questions? Contact Paul Noeldner at (608)-698-0104 or paul\_noeldner@hotmail.com

[Madison Parks Bird and Nature Outings page](#)

## **Tour North Cherokee with Conservation Resource Supervisor Paul Quinlan**

**Wed, June 21, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm**

Our largest and perhaps most famous conservation park protects a variety of natural communities, ranging from upland forest to wet prairie, to riverine marsh.

Come and walk through a cross-section of all this park has to offer and learn about efforts to maintain these habitats within the context of our modern landscape. Sponsored by Madison Parks, led by Conservation Resource Supervisor Paul Quinlan.

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave.

Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel road.  
([map](#))

## Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh

**Sat., June 24, 10 am – 12 pm**

Observe a variety of butterflies as they take nectar from wildflowers and learn about their identification, behavior, and lifestyle. Bring binoculars if you have them, but a few extra pairs of binoculars will be available. Long pants and a hat are recommended. Sponsored by the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association, Madison Audubon Society, and Friends of Cherokee Marsh Led by Karl and Dorothy Legler and Jan Axelson

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave.  
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel road.  
([map](#))

## Northside Farmers Market

**Sun, July 9, 8:30 pm – 12:30 pm**

Stop by and see us at the Northside Farmers Market!

In front of the Willy Street Co-op in the **Northside TownCenter**, corner of Northport Dr and N. Sherman Ave.

## Board meetings

**Wed, June 21, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm**

**Wed, July 19, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

Members and the public are welcome at our monthly board meetings. Occasionally we reschedule, so contact us to confirm: (608) 215-0426, [janaxelson@gmail.com](mailto:janaxelson@gmail.com)

*Our June meeting is a special outdoor meeting at **Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. so we can attend the tour at 6:30 pm (see above).*

In July, we will meet as usual at:

**Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr**

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[Sign up to receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities](#)

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