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The Cherokee Marsh News

Aug / Sept 2023



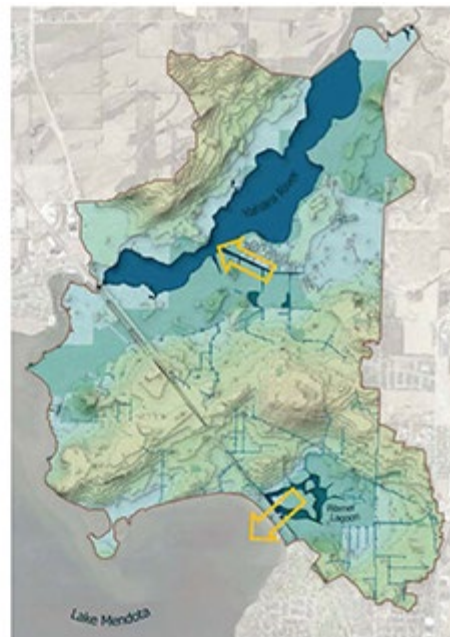
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Where the Water Goes

What's a watershed?

- A watershed is the area of land that drains precipitation (rain, snow, etc.) to a common low point, such as an inlet, stream, or lake.
- Determined by surface terrain and underground pipe system.



Warner Park and Cherokee Marsh watershed study planned

Jan Axelson

On July 20, the City of Madison hosted a virtual meeting to inform residents about a plan to conduct a watershed study for the Warner Park and Cherokee Marsh watersheds. The study will identify causes of flooding and will develop, prioritize, and determine budgets for projects to reduce flooding. The meeting included a presentation by Mike Wegner of the Brown and Caldwell engineering consulting firm that will conduct the study.

The study is one in a series of watershed studies the City of Madison's Engineering Division has been conducting in different areas of the city since 2019. The studies were prompted by a recognition that in recent years (especially since 2000) Madison has been experiencing more rain events as well as more rain events greater than 3 inches. Flooding resulting from these events revealed areas where the stormwater management needs improvement.

About the watershed

In the Cherokee Marsh watershed, stormwater drains to the upper Yahara River, which flows into Lake Mendota. For much of the watershed, the river is bordered by Cherokee Marsh wetlands, which reduce flooding by absorbing stormwater and releasing it slowly.

In developed areas of the watershed, stormwater flows into streets and enters inlets, culverts, and pipes that convey the water to the upper Yahara. Stormwater ponds, such as the ponds just north of Wheeler Road, help slow the flow of stormwater and allow sediments to sink to the bottom of the pond instead of entering the river and lakes.

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park's Mendota Unit borders Lake Mendota, so those wetlands and adjacent uplands drain directly into the lake.

Options to be considered

Proposed solutions to flooding must take into account the recent trend for increased storm frequency and intensity and must provide benefits relative to cost. Proposed solutions cannot just move the problem elsewhere.

The options considered may include projects such as increasing pipe or inlet capacity, creating safe overflow paths for stormwater, rerouting flow, increasing

storage with ponds, flood-proofing buildings, and improving landscaping and grading. The options may include solutions to structures or land on private property.

While the study will consider the water level on Lake Mendota, lake levels aren't the focus of the study. Dane County has been working to reduce flooding due to lake levels by increasing the flow of water through the Yahara chain of lakes.

What lies ahead

A public meeting in the winter of 2023-24 will present the study's findings with a goal of refining the model and fact checking with residents. In late summer 2024, a third public meeting will present proposed solutions.

One way you can help the study is by **reporting any recent or past flooding** you have observed, including to a home or building, street, park, biked path, pond, or greenway. Flood data such as this helps the city prioritize flood projects.

[Warner Park and Cherokee Marsh Watershed Study](#). View the Powerpoint and video of the public meeting and sign up to receive updates.

[Report flooding](#)



Effigy mound protected at Cherokee Marsh NRA

The Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area (NRA) contains two ancient effigy mounds. One mound is in the shape of a bear, and the other, larger mound has been referred to as a panther or water spirit.

Before county ownership of the land, a trail was cut across the "head" of the larger mound. After Dane County acquired the land, the trail was included as part of the NRA's trail system. In recent months, the Friends have been working with the county to protect the mound by closing the trail segment that crosses the mound.

The *Burials, Earthworks, and Mounds Preservation Policy and Plan* of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources specifies a minimum 15-ft buffer around mounds.

To discourage foot traffic and to prevent mowing of the closed trail segment, Dane County Parks staff have placed signage and boulders at the end of the two trail segments that approach the mound. These "endpoint" locations offer views of the river and mound while protecting the mound from further damage.

The Cherokee Marsh NRA is located south of River Road, along the north shore of the upper Yahara River. From the west trailhead at Catfish Court, the mound site is about a 1 mile walk east on the trail system.

[Cherokee Marsh NRA information and trail map](#)

News from the marsh

Here are some things that have been happening in and around the marsh.

Willow loses limb



One of our recent storms caused a limb to break off the large willow by the boardwalk in Cherokee Marsh - North Unit.

Interns finishing summer term



August 8 is the last day for our interns, who removed invasives, gathered seeds, and did whatever needing doing to restore and maintain in the prairies, woodlands, and wetlands of Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area / Yahara Heights. We appreciate their hard work! From left, Emma Thogmartin, Katie Proubcan, Maurisa (Mo) Perez, Paul Millan. Not pictured: Krister Martensson. Thanks to Madison Parks and Dane County Parks for providing supervision for the interns.

Funding the interns is our biggest yearly expense. [Donate to support the interns.](#)

Master Naturalist students enjoy field day at Cherokee Marsh



These Friends of Urban Nature (FUN) Master Naturalist class students and instructors participated at a field day July 29 in Cherokee Marsh - North Unit.

[Learn more about Master Naturalist training.](#)

Job announcement

Conservation Technician Trainee, Madison Parks. Applications accepted until August 7 at 11:59 pm.

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/madisonwi/jobs/4133944>

Register for Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin field trips

Once again this year, there are a number of Natural Resource Foundation field trips in the Cherokee Marsh watershed. This one may have space remaining:

Aug 9 - Twilight paddle on the upper Yahara River

[More information and register](#)



Picking up trash while paddling

Dave Watts

I'm fortunate to live in an amazing natural area where the Yahara River flows into Lake Mendota. The south shoreline is a haven for birds and other wildlife including fish, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. The reedy shoreline borders the Cherokee Marsh Mendota Unit. I often paddleboard in this area to enjoy the natural beauty. Because it's a waterway leading from Westport to the Lake, there is significant boat traffic. Unfortunately, there is a litter problem — and the litter tends to collect in the marsh.

I had been doing trash pickup along the marsh on my paddleboard for a few years. I've gotten fairly adept at scooping up debris, including cans, bottles and assorted plastic trash using my paddle. But there were some items that I left,

including several tires. They were too large to be scooped up with a paddle.

I enrolled in a Master Naturalist class with Paul Noeldner and Friends of Urban Nature (FUN). I needed a project to complete during the 6-week course, and it seemed like the right time to up my game for removing trash — including the tires — from the marsh. I contacted Jan Axelson and explained what I wanted to do, and she said, “Go for it.”

I lashed a couple of boards between two kayaks and dragged the tires up out of the marsh for disposal in the landfill. It reminded me of the TV program “Dirty Jobs,” because it requires putting a rope through each tire and hauling the tire onto a kayak – with spillage of old sediment in the process.

But it worked. I picked up 3 tires, all of which are now properly disposed of. I’m lucky to have great access to the Upper Yahara and the Cherokee Marsh and the skills to be able to help clean up the area. Cleaning up my little corner of the marsh is an honor. Fellow paddlers who wish to clean up their special paddling places should always stay within their skill level and be safe.

There’s a Swedish phrase, “plocka upp,” which has been combined with jogging to create “plogging” (picking up trash while jogging). Picking up trash while paddling could be labeled “pladdling.” Pladdlers of the world, let’s work together to make our waterworld a cleaner place.



Events and volunteering

Join us for any or all of these upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

Events are free with no registration required unless otherwise indicated.

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[Sign up](#) to receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities including announcements for last-minute events and volunteer opportunities that don't make it into the newsletter.

[See the full calendar](#) for latest information.

Bird and Nature Adventures

Sunday, August 6, 1:30 - 3 pm, Summer in the marsh with Lynn Persson and Eva Roos

AND

Sunday, September 3, 1:30 - 3 pm, Ecotones-Habitat edges with Alex Singer

AND

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

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave.
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking area at the end of the gravel road.

Contact: Paul Noeldner, paul_noeldner@hotmail.com, 608-698-0104

[Madison Parks bird and nature adventure page](#)

Snapshot Day

Saturday, August 19, 8:30 am – noon

Snapshot Day is a statewide, one-day event connecting volunteers, water lovers, and local groups in a search for aquatic invasive species (AIS). You can help protect Wisconsin's rivers, lakes, and wetlands from these invasive plants and animals that negatively impact habitat, wildlife, recreation and health. This event is coordinated in partnership with UW-Madison Division of Extension, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, local

partners, and YOU!

The sites this year will likely include locations at Cherokee Marsh, Six Mile Creek, Warner Park, Starkweather Creek, and Token Creek.

[More information and register](#)

Beyond Backyard Birding: Cherokee Marsh North

Saturday, September 16, 7:30 am – 9:30 am

This morning trip is especially for backyard birders looking to grow their skills! Come to have your bird questions answered and get help identifying all those brown streaky birds and distant ducks.

Registration required. [More information and register.](#)

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

Chainsaw training

Volunteers who want to use chainsaws on public land must complete training. These trainings are hosted by Dane County Parks, but the certification is valid for Madison Parks and DNR properties. Multiple dates this fall.

[More information and sign up](#)

Board meetings

Friends of Cherokee Marsh board meeting. Public welcome. Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr. *In the summer, you will likely find us outdoors at the Rainbow Shelter.* Third Wednesdays. To confirm time and place, contact janaxelson@gmail.com.

Wednesday, August 16, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Wednesday, September 20, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Self-guided nature adventures

Get ideas for your own self-guided nature adventures at Cherokee Marsh and other locations.

tinyurl.com/selfguided-adventures

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